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**Open Wide:
Culinary Meta-theatre in Early Modern Drama**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Department of English Studies

Durham University

2025

Abstract

Meta-theatricality is widely recognised as a defining feature of many early modern English plays, particularly those produced in the early decades of the seventeenth century, with contemporary playwrights frequently employing meta-theatrical symbols and devices to reflect upon the nature and function of performances. Although the use of food as a meta-theatrical symbol in English Renaissance drama has received some scholarly attention in recent decades, many investigations into this phenomenon are limited in scope. This investigation expands upon such studies, exploring in detail the nature, origins, extent, and wider implications of the drama-as-food conceit on the English Renaissance stage. After using quantitative data collected from a broad range of early modern texts to demonstrate that a unique relationship exists between food and drama in this period, this study employs close-readings to trace the emergence of this connection through medieval and Reformation plays. It then moves on to consider how food and its providers are portrayed in both commercial and non-commercial Renaissance drama. Doing so reveals not only that contemporary playwrights frequently use food as a meta-theatrical symbol in their work, but also that they do so in order to emphasise the parallel physical and moral risks attendant upon food consumption and theatrical spectatorship. This approach enables early modern dramatists to defend theatrical performances as beneficial to their attendees even whilst acknowledging their potential dangers, allowing them to effectively undermine, rather than simply contradict, the arguments of contemporary anti-theatricalists. As well as deepening our understanding of this rich period in dramatic and literary history, this study invites future explorations of the meta-theatrical valences of particular foodstuffs, dramatists' differing approaches to theatricality, and changes to the drama-as-food conceit during the closure of the theatres, the Restoration, and beyond.

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To J. L. F.
For lighting the fire.

Introduction

The epilogue to John Suckling's *Aglaura* (1637) begins with the assertion that 'Playes are like Feasts, and everie Act should bee | Another Course, and still varietie'.¹ This is in many ways an eminently logical comparison, drawing on and gesturing towards the many practical similarities between dining and theatrical spectatorship, both of which constitute intensely multisensory experiences which entail the absorption and assimilation of external matter into the body. It is not, however, an uncomplicated claim. Certainly, it holds many positive connotations for performances, attributing to them the capacity not only to entertain but also to nourish their spectators, whilst also reflecting positively on playwrights' inventiveness and artistic skill. However, the comparison of plays to food also carries other, less flattering resonances, particularly in light of food's intimate association with the needs of the body – traditionally viewed as inferior to those of the mind and the spirit – and its manifest capacity to sicken as well as to sustain its consumers.

This thesis explores the factors motivating the use of the drama-as-food conceit by early modern English playwrights. Particularly after the turn of the seventeenth century, dramatists writing for the public stage repeatedly call attention not merely to the superficial, mechanical similarities between composing a play and constructing a meal, or between tasting a dish and hearing a speech, but also to equivalences between the social, medical, and moral valences of plays and food. It is therefore significant that depictions of and references to food in these plays often focus not on its health- and life-giving qualities but instead on its capacity to endanger the bodies, minds, and morals of its consumers. As such, instead of framing performances as straightforwardly beneficial to their attendees, parallels between food and drama in early modern public plays highlight performances' physically, psychologically, morally, socially, spiritually, and politically threatening potential. By

¹ John Suckling, *Aglaura* (London: John Haviland, 1638), sig. O1^v.

continuing to produce plays even whilst emphasising the potential risks they pose to their consumers, early modern playwrights initially appear to demonstrate a wanton disregard for spectators' wellbeing, apparently corroborating rather than challenging many of the accusations levelled against plays by contemporary anti-theatricalists. However, closer inspection reveals that the drama-as-food metaphor enables Renaissance playwrights to put forward a more compelling defence of performances than would otherwise have been possible. Likening plays to food specifically – something essential to the preservation of life and health – enables these dramatists to emphasise performances' indispensability to their society, and even to suggest that the benefits of attending plays do not merely outweigh but are in many ways constituted by the risks involved in their consumption. As such, Renaissance playwrights' use of the drama-as-food metaphor allows them to frame anti-theatricalists' calls for the discontinuation of performances as not merely extreme, but also counterproductive.

Much useful work has already been conducted on instances of meta-theatre in early modern drama, including on playwrights' engagement with contemporary anti-theatrical discourse.² Indeed, many of these studies also pick up on Renaissance playwrights' tendency not to challenge but rather to corroborate anti-theatrical arguments, albeit sometimes in an ironic or mocking way.³ Nevertheless, most focus exclusively on overt instances of meta-theatre in Renaissance plays, including 'metaphors of playing and acting, shadows and

² See Sarah Dustagheer and Harry Newman, 'Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 36.1 (2018), 3–18; Stephen Purcell, 'Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 36.1 (2018), 19–35; James L. Calderwood, *To Be and Not to Be: Negation and Metadrama in 'Hamlet'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Bhargav Rani, 'Self-Reflexivity through Self-Reflectivity: The Play of Metatheatre in Jonson's Comedies', *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 3.4 (2011), 495–506.

³ George Oppitz-Trotman, 'Staging Vice and Acting Evil: Theatre and Anti-Theatre in Early Modern England', *The Church and Literature*, 48.1 (2012), 156–69; Debra Belt, 'Anti-Theatricalism and Rhetoric in Marlowe's *Edward II*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 21.2 (1991), 134–60; Clifford Davidson, 'Judgement, Iconoclasm, and Anti-Theatricalism in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*', *PLL*, 25.4 (1989), 349–63; Dustagheer and Newman, 'Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama', p. 5.

dreams, and the use of disguise'.⁴ By contrast, my own investigation takes place at the nexus between this conventional approach to early modern meta-theatricality and the growing scholarly interest in early modern food and medicine, both within and beyond contemporary drama. Though this area of research has experienced significant growth in recent decades, many of the studies to which it has given rise maintain a purely historical focus, with even those which do address literary and dramatic depictions of food often doing so with anthropological, culinary, economic, or sociological interests, rather than theatrical ones, in mind.⁵ In *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (2013), for instance, Joan Fitzpatrick explores Shakespeare's interaction with dietary literature in order to illuminate early modern views of particular foodstuffs. Alternatively, both Robert Applebaum's *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture, and Food Among the Early Moderns* (2006) and Matt Williamson's more recent *Hunger, Appetite, and the Politics of the Renaissance Stage* (2021) focus on what literary and dramatic accounts of food and eating can reveal about other aspects of Renaissance society. A similar intention underlies many of the essays contained in David B. Goldstein and Amy Tigner's edited collection *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England* (2016), which often utilise dramatic representations of food as a lens through which to explore early modern politics, economics, and religion. Although studies of this kind have informed my own argument at times, my primary concern is with

⁴ Dustagheer and Newman, 'Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama', p. 5.

⁵ See Jean-Louis Flandrin, Massimo Montanari, and Albert Sonnenfeld, eds. *Food: A Culinary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Elizabeth Spiller, 'Recipes for Knowledge: Maker's Knowledge Traditions, Paracelsian Recipes, and the Invention of the Cookbook, 1600–1660', in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories*, ed. by Joan Fitzpatrick (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 55–72; David B. Goldstein, *Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine and Society, 1450–1800* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Christopher Kissane, ed. *Food, Religion, and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Leonard Barkan, *The Hungry Eye: Eating, Drinking, and European Culture from Rome to the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021); Madeline Bassnett and Hilary Nunn, eds. *In the Kitchen, 1550–1800: Reading English Cooking at Home and Abroad* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022).

what dramatic representations of food can tell us about theatrical performances – an approach which, I argue, early modern dramatists themselves encourage.

My treatment of this theme is also distinct from those recent studies which approach interactions between food and performances in this period from a more literal perspective, such as those which examine the logistics of physically representing food onstage, or which highlight the indistinct boundaries between playing spaces and food venues in Renaissance England. One such investigation is Chris Meads' 'The Presentation of Banquets on the English Stage: 1585–1642' (1999), wherein Meads contends that, for practical as well as financial reasons, staged comestibles were in many cases likely to be 'fashioned from some convenient substitute material' such as 'wood or leather', or even sculpted from a more easily obtainable foodstuff like 'bread'.⁶ Denise E. Cole adopts a similarly practical approach in 'Edible Performance: Feasting and Festivity in Early Tudor Entertainment' (2007), enumerating the ways in which the use of the same spaces for dining and for performances may have influenced spectators' responses to early Tudor plays.⁷ Sally Templeman takes up this theme in relation to early modern drama in "'What's this? Mutton?": Food, Bodies, and Inn-Yard Performance Spaces in Early Shakespearean Drama' (2013).⁸ Templeman here claims that those 'playing venues' which were 'constructed at the heart of eating establishments' would have been surrounded by a 'pervasive smell of cooking', which would in turn have operated as an 'olfactory stimulant' and impacted the composition and reception of particular performances.⁹ Although each of these studies foregrounds the fascinating dialogue between food and drama in late medieval and early modern England, they focus predominantly on how food's physical presence within and around performances may have

⁶ Chris Meads, 'The Presentation of Banquets on the English Stage: 1585–1642', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 12.1 (1999), 268–91 (pp. 286–87).

⁷ Denise E. Cole, 'Edible Performance: Feasting and Festivity in Early Tudor Entertainment', in *The Senses in Performance*, ed. by Sally Barnes and André Lepecki (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 92–104.

⁸ Sally Templeman, "'What's this? Mutton?": Food, Bodies, and Inn-Yard Performance Spaces in Early Shakespearean Drama', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 31.1 (2013), 79–94.

⁹ Templeman, "'What's this? Mutton?'"', pp. 79 and 82.

affected spectators' approaches to plays. Whilst agreeing that food and drama are closely intertwined in the early modern period, my investigation contends that this connection exists on a metaphorical and theoretical as well as on a purely literal level. I will therefore be considering instances in contemporary plays when food is alluded to without necessarily being materially present on or near the stage.

The use of food as a meta-theatrical device in early modern drama has not gone entirely unrecognised in current scholarship, with a small selection of recent studies drawing attention to the recurrence of the drama-as-food conceit across a broad spectrum of Renaissance plays. Insightful though such investigations are, many are also considerably limited in scope, as is the case with Uwe Klawitter's article 'The Play as Banquet: Implications of a Metatheatrical Conceit in Jacobean-Caroline Drama' (2010). Although Klawitter astutely foregrounds 'the large number of structural and functional correspondences between Renaissance banquets and theatrical performances', his investigation focuses solely on the appearance of this connection in seventeenth-century paratexts.¹⁰ Similarly, Meads in 'Narrative and Dramatic Sauces: Reflections Upon Creativity, Cookery, and Culinary Metaphor in Some Early Seventeenth-Century Dramatic Prologues' (2010) attends exclusively to seventeenth-century prologues when exploring the 'direct analogy between the role of the dramatist and that of the master cook' in contemporary plays.¹¹

My investigation extends upon those of Klawitter and Meads in several major respects. For one, whilst it does attend to authors' use of the drama-as-food metaphor in early modern dramatic paratexts, it also takes into account culinary meta-theatricality within the main texts of early modern plays. By revealing that this conceit is not limited exclusively to

¹⁰ Uwe Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet: Implications of a Metatheatrical Conceit in Jacobean-Caroline Drama', in *The Pleasures and Horrors of Eating: The Cultural History of Eating in Anglophone Literature*, ed. by Marion Gymnich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 12–41 (p. 125).

¹¹ Meads, 'Narrative and Dramatic Sauces: Reflections upon Creativity, Cookery, and Culinary Metaphor in Some Early Seventeenth-Century Dramatic Prologues', in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Recipes and Culinary Histories*, ed. by Joan Fitzpatrick (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 145–66 (p. 147).

paratextual material but instead arises frequently within the plays themselves, this approach provides a clearer view of its pervasiveness, in turn enabling more accurate conclusions to be drawn about its contemporary dramatic significance. Furthermore, I devote considerable attention to the pre-seventeenth-century origins of this theme, tracking developments to the plays-as-food metaphor from the medieval period onwards. Doing so offers important insights into playwrights' reasons for utilising this comparison, particularly in light of its potentially negative valences. I also extend my focus to foods and culinary experiences which go unmentioned in Klawitter's study. Banquets constitute a very particular form of dining, generally characterised by opulence and formality, and Klawitter is therefore right to conclude that comparisons between plays and banquets 'allowed playwrights to put their labours into a positive light' by suggesting that playgoers are being offered 'the best food available'.¹² However, he does not satisfactorily explain why food loses its meta-theatrical connotations when it appears in less ordered, formal, polite, or safe contexts. I, like Meads, suggest that it does not, arguing instead that playwrights often associate theatrical spectatorship with less commendable forms of dining in order to emphasise drama's ambiguous effects on viewers' physical, emotional, and moral wellbeing.¹³

The present study is primarily concerned with the relationship between food and drama in plays produced between the 1560s and the 1630s. These eight decades witnessed significant changes in the social, political, and theatrical landscape of Renaissance England, and the form, content, and purpose of plays produced throughout this period varies widely. Naturally, the drama-as-food metaphor also undergoes changes during this time, and this study takes these chronological alterations into account even whilst it highlights the persistence and longevity of the conceit itself. Whilst beginning and end dates for investigations of this kind are necessarily somewhat arbitrary, mine have nevertheless been

¹² Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet', pp. 138 and 127.

¹³ Meads, 'Narrative and Dramatic Sauces', p. 165.

selected advisedly. Although parallels between food and plays have a long history in English drama, the simultaneous portrayal of food as a profound threat and as a meta-theatrical symbol does not occur in any widespread capacity before the 1560s, for reasons which will be explored in depth in my second and third chapters. At the other end of the period, I have chosen not to expand my investigation further into the seventeenth century owing to the significant contextual shift which occurs as a result of the closure of the public theatres in 1642, with the impact of this event on how drama was perceived and engaged with requiring far more detailed exploration than would be possible to include in this investigation. Since the quantitative data I use to lay the foundations of my argument is arranged by decade, the years 1640–1642 cannot productively feature in this part of the study, and so I have established 1639 as a cut-off date for both my quantitative and qualitative analysis. The influence of the closure of the theatres on the uses of food in Interregnum and Restoration drama constitutes one potential line of further enquiry which emerges from this research.

This investigation adopts a loosely chronological approach to the material in question, analysing medieval and early sixteenth-century drama's portrayal of the relationship between food and performances before moving on to consider late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century attitudes to their connection. Such a method carries inherent risks, particularly that of inadvertently diminishing the richness and complexity of medieval and sixteenth-century drama by presenting pre-Renaissance plays as simply paving the way for their early modern successors. This does not at all reflect my own views of early English drama, and I endeavour at all times to avoid erroneously conflating change with progressive development. Moreover, although the overarching structure of my discussion is chronological, individual chapters are for the most part arranged thematically, an approach which enables a clearer view of similarities between different playwrights' treatment of food and dining throughout the early modern period. Although a chronological examination of playwrights' changing approaches

to food throughout the early modern period would constitute a productive line of inquiry, such a fine-grained exploration would threaten to obscure the broader and, for the purposes of this study, more significant similarities evident in Renaissance playwrights' treatment of food.

My primary means of approaching this topic is through close analysis of individual plays, anti-theatrical tracts, and culinary and medical texts produced during the period in question. However, from such a perspective it can be difficult to recognise larger patterns in Renaissance dramatists' use of culinary language, and so I also supplement this qualitative analysis with quantitative data gleaned through distant-reading methods. This combined approach provides a more holistic view of general trends in early modern dramatists' treatment of food, allowing for more informed conclusions to be drawn about the reasons underlying their choices. In my close analysis, I devote considerable attention to canonical Renaissance dramatists including Shakespeare, Jonson, and Dekker, whose contemporary popularity, prolific dramatic output, and persistent interest in the nature and function of performances render them invaluable to any exploration of how the drama-as-food analogy operates in early modern plays. However, I do not rest on the assumption that these playwrights' treatment of food can be taken as representative, instead examining their work alongside that of dramatists whose output is less widely studied in the present day.

Each of the following seven chapters considers the relationship between food and drama from a different angle, an approach which evidences both the frequency with which food appears as a meta-theatrical symbol in medieval and early modern drama and the diverse array of contexts in which it serves this function. In Chapter One, I utilise distant-reading techniques to analyse the relative frequency of culinary words in drama, prose, poetry, and medical and culinary texts published between 1560 and 1639. Doing so reveals that the frequency pattern of culinary language follows a markedly different trend in Renaissance

drama compared to that seen in other contemporary literary genres. In order to account for these divergences, I examine the frequency patterns of certain keywords in more detail, considering the potential reasons underlying alterations in their prevalence across the period in question. Doing so reveals that the words whose frequency patterns in drama diverge most drastically from those in other forms of literature tend to be those which both constitute a particularly close parallel for performances and, more often than not, hold negative contemporary resonances.

The remainder of the thesis is concerned with uncovering the reasons behind this trend. My second and third chapters contextualise the discussion of food in early modern drama by exploring the relationship between food and performances in earlier plays. Chapter Two focuses on parallels in the portrayal of food and plays in medieval drama, wherein both are presented as capable of facilitating spiritual advancement not despite but because of their materiality and association with worldliness. Chapter Three, meanwhile, concentrates on Reformation and mid-sixteenth-century drama, examining the ways in which Reformed theology's suspicion of materiality influenced theatrical depictions of both performances and food. In particular, I focus on the reasons informing both the opposition between food and drama by early Reformation dramatists and the realignment of the two by their successors several decades later, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of Renaissance playwrights' portrayals of both food and performances.

In Chapter Four, I turn my attention to early modern dramatic paratexts, and to the recurrent alignment of performances and food in these highly meta-theatrically significant works. Close analysis of performed prologues, epilogues, and inductions exposes changes in contemporary attitudes towards drama's central purpose taking place in the late sixteenth century. Shortly thereafter, the drama-as-food metaphor gains widespread traction across dramatic paratexts, with this conceit constituting a means by which contemporary paratext

authors articulate their (at times widely diverging) views regarding the ideal nature and function of performances. This clearly demonstrates that seventeenth-century paratext authors – who in many cases were also the authors of the works to which they are attached – are consistently thinking about plays through food.

Building on this idea, Chapter Five examines portrayals of food providers in early modern plays, focusing specifically on the parallels recurrently established between playwrights and food producers including cooks, medics, and nurses. This comparison holds some favourable connotations for playwrights, implicitly indicating both their technical expertise and their ability to restore and to maintain the physical, mental, and moral health of their customers. Nevertheless, Renaissance dramatists repeatedly foreground the negative rather than the positive aspects of this comparison, emphasising the profound threat posed by contemporary food providers and so drawing significant attention to their own power to harm as well to heal their clientele.

Chapter Six, meanwhile, is dedicated to considering playwrights' treatment of food in non-commercial contemporary drama, and to exploring whether or not this diverges in any significant respects from their use of culinary themes in commercial plays. Although non-commercial performances and public playhouse drama have a dialogic relationship throughout the early modern period, their context and aims are sufficiently distinct to merit separate treatment in an investigation concerned with contemporary views of dramatic performances. Despite their prominent meta-theatricality, such entertainments very often attempt to undermine the link between food and performances established in their commercial counterparts.

In Chapter Seven, I explore how the drama-as-food conceit is connected to depictions of bodily, sensory, and affective openness in the plays of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Thomas Heywood. Despite presenting guarded, dispassionate engagement with external influences as

essential for ensuring individuals' safety, these playwrights nevertheless call attention to the distinction between safety and health, drawing on early modern medical beliefs regarding the benefits of bodily and affective openness to comment on plays' social function. Significantly, these playwrights' interest in this theme is especially prominent in a decade wherein we see a disproportionately high frequency of culinary terminology in drama compared to other contemporary literature.

This study is therefore concerned with how not only drama and food but also the body, its passions, and its sensory faculties were viewed throughout the medieval and early modern periods. In particular, it is interested in how and why attitudes towards the distinct but interrelated concepts of materiality, sensory reception, and affectivity shift in response to societal and literary factors, and in the ways in which these alterations both inflect contemporary approaches to drama and shape the nature of performances themselves. Although my investigation's primary focus is, of course, on dramaturgy, its wide-ranging approach also renders it of considerable interdisciplinary interest, with its arguments not only advancing our understanding of medieval and early modern drama but also contributing to scholarship on the histories of food, medicine, aesthetics, literature, religion, sensory reception, and the emotions. Its quantitative elements also contribute to the developing field of digital humanities, demonstrating just one of the ways in which emerging technologies can provide insights into texts and into time periods that could not be gained through close reading alone.

Culinary Keywords in Early Modern Drama, 1560–1639: A Statistical Analysis

Introduction

Support for the claim that food and drink serve a meta-theatrical function in early modern English drama emerges through statistical evaluation of both the plays in question and other contemporary literature. In this chapter, I employ distant-reading techniques to track the appearances of 217 culinary and medical keywords in a wide range of Renaissance texts published between 1560 and 1639, taking these findings as the basis for some preliminary conclusions about the role of food in early modern drama. As well as permitting an assessment of broad trends in Renaissance authors' use of particular words across a considerable period of time, quantitative analysis allows for clear and direct comparisons to be made between and within different literary forms, rendering it particularly useful to this section of my investigation. Furthermore, quantitative analysis permits literary texts to be assessed with a greater degree of objectivity than close reading, reducing (although not, as I outline below, completely eliminating) the impact of confirmation bias on the results it generates. Finally, digitally assisted textual analysis is advantageous for its potential to disregard canonicity, affording Shakespeare and Jonson's language equal weighting with that of their now lesser-known contemporaries. Of course, it remains true that some contemporary plays never entered print, whilst others that did have not survived, with the result that no modern study of Renaissance drama can ever be considered either complete or unbiased. Nevertheless, by diminishing the effects of modern biases, distant reading is theoretically capable of affording a more balanced view of early modern linguistic trends than traditional close-reading methods, though it must be remembered that manually compiled databases are unlikely to be so democratic in their approach.¹

¹ For discussions on the effect of bias in distant reading, see Gabi Kirilloff, 'Computation as Context: New Approaches to the Close/Distant Reading Debate', *College Literature*, 49.1 (2022), 1–25; Ted Underwood,

There are, however, some obvious drawbacks to using digital analysis to interrogate the function of food and drink in Renaissance drama, and seemingly none more crucial than the fact that no current technology can reveal precisely how any given term is being employed in the texts being investigated. An apple or a piece of mutton could feature in an entirely literal capacity in one play and be imbued with extensive meta-theatrical significance in another, yet these differences are impossible to detect using word-frequency analysis alone. This being the case, the rate of occurrence of any given word in Renaissance drama does not necessarily provide any relevant information with regard to this particular investigation, with fluctuations in word-frequency potentially being attributable to any number of causes unrelated to meta-theatricality.

There are several ways in which to mitigate this problem. Firstly, although not especially illuminating in isolation, the frequency with which particular culinary and sensory terms appear in these plays becomes more meaningful when considered alongside their frequency in contemporary medical and culinary literature. Such comparisons expose instances where the popularity or unpopularity of particular words in plays conflicts with contemporary cultural trends as reflected in texts discussing real-life culinary and medical practices, indicating when dramatists may be using these words in a supra-literal capacity. However, this information still does not necessarily reveal instances of meta-theatricality, since culinary terms with additional cultural or symbolic but not meta-theatrical significance can also be expected to display a different frequency-pattern in drama than in medical and culinary texts. It is therefore also necessary to compare the appearances of pertinent words in dramatic texts with their manifestations in contemporary poetry and prose, thereby exposing examples of words which appear significantly more or less often in drama than in other literary genres. Whereas words with general symbolic significance might be expected to

Distant Horizons: Digital Evidence and Literary Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), pp. 156–58.

fluctuate in a relatively uniform manner across these literary forms, trends in drama that deviate from those observed in contemporary poetry and prose may indicate the meta-dramatic import of the affected terms. These data can also be supplemented with statistical information regarding the distribution of relevant words within different dramatic genres, an approach which reveals cases wherein certain keywords are associated with particular kinds of play. Doing so indicates when trends in words' usage in drama, though different from those observed in poetry, prose, and medical and culinary texts, are attributable not to meta-theatrical significance but simply to fluctuations in contemporary dramatic tastes.

Methodology

When undertaking an investigation of this nature, it is vital to recognise that statistical information is not inherently unbiased – that data, in the words of Gabi Kirilloff, 'are not facts'.² Although Kirilloff persuasively argues that the subjective biases informing datasets 'should not be viewed as a deterrent to computational research' by demonstrating that even faulty data and flawed programmes can be of instructive value, this does not negate the fact that precautions must be taken to ensure that accurate conclusions can be drawn from collected data.³ In particular, a consistent awareness must be maintained of the impact of researchers' decisions on the compiled information, and steps taken to ensure both that this influence is minimised where possible, and that where it is present it does not compromise the data's validity. I will therefore outline here the key decisions involved in collecting and processing my own datasets, and explain the reasoning behind my choices. As well as ensuring the repeatability of my research, this transparency will also highlight some alternative approaches to the data in question, presenting these untaken paths as avenues of future exploration.

² Kirilloff, 'Computation as Context', p. 13.

³ Kirilloff, 'Computation as Context', p. 4.

One of the most fundamental decisions involved in my study was that of which keywords to include in the survey.⁴ In order to maintain the integrity of the investigation, it was vital to ensure that the selected keywords covered a wide range of different culinary categories, since a disproportionate focus on one particular facet of early modern culinary or medical culture could potentially skew the data. My selection of keywords therefore encompasses a variety of food groups such as vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy products, exotic foods, seasonings, composite foodstuffs, and drinks, as well as the names of particular meals, cooking techniques, and dining implements. Though the inclusion of every possible relevant word is of course impossible, the diversity of this sample means that the absence of any particular item is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the conclusions drawn from the data, since other items with similar cultural and/or dramatic valences are likely to be present. I have omitted from this selection words referring to medical and culinary practitioners, such as ‘cook’, ‘nurse’, and ‘physician’ due to their limited validity with regard to dramatic texts, where the likelihood of such figures being referred to by their proper names renders quantitative assessment of the titles alone incapable of offering an accurate representation of the prevalence of cooks and medics onstage.

I have also excluded terms which possess additional, non-culinary meanings, including words such as ‘quail’, ‘carp’, and ‘clove’, though I have retained words which do not entirely lose their culinary valences even when employed in different contexts, such as ‘lamb’, ‘flesh’, and ‘preserve’. The single exception to this rule is the word ‘beer’, this being an early modern spelling variant of the word ‘bier’ (and, much less frequently, ‘bear’). ‘Beer’ appears in a considerable number of works throughout this period – 296 poems, plays, and prose texts in total – and, from the results on the search page, it quickly became clear that most of these works use ‘beer’ in a culinary rather than a funereal sense. To determine the

⁴ See Appendix A for an alphabetised list of my chosen keywords.

impact of false-positive matches, I searched for collocations (within ten words) between ‘beer’ and the words ‘funeral’, ‘death’, ‘die’, ‘lay’, ‘set’, ‘pyre’, ‘dirge’, or ‘bury’. Although this search turned up 42 results, further scrutiny revealed that 24 of these texts also refer to ‘beer’ in its purely culinary sense, and so do not adversely impact my data for the number of plays containing this word – leaving only 18 texts that use it exclusively in the sense of ‘bier’, distributed throughout the three literary genres across the eight decades. Though my search for collocations may not have revealed all instances of the word ‘beer’ being used to refer to a funeral bier, these findings do indicate that the vast majority of search results for ‘beer’ on LION in these decades reflect culinary uses of the term. This, in conjunction with both the prominence of ‘beer’ in its culinary sense in these works and the large dataset under consideration, renders the impact of non-culinary uses of ‘beer’ on my collected data negligible, and I have therefore chosen to include this word in my investigation.

The raw data for poetry, prose, and drama were gathered from the Literature Online (LION) database, and are accurate as of September 2024. LION offers access to an extensive range of texts from the period under consideration, amounting to a total of 512 plays, 201 prose works, and 23,823 poems for the years 1560–1639, with these texts spanning a wide range of topics, genres, and styles. One feature of LION which renders it particularly appropriate for this study is its inclusion of a wide range of form and spelling variants for selected search terms. As well as enabling predictable variants to be counted without multiple searches through its lemmatisation feature, LION also permits the inclusion of less predictable early modern spellings in the data. This allows direct comparisons to be drawn between LION’s separate poetry, prose, and drama collections in the knowledge that exactly the same variants have been included in each search, something which would be difficult to guarantee if three separate databases were used for the different literary forms. Although the Early English Books Online (EEBO) database also offers this feature, and indeed contains a

considerably wider selection of texts, it was unsuitable for this investigation both because it does not display the number of keyword appearances in each text on its results page, and because its catalogue is in fact impractically large for the manual counting process I have employed (comprising tens of thousands of prose works, for instance, subdivided into thematic categories).

All databases, however, have their drawbacks, and LION is no exception. One particularly prominent shortcoming of LION is the incompleteness of its collections, something which is especially clear with respect to its prose database. It is unclear why so many works which are readily accessible elsewhere (such as on EEBO) do not appear on LION, but the evidently selective nature of the database suggests that the texts which are present disproportionately reflect the tastes of their compilers rather than providing an unbiased cross-section of early modern works. This in turn means that quantitative data drawn from this collection is likely to be skewed by modern biases. However, as this is a risk entailed with the use of any database, and given the extensive and diverse array of texts which are present on LION, using another collection seems – at least for the present time – unlikely to eliminate or even to significantly attenuate the problem. LION can thereby be approached as a viable, if imperfect, source from which to compile this data; future studies may wish to conduct the same research using different databases to determine whether doing so has any statistically significant impact on the results.

It is also important to note the statistical impact of LION's classification system, which categorises dramatic works based on the date of their initial publication rather than of their first performance, likely due to the considerably greater ease of determining the former. Though in most cases these dates occur within no more than a few years of one another, at times they differ radically. To take two particularly noteworthy examples, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* was printed in 1575 and thus contributes to my dataset for drama of the 1570s, despite

its first performance likely taking place in the 1550s, whilst *Bartholomew Fair*, first performed in 1614, does not feature in this data at all, being catalogued according to its inclusion in a collection of Jonson's works printed in 1640. Despite its apparent potential to create statistical inaccuracies, I do not believe that LION's organisational system invalidates these data for two important reasons. Firstly, the printing of a play, perhaps even more than its performance onstage, is a reliable indicator of its contemporary popularity, or at least of a publisher's belief that it will be well-received by their clientele. As such, the date of a play's publication in print still offers accurate insight into the kind of material which interested drama's reading audiences at that time. Secondly, it is highly likely that some dramatic texts underwent alterations between their first performance and initial publication, even when those events occurred within close temporal proximity. Indeed, the later addition of prologues and epilogues is widely acknowledged amongst early modern scholars, and significant in-text changes are evident even between different print editions of some plays, as with the 1603 and 1605 versions of *Hamlet* available on LION.⁵ These texts therefore permit insight into contemporary tastes at the time of their publication in print even if this does not correspond to the time of their initial performance, meaning that LION's method of categorisation does not diminish their usefulness with respect to this investigation.

In order to account for these textual changes and what they may be able to tell us about the tastes of contemporary audiences, where multiple early modern print editions of the same play appear in the LION catalogue all have been included in the data. This approach is in many ways imperfect, not least because it is in almost all cases Shakespeare's plays which appear in multiple editions on LION, and it is unclear whether this is an accurate reflection of their greater popularity or symptomatic of modern biases in the compilation of the database.

⁵ Sonia Massai and Heidi Craig, 'Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues on Page and Stage', in *Rethinking Theatrical Documents in Shakespeare's England*, ed. by Tiffany Stern (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2020), pp. 91–110; Tiffany Stern, "'A Small-Beer Health to His Second Day': Playwrights, Prologues, and First Performances in the Early Modern Theatre', *Studies in Philology*, 101.2 (2004), 172–99 (pp. 191–93).

One way of mitigating for the latter possibility would be to include only the earliest available edition in the statistics, but this would not capture the at times significant variations between editions noted above. Another option would be the inclusion of later editions only when these do differ significantly from the earliest available version, but this introduces the additional problem of determining what counts as a “significant” difference, a matter upon which scholarly judgements will necessarily differ. In spite of its potential drawbacks, the inclusion of all available editions of plays printed between 1560 and 1639 thereby stands out as the most reasonable approach, minimising the degree of subjectivity involved in creating the dataset and ensuring that the research is easily repeatable.

Even with the assistance of LION’s automatically produced word variants – and at times because of this digital “assistance” – counting the frequency of these keywords involves exercising a certain degree of editorial discretion. I have, for example, taken care wherever possible to exclude errors produced by the searching algorithms, such as removing abbreviations of ‘Alexander’ from my data for ‘ale’ and omitting the name of the printer Nathaniel Butter from data for the homonymous foodstuff. The most extensive of these amendments involves the word ‘hear’ – a word not included in my culinary keyword list, but which I discuss later in relation to the included word ‘taste’. Seven of the suggested spelling variants for ‘hear’ (‘hering’, ‘heringe’, ‘heringes’, ‘herings’, ‘heryng’, ‘herynge’, and ‘herynges’) are sometimes, but not always, employed to represent the modern word ‘herring’. To resolve this problem, after compiling the data for both ‘herring’ and ‘hear’ I searched for these seven terms alone and determined the category they belong to using close reading, adding them to the data for ‘herring’ and subtracting them from that for ‘hear’ where necessary.

Poetry collections containing keywords in their titles also proved problematic, registering in searches once for every poem contained within them – sometimes amounting to

hundreds of additional entries for the same word. In such cases, if no poems within the collection featured the keyword again I counted it as one additional text and one instance of the keyword in my raw data. If a poem from the collection did feature the keyword, I counted the title as offering one further instance of the word but not as affecting the total number of texts in which it appears. I have also included in my data instances of keywords which appear as proper names, encompassing figures such as Peter Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594) and Hans Beer-Pot in *See Me, and See Me Not* (pub. 1618). In these cases, I have counted appearances of the characters' names in stage directions and speech prefixes, thereby generating a more accurate impression of how heavily such characters feature in the plays than would be permitted by counting only those instances in which they are addressed by name in the speech of other characters. For the aforementioned Hans Beer-Pot, this involved counting speech prefixes (even those only using his first name) as contributing to the number of uses of 'beer' in drama of the 1610s.

Collecting the same data for contemporary medical and culinary literature required a different approach, as no texts of this kind from the time period under consideration appear on LION, but had to be accessed through EEBO instead. Although EEBO does allow users to search for texts in particular subject categories, searches for these genres give rise to results that are not directly relevant to my investigation (such as texts criticising medical practitioners), meaning that there was no way to conveniently gather the requisite data using EEBO alone. Instead, acquiring this information necessitated compiling my own list of texts for inclusion in the survey and entering each of them separately into the online textual analysis aid Voyant Tools, then using Voyant's search option to look for keywords one at a time. One of the main challenges involved in this procedure was ensuring that only those form and spelling variants which appear in searches on LION were included in the data for these texts, in order to allow for fair comparisons to be drawn between them and my data for

contemporary prose, poetry, and drama. This involved such apparently capricious decisions as including ‘sweetly’, ‘sweeter’, and ‘sweetest’ as variants of ‘sweet’ whilst discounting ‘sweeten’, ‘sweeting’, and ‘sweetness’. Nonetheless, every effort has been made to ensure that the data gathered using Voyant can be reliable compared with that acquired through LION. It is also important to note that, regardless of their stylistic qualities, none of these medical and culinary texts have been included in the data for drama, poetry, or prose texts, which consist exclusively of the works available on LION.

One obvious drawback to the use of EEBO for the compilation of these texts is the exclusion of manuscript recipes from this investigation. As well as limiting the pool of texts from which statistics can be gathered, this omission is potentially significant in terms of its impact on the data collected. As Sara Pennell explains, printed medical and culinary texts from the early modern period often present an idealistic view of how particular ingredients should be used, rather than offering a realistic insight into how they actually were used in daily life.⁶ Though perhaps not entirely devoid of such idealism, manuscript cookbooks may, as working documents, offer a more accurate impression of quotidian approaches to food, drink, and medicine than their printed counterparts. The disparity between recommended and actual practice is perhaps more likely to affect expensive, exotic, and rare ingredients than everyday staples, but in these cases it is worth remembering that the data from printed texts must be taken with a figurative pinch of salt.

Another issue raised by the use of EEBO is that, whilst the databases for poetry, prose, and drama were pre-constructed, medical and culinary texts had to be selected on a case-by-case basis, as mentioned above.⁷ In order to ensure that this selection is representative, I have attempted to be as inclusive as possible when determining which texts to incorporate, within certain limiting parameters. I have included any works which aim to

⁶ Sara Pennell, ‘Recipes and Reception: Tracking “New World” Foodstuffs in Early Modern British Culinary Texts’, *Food & History*, 7.1 (2009), 11–34 (p. 15).

⁷ See Appendix B for a full list of the texts and editions used.

instruct readers about either the preparation of food or the restoration and maintenance of health, comprising a variety of recipe books, dietary manuals, surgical treatises, and pamphlets offering remedies against the plague, among others. I have included only those medical texts which focus predominantly on ingestible cures and preventatives, excluding other forms of medical text that have no bearing on this investigation, such as those advocating for the use of public baths. I have also excluded texts which focus only on one particular foodstuff, in order not to skew the data. The necessity of inputting these texts into Voyant Tools restricted my choice of texts to those already extant in plain-text format. Where plain-text versions exist for multiple editions of the same work, I have included only the earliest version in the data, and only when this originates from the same decade in which the first edition of the text came into print. This differs from my approach to plays on LION, where I have included multiple print editions in the data, a divergence which is nevertheless necessary due to the fact that, unlike contemporary print editions, the availability of digitised plain-text versions does not correspond in any way to contemporary demand for the work in question. For a Renaissance text extant in only two print editions, both could be available in plain-text format, whereas for another work which exists in eight early modern editions only one plain-text version may be available, meaning that the inclusion of all plain-text versions could unfairly skew the results of the investigation. In the absence of unlimited time and resources, the obvious way to ensure the reliability of the data is therefore to include each text only once. In most cases, this system is effective, producing sufficiently large sample sizes for the acquisition of reliable data. However, only three texts in the 1610s and another three in the 1620s met the necessary criteria for inclusion; as such, I have taken care not to rely on evidence from medical and culinary texts of these decades to support my arguments. For all medical and culinary works, I have excluded from the data tables of contents, chapter summaries, lists of corrections, authors' notes, and indexes.

After noting the amount of plays, poems, prose works, and medical and culinary texts published in each decade between 1560 and 1639, I recorded three pieces of raw data in order to pursue my investigation. For all of these literary forms, I chronicled the total number of appearances of a selected keyword in texts of each decade, the amount of texts containing the keyword at least once, and the maximum number of times it is mentioned in any single text, doing this for each keyword. So, to take one example, the word ‘apple’ appears five times in plays of the 1560s, distributed across four plays, and appears a maximum of two times in a single play. I then processed these data to enable accurate comparisons to be drawn between the various literary forms. This involved, first of all, dividing the number of texts in which each keyword appears by the total number of published texts in that decade, to give the percentage of works in which these words are mentioned in each decade and for each literary form. For the above example, LION lists nineteen plays as having been published in the 1560s, so the word ‘apple’ can be determined to appear in 21.05% of plays in this decade. Processing the raw data in this way allows for a standardised consideration of contemporary writers’ interest in particular keywords, and of how this interest changes in all literary forms between the 1560s and the 1630s. In order to determine the significance of these words to the texts in which they do appear, I also divided the number of times they appear in each decade by the number of texts in which they occur, thereby revealing the average number of times every keyword is mentioned in texts that use them at least once – in the case of ‘apple’ in plays of the 1560s, this came to 1.25 times. The maximum number of appearances of each word in any single text was recorded in order to assist with the interpretation of this number, revealing whether the average can be considered roughly representative or whether it is heavily skewed by the presence of one particular text. This proved particularly important for prose works of the 1610s, due to the publication of the *King James Bible* in 1611. To give a flavour of this text’s effect on the data, 951 out of the 1,009 instances of ‘eat’ in prose during

this decade appear in this single work. As such, when it is included in the data the average number of times ‘eat’ is mentioned per text comes out at 126.13; excluding it from the calculation as an outlier gives the much more modest figure of 8.29.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge the possibility of a margin of error within the data upon which this investigation relies. Though digital technology has been used to gain access to these data, I myself have collected and processed them. As such, despite every effort having been taken to ensure their accuracy, the potential impact of human error upon the data cannot and should not be ignored. However, I do not believe that the possibility of clerical inaccuracies compromises the validity of my findings. This is because, besides the fact that any mistakes are likely to be very minor due to the care that has been taken to prevent them, errors are naturally more likely to affect larger datasets (miscounting by one instance of a word out of 500, rather than by one out of ten). This being the case, human error is likely to exert minimal influence upon the processed statistics upon which I rely, and so provides no reason for dismissing the conclusions to be drawn from them.

Findings: Food and Drink

To begin with some of the more obvious information supplied by the data, keywords appear in a lower percentage of plays than medical and culinary texts – and are used less often on average in plays which do mention them – than in medical and culinary texts in every decade surveyed in this investigation (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2). This is entirely unsurprising, with early modern drama’s broad range of concerns and the narrow functionality of medical and culinary literature naturally resulting in a higher frequency and density of these keywords in the latter group of texts. Less predictable is the disparate deployment of these keywords in poetry, prose, and drama. After medical and culinary texts, prose demonstrates the second-highest frequency of keyword usage in every decade except the 1600s and 1610s, in which

drama moves briefly from third to second place. (The reasons for the surge in keyword usage in these two decades will be explored in more detail in later chapters.) In very stark contrast, only a tiny percentage of contemporary poems contain the words under consideration; whilst the average percentage of poems containing keywords peaks at 1.14% in the 1580s, the maximum for drama comes decades later in the 1600s with 17.39%. These statistics are not skewed by the extreme popularity or unpopularity of particular words, with similar discrepancies existing for almost every single keyword included in this investigation. To take some examples at random, ‘cheese’ or ‘chese’ appears in only 0.64% of poems published in the 1570s, despite arising in 14.29% of plays, 30.00% of prose works, and 40.00% of medical and culinary texts from the same decade (Fig. 1.3). ‘Bake’, a word with different valences, is present in 0.29% of poems in the 1630s but emerges in 6.47% of plays, 9.09% of prose works, and 41.18% of medical and culinary texts published contemporaneously (Fig. 1.4). Even such a versatile word as ‘sweet’, which is capable of describing non-gustatory sensory experiences, appears in only 32.05% of poems in the 1590s compared to 90.48% of prose texts and 100.00% of plays and medical and culinary works from the same period (Fig. 1.5).

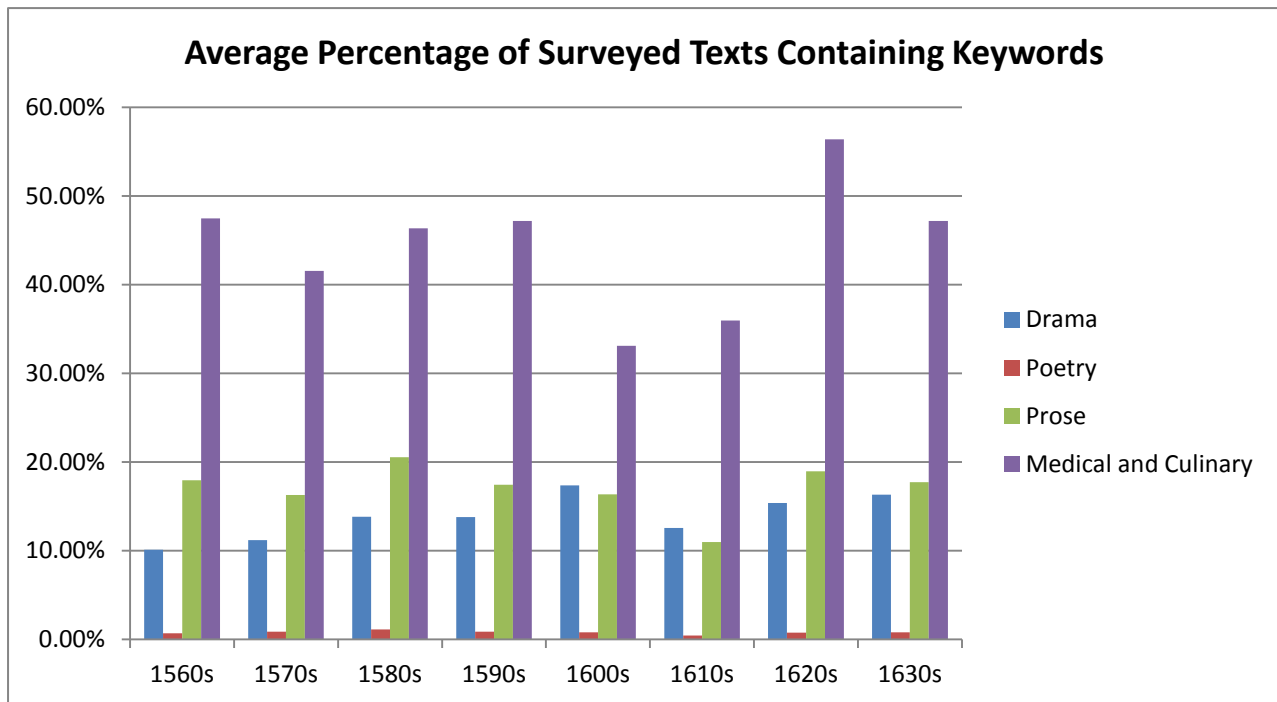


Fig. 1.1

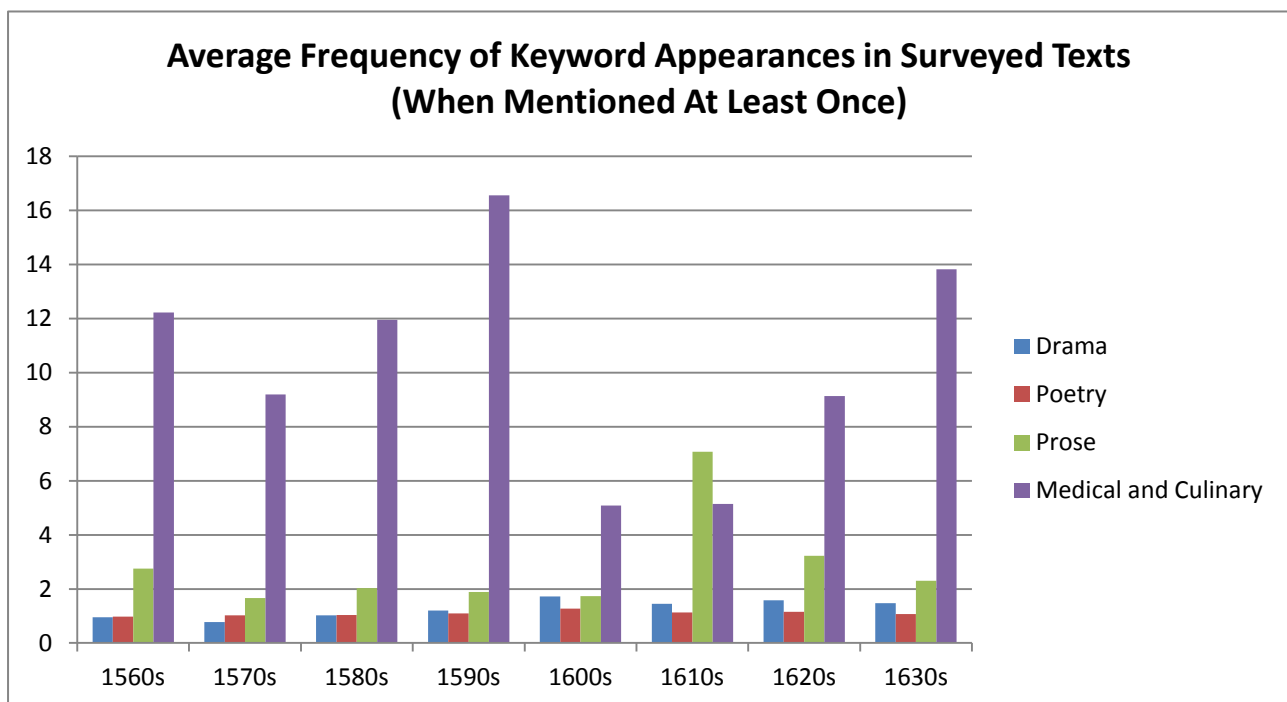


Fig. 1.2

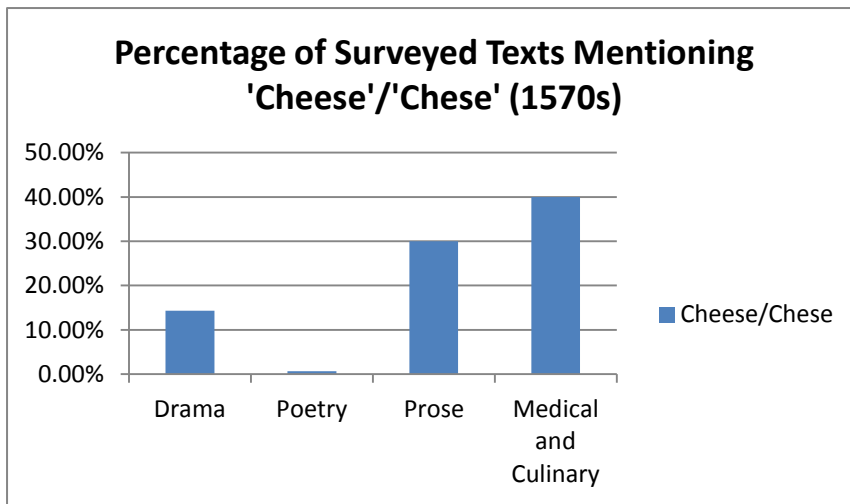


Fig. 1.3

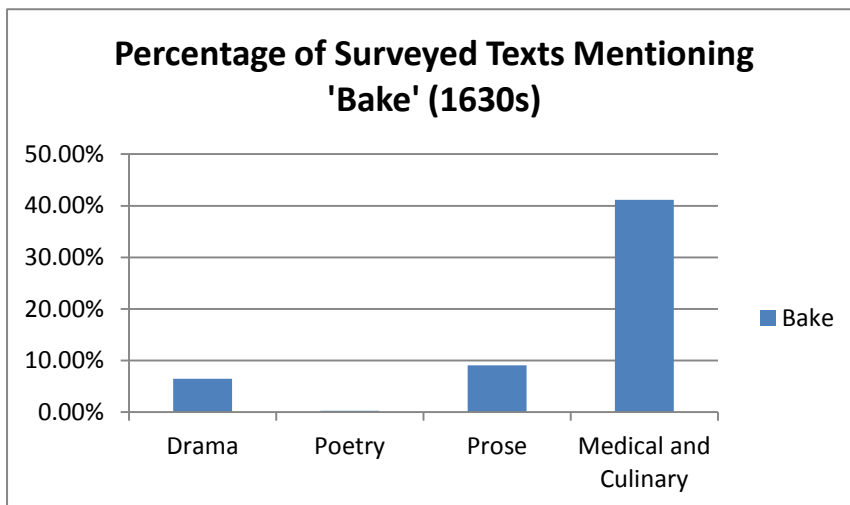


Fig. 1.4

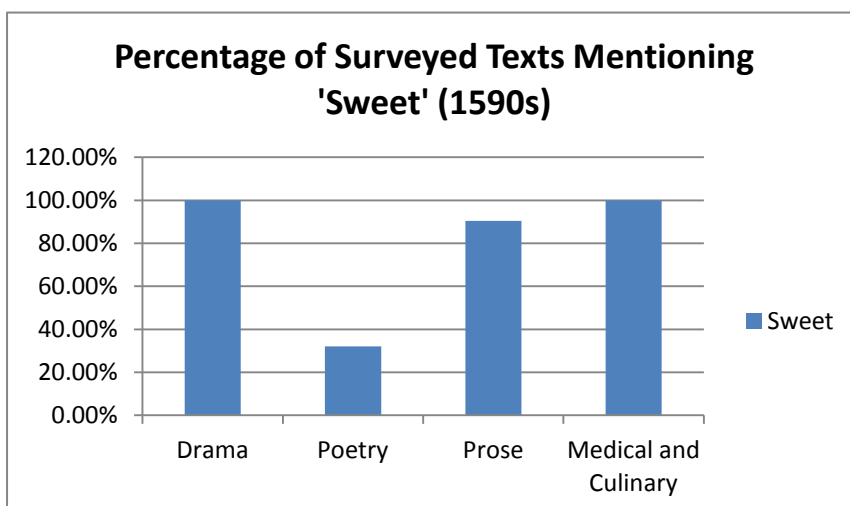


Fig. 1.5

One conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that these keywords are in general no more significant to Renaissance drama than they are to contemporary prose. However, the

clear and consistent disparity between the use of culinary terminology in poetry and that seen in other literary forms indicates that food is not a favoured subject for poetic exploration, for reasons which manifestly do not deter early modern dramatists from featuring it in their work. Therefore, although word-frequency analysis alone indicates no particularly close link between food and drama, it does reveal a contemporary correlation between literary form and keyword usage. That this divergence in keyword frequency does not simply reflect a coincidental disparity between the interests of Renaissance poets and those of contemporary playwrights becomes apparent through a comparison between the appearances of keywords in poetic and dramatic works produced by the same author. For the period under consideration, LION lists 62 plays and 175 poems as belonging to Shakespeare. Analysis of these works reveals that keywords appear in 19.85% of Shakespeare's plays, but only in 0.57% of his poems, with this significant difference evidencing Shakespeare's (perhaps unconscious) awareness of food's different relationships to poetry and drama. This pattern holds true for the Renaissance poet-playwright Thomas Heywood, with an average of 12.96% of Heywood's plays containing culinary keywords as opposed to only 2.01% of his poems.⁸ These data strongly suggest that the use of medical and culinary terminology in early modern literature is at times informed by literary motives, rather than by cultural, political, or religious trends alone.

There are, of course, many possible explanations for such discrepancies in keyword usage that have little to do with meta-theatricality. They could, for instance, result from authors' familiarity with the demands of the (potentially distinct) target audiences for drama and poetry, a theory which would explain the statistical differences between plays and poems

⁸ Ben Jonson, of course, was also a prolific poet-playwright, but LION classifies the vast majority of his poems as having been printed after 1640, despite the fact that many were written and published much earlier. Although his dramatic and poetic works therefore cannot be compared within the parameters of this investigation, when his plays printed before 1640 are set alongside his poems published between 1640 and 1649 they demonstrate the same pattern as that observed in Shakespeare and Heywood's work, with an average of 12.13% of his plays containing keywords compared to only 0.70% of his poems.

written by the same author. More informative than the prevalence of these keywords in any particular genre are comparative trends in the usage of keywords, which provide considerably greater insight into the factors informing fluctuations in their popularity. For example, there are some words whose appearances follow a very similar pattern in all of the literary forms considered in this survey, such as the word ‘sugar’. In both prose and drama, ‘sugar’ usage peaks in the 1580s, declines throughout the following three decades, increases again in the 1620s, and finally declines once more in the 1630s, a trend very similar to that seen in contemporary medical and culinary literature (Fig. 1.6). While uses of ‘sugar’ peak earlier in poetry than in prose or drama, in the 1570s rather than the 1580s, they otherwise follow the same pattern. Although ‘sugar’ is mentioned more often in some of these forms than others, its uniform pattern of fluctuation across the different genres implies that all are using ‘sugar’ in response to the same stimuli. Indeed, this particular trend is at least partially explicable by fluctuations in the contemporary availability of and demand for sugar. Though regularly in use in elite meals throughout the Middle Ages, the expense of importing sugar rendered it inaccessible to most households before the later sixteenth century.⁹ This relative exoticism, as well as accounting for sugar’s comparative rarity in prose, poetry, and drama of the 1560s, also explains its popularity in medical and culinary literature of the same decade and into the 1570s, with unfamiliar or expensive products regularly being marketed as possessing remedial or health-giving qualities in this era.¹⁰ However, in a process which has been succinctly outlined by Barbara Sebek, the evolution of early modern trade routes in the later sixteenth century rendered sugar and sugary food and drink readily accessible to a much wider range of English consumers.¹¹ Sugar’s increased availability – and its resulting

⁹ Peter C. D. Brears, *Cooking and Dining in Medieval England* (London: Prospect Books, 2008), p. 343.

¹⁰ Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 147.

¹¹ Barbara Sebek, “‘Wine and Sugar of the Best and Fairest’: Canary, the Canaries, and the Global in Windsor”, in *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England*, ed. by David B. Goldstein and Amy L. Tigner (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2016), pp. 41–56 (pp. 49–50).

familiarity as a point of reference to middle-class readers and playgoers – may have contributed to its growing literary popularity up to the 1580s – at which point, perhaps, its novelty begins to wane.

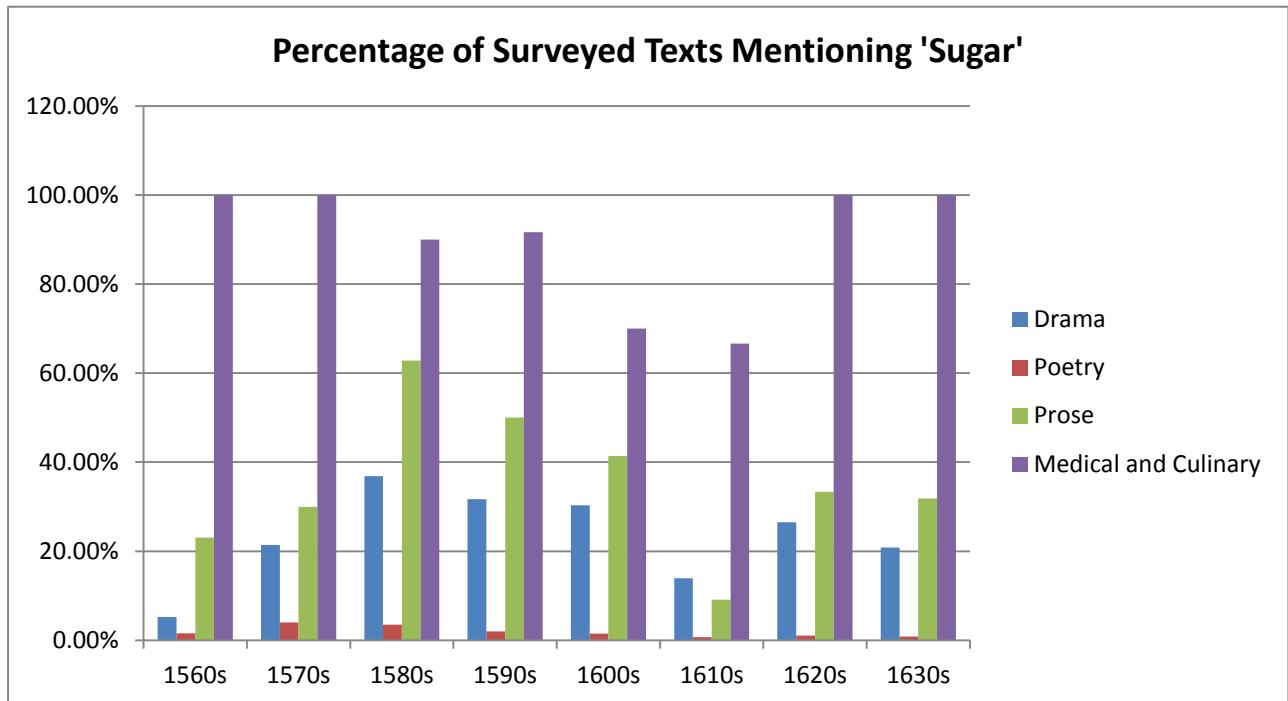


Fig. 1.6

If fluctuations in the appearances of all the keywords under consideration were similarly attributable to cultural causes such as changes to the availability, popularity, or function of the items or practices to which they refer, their uses in drama, poetry, and prose would correspond in the way they do for 'sugar'. It is therefore intriguing that for many keywords this is not the case. Evidence that early modern plays do not simply reflect contemporary social and cultural realities in their deployment of culinary and sensory terms appears firstly in the fact that some prominent items in early modern medical and culinary literature are almost entirely absent from concurrently published drama. The word 'vinegar', for instance, appears in every single culinary and medical text published in five of the eight decades covered by this study, and in a minimum of 80.00% of these texts published in the remaining three decades (Fig. 1.7). By contrast, the percentage of plays containing 'vinegar'

peaks in the 1630s at only 11.51%, and in some earlier decades this number is considerably lower – just 3.33% in the 1590s. Moreover, even at its zenith in the 1630s ‘vinegar’ is used only an average of 1.19 times in the plays in which it features at all, compared to an average of 43.75 times in medical and culinary texts from the same decade (Fig. 1.8). The case is much the same for the popular ingredients ‘fennel’, ‘saffron’, and ‘ginger’, suggesting that these items are of similarly limited dramatic interest in this era (Figs. 1.9, 1.10, and 1.11). These statistics clearly reveal that Renaissance dramatists are not beholden to culinary trends when it comes to their use of keywords, deploying and dismissing them in accordance with dramatic requirements rather than straightforwardly reflecting contemporary cultural realities in their work.

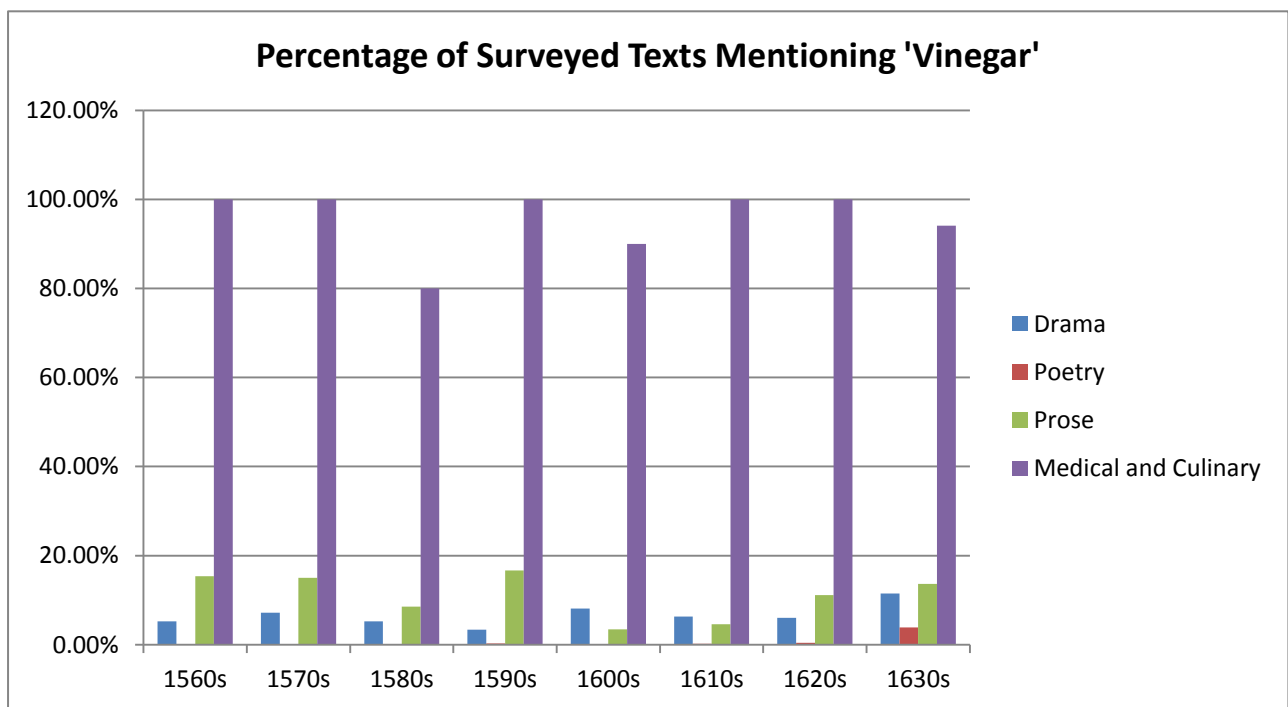


Fig. 1.7

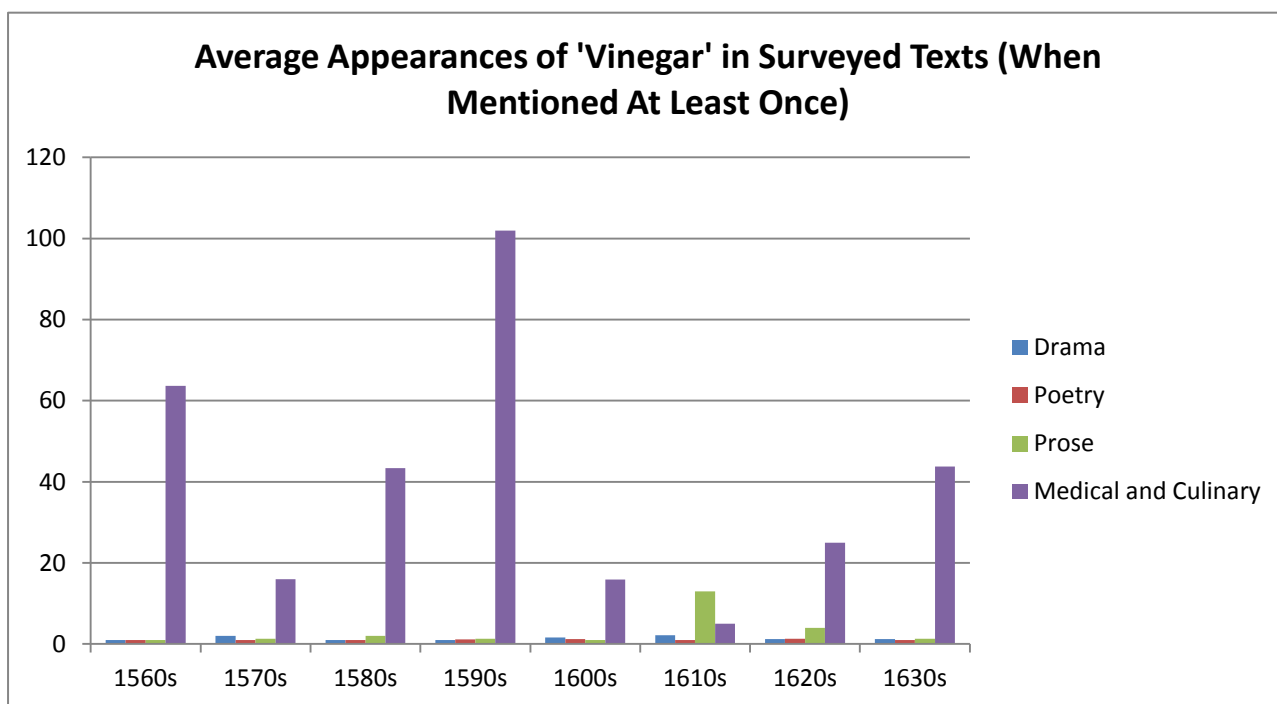


Fig. 1.8

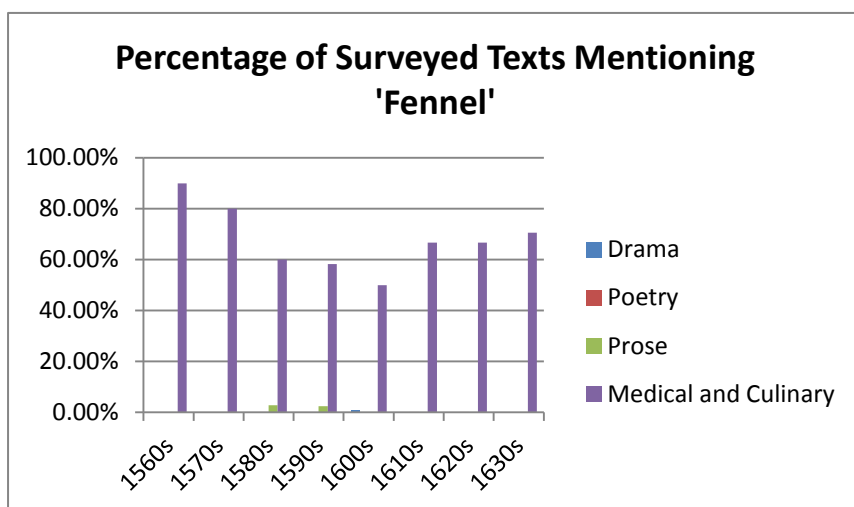


Fig. 1.9

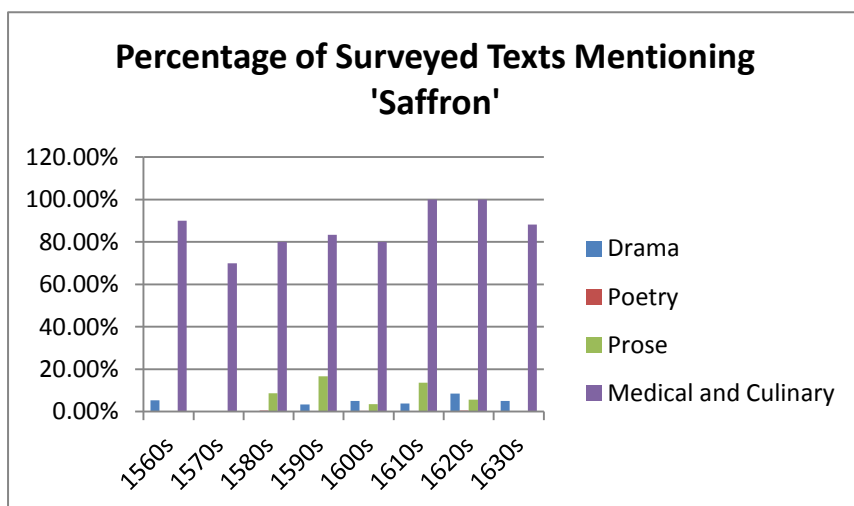


Fig. 1.10

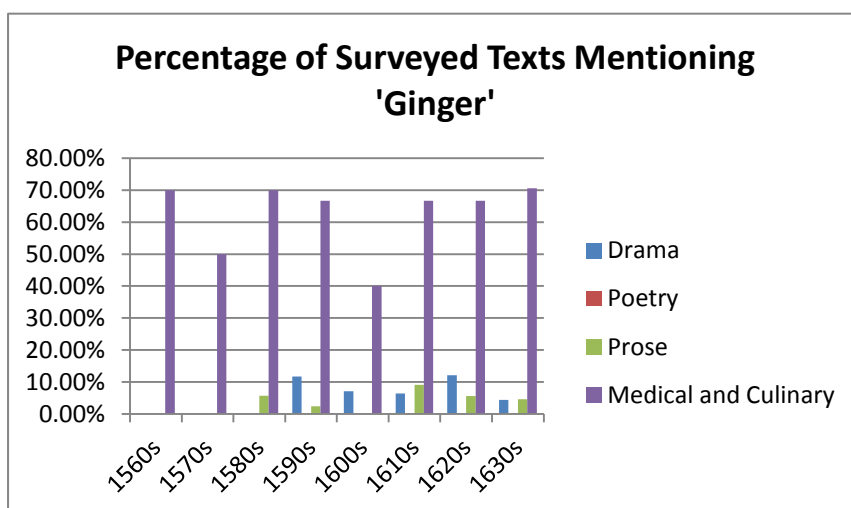


Fig. 1.11

However, variations in keywords' usage patterns in drama compared to other literary forms do not necessarily indicate meta-theatrical significance, as becomes evident upon consideration of the word 'venison'. Although trends in the usage of 'venison' are subtler than those of some of the other keywords considered in this investigation, it is nonetheless plain that it does not fluctuate in drama in accordance with changes in medical and culinary literature (Fig. 1.12). In the 1570s and 1580s, 'venison' appears in 20.00% and 30.00% of the medical and culinary texts included in this study respectively, yet it does not feature in any dramatic works throughout these decades. Then, when appearances of 'venison' are increasing in medical and culinary literature between the 1600s and 1620s, the amount of plays in which it is mentioned falls from the already modest 15.15% to just 6.02%. These conflicting trends indicate that dramatic uses of 'venison' are informed by something other than culinary practices alone, yet further inspection reveals that the motivating factor is not meta-theatrical applicability. Instead, the diverging frequency pattern of 'venison' can be explained with reference to the fluctuating popularity of different forms of drama throughout this period. Indeed, from the 1590s onward, the frequency pattern of 'venison' corresponds almost exactly to changes in the proportion of comedies published in each decade (Fig. 1.13). This fact is intriguing in and of itself. As a foodstuff available almost exclusively to upper-class consumers at this time, appearances of 'venison' might be expected to correlate to the

prevalence of those plays which focus more intensely on higher-ranking characters, such as tragedies or histories, but this is not at all what we find (Fig. 1.14). These data may therefore suggest that Renaissance comedies, rather than accurately recreating the lived experiences of those most likely to be in attendance, engage in a form of theatrical wish-fulfilment via the usurpation of conventional (or stereotypical) elements of aristocratic culture for the entertainment and/or edification of the theatregoing public. This is certainly the case in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (pub. 1608), in which recurrent references to stealing venison challenge the aristocracy's exclusive claim to this meat.¹² Not all instances are so radical. In the earlier play *Jacob and Esau* (c. 1550s), Rebecca's assertion that she will transform her son Jacob's 'kyd' into 'venison' draws on and upholds the conventional disparity between the status of these meats – and, implicitly, their consumers – in order to emphasise the literally miraculous power of Rebecca's culinary artistry.¹³ The case of 'venison' therefore demonstrates that statistical divergences between the use of keywords in Renaissance drama and that seen in other contemporary texts, even whilst offering potentially intriguing insights into early modern plays, are not always indicative of self-reflexivity.

¹² Anonymous, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (London: Henry Ballard, 1608), sigs B1^r, C1^v, E1^r, F2^v, and F3^v.

¹³ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1568), IV. 6. 21 and 25.

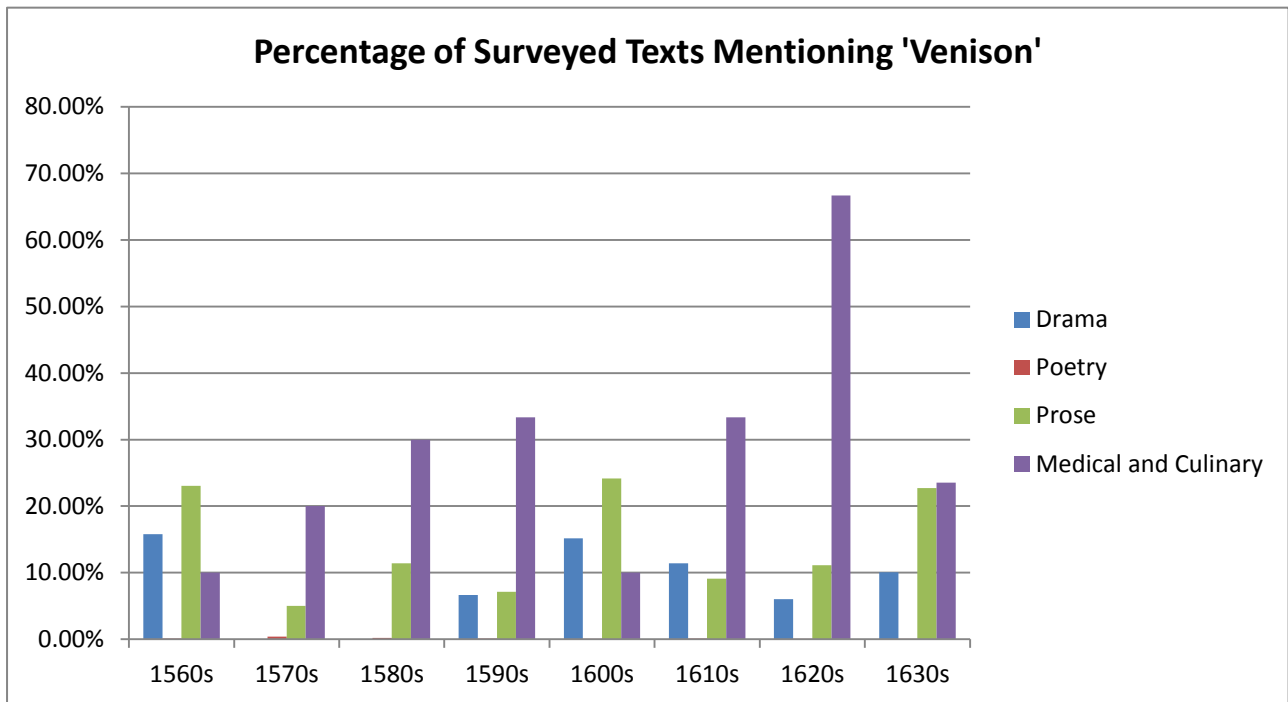


Fig. 1.12

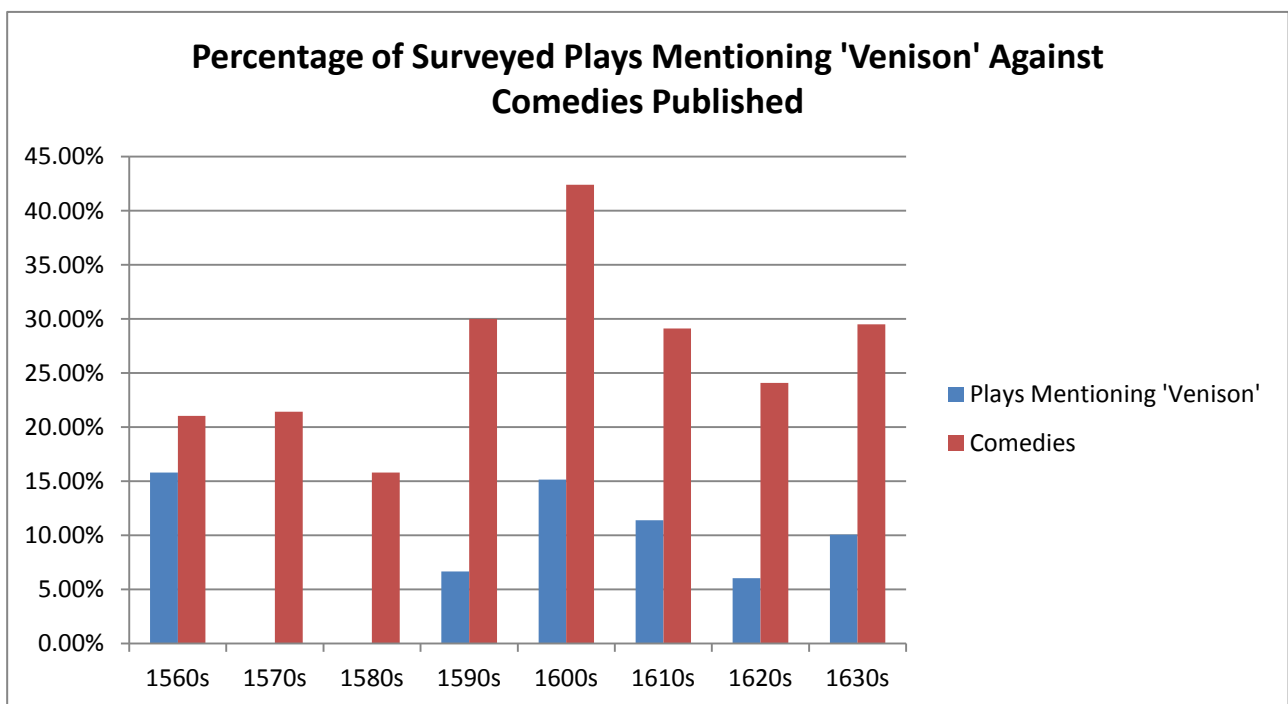


Fig. 1.13

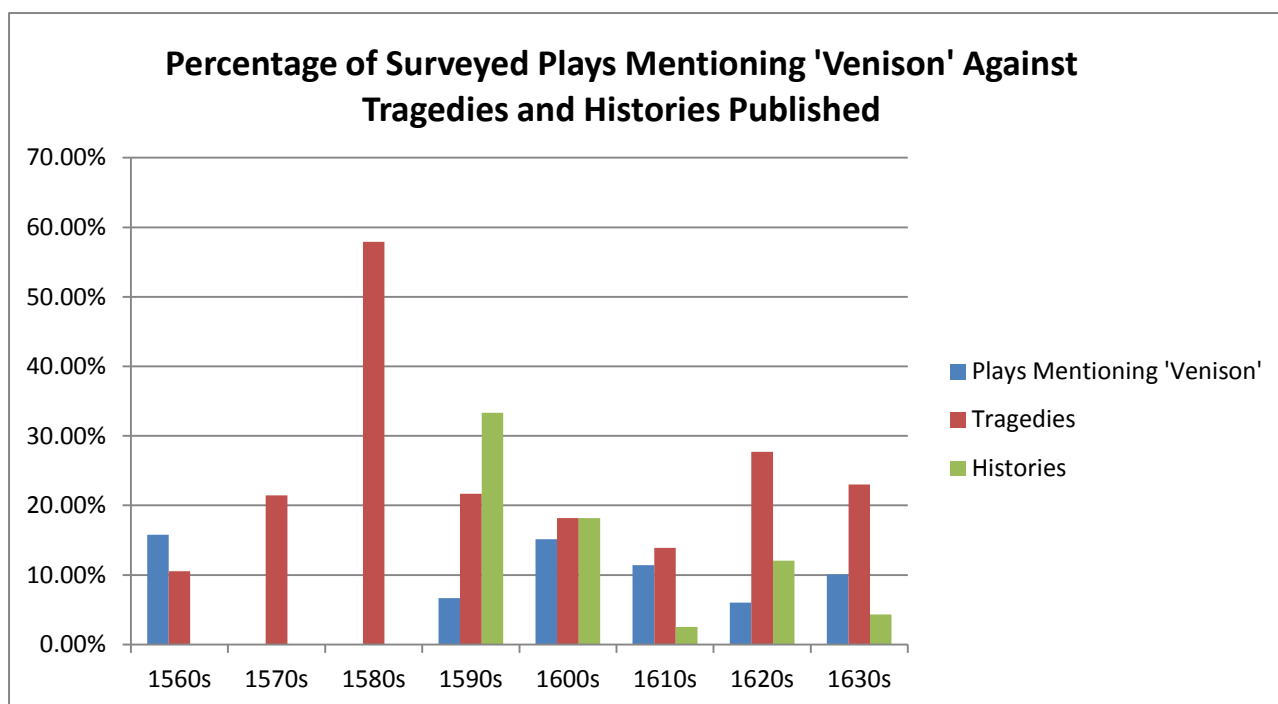


Fig. 1.14

Further information can be gained from authors' deployment of sensory language in early modern literature, with the relationship between different sensory terms across different literary forms and within drama itself suggesting playwrights' particular interest in gustatory sensation. In all eight decades covered by this study, 'taste' appears in a higher proportion of plays, poems, and prose texts than 'smell', indicating the former's greater literary attraction whilst initially evidencing no particularly close connection between either of these sensory words and performances (Figs. 1.15 and 1.16). This is especially intriguing in light of the fact that 'smell' might be expected to appear more often in plays than in other contemporary literary forms owing to its more obvious dramatic resonances. Performances themselves, after all, are more likely to possess an olfactory than a gustatory dimension, and, as a result of its closer proximity to the distal senses of sight and hearing in the early modern sensory hierarchy, smell also provides a conceptually closer parallel than taste for the reception of the visual and auditory information of which theatrical productions are predominantly comprised.¹⁴ That 'taste' nevertheless appears more frequently than 'smell' in contemporary

¹⁴ Elizabeth L. Swann, *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 9.

plays therefore suggests that there is something less literal about this word which recommends it to contemporary playwrights above the logically superior ‘smell’.

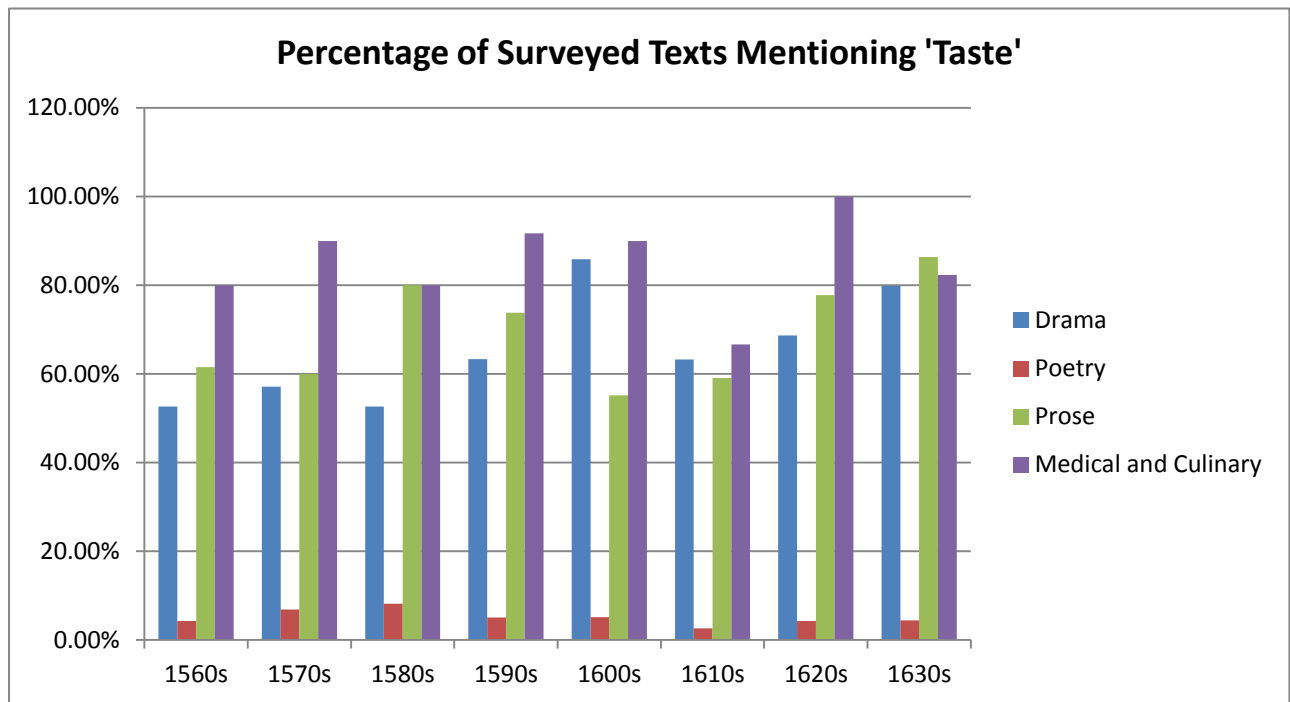


Fig. 1.15

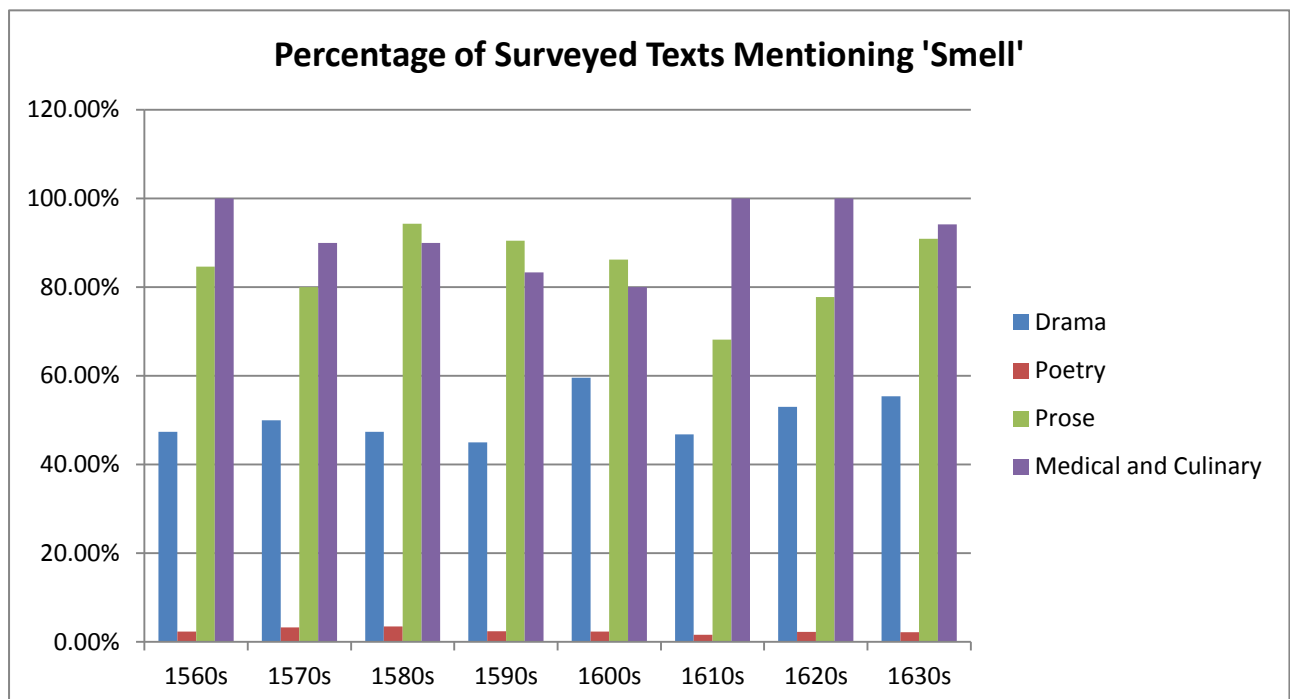


Fig. 1.16

A closer look at the statistics supports this conclusion. Although the percentage of contemporary prose texts and poems containing the word ‘taste’ steadily decreases between the 1580s and the 1600s, the percentage of plays featuring ‘taste’ increases significantly across the same decades, from 52.63% to 85.86%. The proportion of medical and culinary texts containing the word ‘taste’ also demonstrates a net increase in these decades, but only from 80.00% to 90.00%, plainly marking its uptick in drama as disproportionate. Furthermore, although ‘taste’ never becomes more popular in drama than in medical and culinary literature, the difference between how frequently it appears in the two forms narrows considerably over time. Indeed, after 1600 this difference is less than 5.00% in every decade except the 1620s – for which the data collected from medical and culinary literature is, as previously noted, unreliable. The percentage of plays in which ‘smell’ is mentioned also increases from the 1560s to the 1600s despite its appearances in prose and in medical and culinary literature falling between the same decades. Nevertheless, from the 1560s through to the 1630s ‘smell’ always appears in a far lower percentage of plays than medical texts, with the two never reaching the close statistical proximity seen in the word ‘taste’ (the narrowest distance between the two being 20.40% in the 1600s). Additionally, although ‘taste’ is only slightly more common than ‘smell’ in plays from 1560 to 1589, thereafter the difference between the two becomes significantly more pronounced as mentions of ‘taste’ increase at a markedly faster rate than instances of ‘smell’. A similar increase does occur in prose, but does not begin until considerably later, in the 1610s rather than the 1590s, and in poetry uses of ‘taste’ actually demonstrate a general downward trend, appearing in only 1.05% more poems than ‘smell’ in the 1610s. Taken together, these statistics clearly show that after the 1580s references to ‘taste’ become disproportionately high in drama compared to both uses of ‘taste’ in other forms of early modern literature and dramatic applications of the comparable

sensory term ‘smell’. Dramatists’ meta-theatrical application of ‘taste’ would constitute one possible explanation for these trends.

Evidence for early modern drama’s meta-theatrical interest in culinary terminology also emerges from appearances of the word ‘feast’ in contemporary literature. Throughout the entire time period under consideration here, ‘feast’ is consistently more common in prose and drama than it is in poetry and medical and culinary literature, arising in drama more than in any other form between 1590 and 1629 (Fig. 1.17). This is unsurprising, with its connotations of extravagant performativity instilling feasting with considerable dramaturgical potential whilst simultaneously distancing it from the more pragmatic concerns of medical and culinary manuals. Again, what is more intriguing is the rhythm with which its usage fluctuates across these decades. Though related more erratically in the 1560s and 1570s, from the 1580s onward uses of ‘feast’ follow the same pattern in poetry, prose, and medical and culinary literature – increasing in the 1590s, decreasing until the 1610s, and increasing again throughout the 1620s and 1630s. Though the initial surge in uses of ‘feast’ between the 1580s and 1590s is also apparent in drama, the amount of plays containing this word continues to increase until the 1620s, reaching a peak of 74.70%, a number which falls only by 1.32% in the 1630s. In other words, between the 1590s and 1610s ‘feast’ becomes steadily more popular in drama even as its prominence diminishes in other literary forms.

Although Renaissance drama is naturally more concerned with the theatrical elements of dining represented by the word ‘feast’ than are other forms of contemporary literature, a similar trend is not apparent for words denoting culinary implements such as ‘cup’, ‘spoon’, and ‘trencher’ (Figs. 1.18, 1.19, and 1.20). As such, drama’s preoccupation with feasting is not entirely explicable as symptomatic of its greater interest in culinary materiality in general, again raising the possibility that this interest is meta-theatrically motivated. Indeed, it is noteworthy that divergences between dramatists’ and other writers’ uses of the word ‘feast’

begin to emerge in around the 1580s, the same decade in which similar discrepancies appear regarding the word 'taste'. This is of particular interest because the 1580s also saw the publication of several prominent anti-theatrical tracts such as those by Anthony Munday, Stephen Gosson, and Philip Stubbes, marking this as a decade in which theatrical practices were subjected to particularly intensive scrutiny. It is therefore possible that contemporary playwrights' use of words such as 'taste' and 'feast' constitutes a response to these debates, or to another stimulus which also inspired the tracts. Determining what this catalyst may have been will be a major focal point of this thesis.

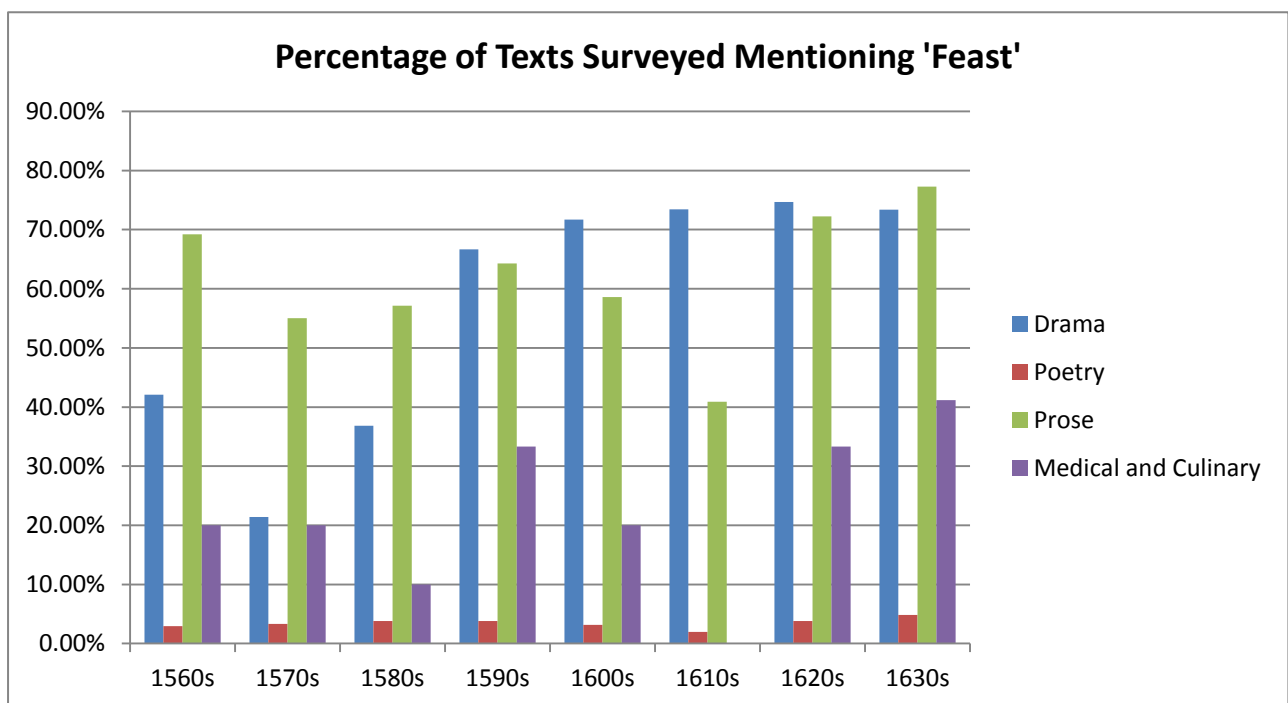


Fig. 1.17

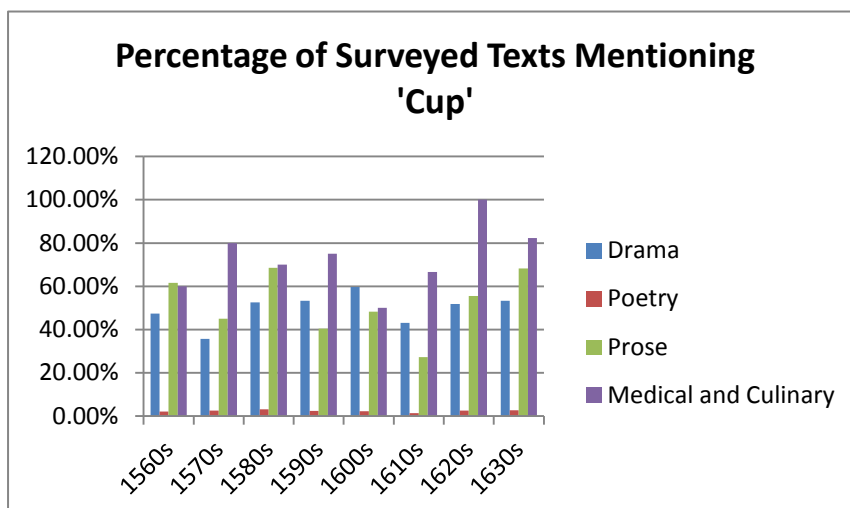


Fig. 1.18

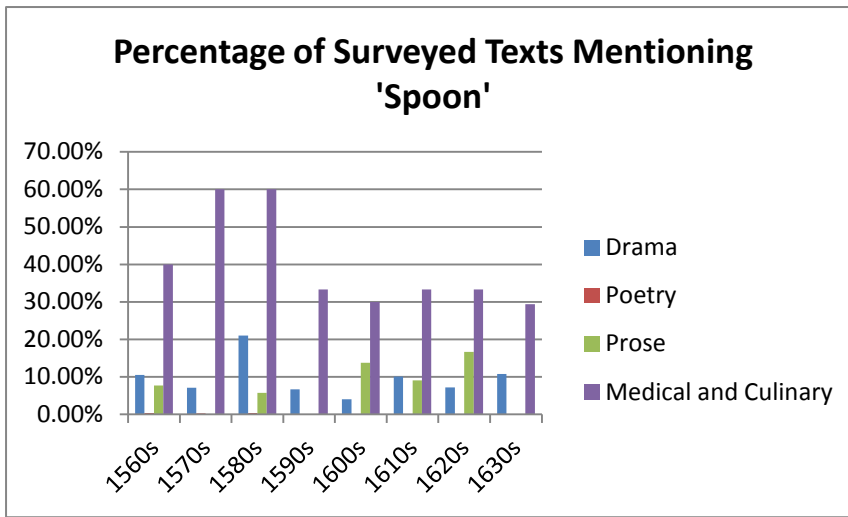


Fig. 1.19

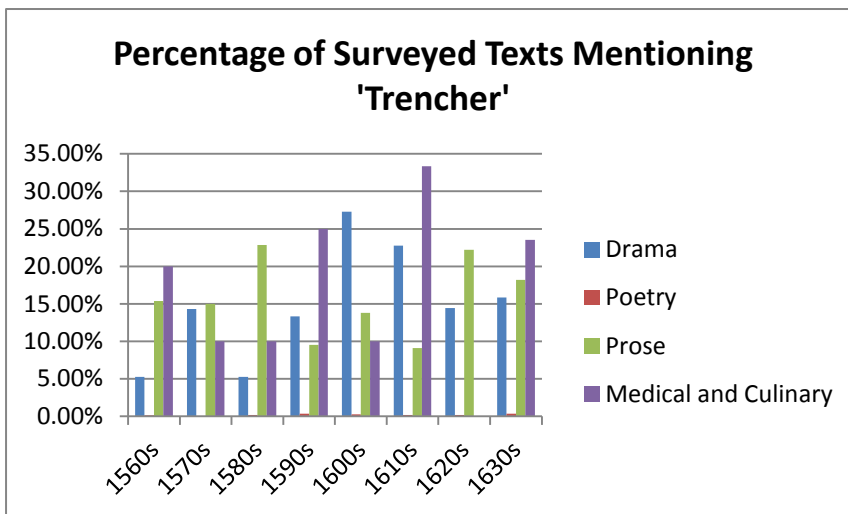


Fig. 1.20

Further evidence for this claim appears in playwrights' usage of the word 'banquet', a term which we might expect to display a frequency pattern very similar to that of the closely related term 'feast'. However, 'banquet' actually follows a very similar trend in drama as in poetry, prose, and medical and culinary literature – one which roughly corresponds with that of 'feast' in non-dramatic works (Fig. 1.21). Moreover, although the amount of plays containing 'banquet' climbs between the 1580s and 1600s, this number does not show the same sharp spike as the term 'feast' in the 1590s, resulting in a considerable disparity between the frequency of these words in drama after this decade (with 'banquet' appearing in 36.15% fewer texts than 'feast' in the 1620s, for instance). This strongly suggests that dramatists did not see the two words as equally well-suited to their purposes, with closer scrutiny of the subtly different valences of 'feast' and 'banquet' thereby allowing for a clearer

view of what their aims may have been. Although at times used synonymously with ‘feast’, in Renaissance England ‘banquet’ could also denote something like a dessert course following the main dishes comprising upper-class meals.¹⁵ These sweet banquets would often take place in separate, more private settings than those utilised for the earlier courses, and were sometimes even accompanied by music and performances.¹⁶ Although banqueting thereby holds some meta-theatrical connotations, it is a practice far more tonally compatible with the private masques performed for (and by) members of elite households than with the plays performed in the rowdy atmosphere of the public playhouses, from which the vast majority of the data are taken (with only 29 of the 512 dramatic works surveyed listed as ‘masques’ on LION). Despite being similarly lavish, feasting in many cases constitutes a more public and raucous form of food consumption than banqueting, and might therefore be said to offer a more accurate parallel for the experiences of playgoers in contemporary commercial theatres. This being the case, it is particularly significant that ‘feast’, not ‘banquet’, is employed differently by dramatists than by other early modern authors. Of course, statistical evidence alone cannot reveal whether ‘feast’ or any other keyword is being employed in this way or not, and exploring this idea further will be the focus of later chapters. Nevertheless, that a word with such clear meta-theatrical potential appears with disproportionate prevalence in drama compared to other contemporary literature, and that it begins to do so during a decade in which theatricality was particularly at issue, offers substantial support to the argument that food serves a meta-theatrical purpose in early modern English drama.

¹⁵ Louise Stewart, ‘Social Status and Classicism in the Visual and Material Culture of the Sweet Banquet in Early Modern England’, *The Historical Journal*, 61.4 (2018), 913–42 (pp. 917–18 and 927).

¹⁶ Stewart, ‘Social Status and Classicism’, pp. 917–18 and 927; Sara Mueller, ‘Early Modern Banquet Receipts and Women’s Theatre’, *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 24.1 (2011), 106–30.

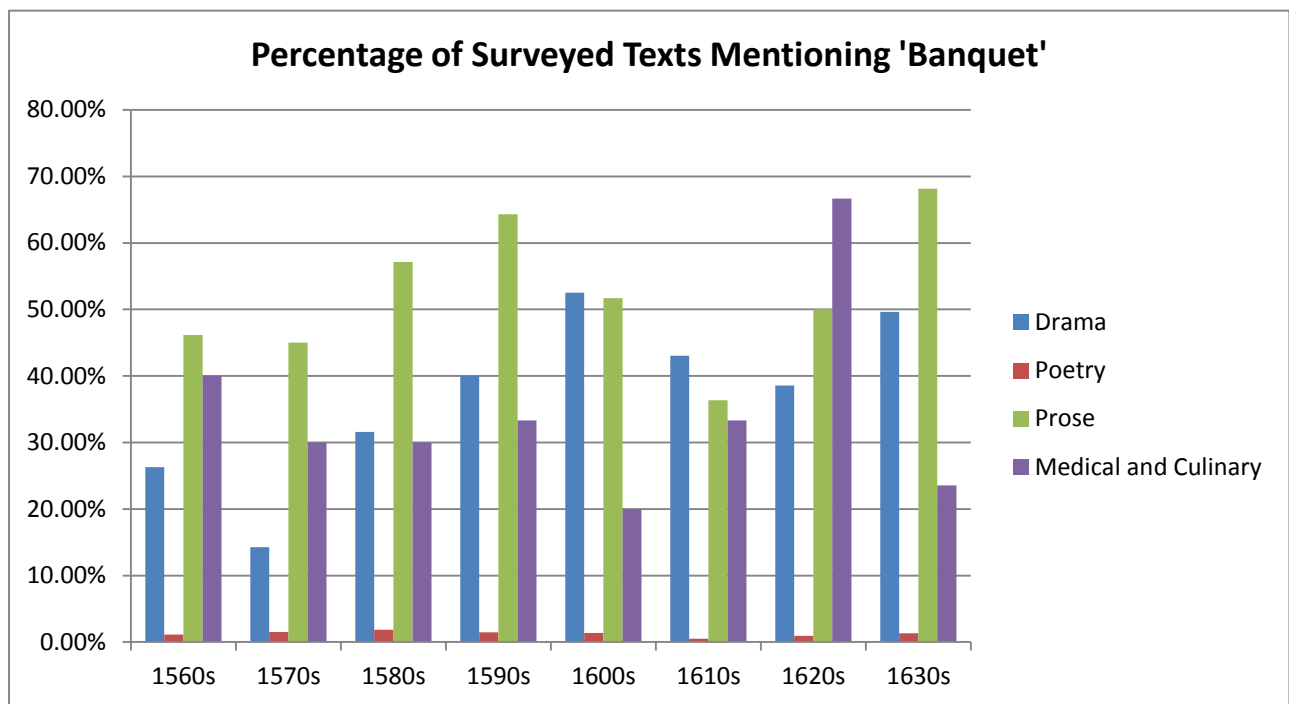


Fig. 1.21

Another culinary keyword which provides insight into early modern playwrights' attitudes towards drama is 'honey', another term whose popularity fluctuates differently in drama compared to other contemporary literary forms. 'Honey' is prevalent in medical and culinary literature in the early decades of the period under consideration, appearing in every such text included in this study between the 1560s and 1580s (Fig. 1.22). After this point, its popularity gradually diminishes until the 1620s before resurging in the 1630s. This pattern is largely reflected in early modern prose and poetry, where uses of 'honey' rise until the 1570s and 1580s respectively, decrease until the 1610s, climb again in the 1620s, and finally decrease once more in the 1630s. In drama, however, between 1560 and 1609 'honey' exhibits a frequency pattern not only different from but in fact diametrically opposed to that seen in other literature. Despite initially appearing in a low percentage of plays, 'honey' steadily increases in popularity in drama until the 1600s even as its appearances in other works throughout these decades fall. As with 'feast', the distinguishing features of 'honey' may provide some insight into why this is the case. For one, honey constitutes a more natural and widely available form of food sweetener than sugar, something that may in the early

modern period have been detrimental to its social image. As Ken Albala points out, it was a persistent belief in this era that the more civilised a society became, ‘the more refined and “artificial” its food should be.’¹⁷ It would therefore be wrong to assume that honey’s greater proximity to nature indicated its greater healthfulness, with this modern rationale obscuring the Renaissance impression of honey as wild and unrefined, and so as potentially dangerous. Furthermore, although in the late medieval and early Renaissance period sweetness was considered a marker of a food’s digestibility and wholesomeness, this perspective came under scrutiny in the middle of the sixteenth century, with sweet foods coming to be considered as deceptive temptations which should be resisted.¹⁸ Indeed, Renaissance texts regularly highlight honey’s dangers by drawing explicit attention to the ability of its sweetness to conceal the bitter taste of poison.¹⁹ Therefore, as well as inviting parallels with dramatic creativity through its association with the industrious productivity of bees, ‘honey’ functions as a reminder that sensory experiences can be simultaneously pleasant and harmful, and indeed that such pleasantness can conceal harmful effects. Dramatists’ atypical interest in ‘honey’ thereby coincides once again with the product’s meta-theatrical potential, with the fact that usages of ‘honey’ increase as the product gains a more negative reputation possibly indicating an attempt by playwrights to emphasise the potential hazards involved in consuming drama.

¹⁷ Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 92.

¹⁸ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, pp. 66 and 179.

¹⁹ See, for example, Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), sig. A2^r; William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), I, pp. 333–67 (II. 2. 29–31); Thomas Dekker, *The Second Part of The Honest Whore* (London: Elizabeth Allde, 1630), III. 1. 66.

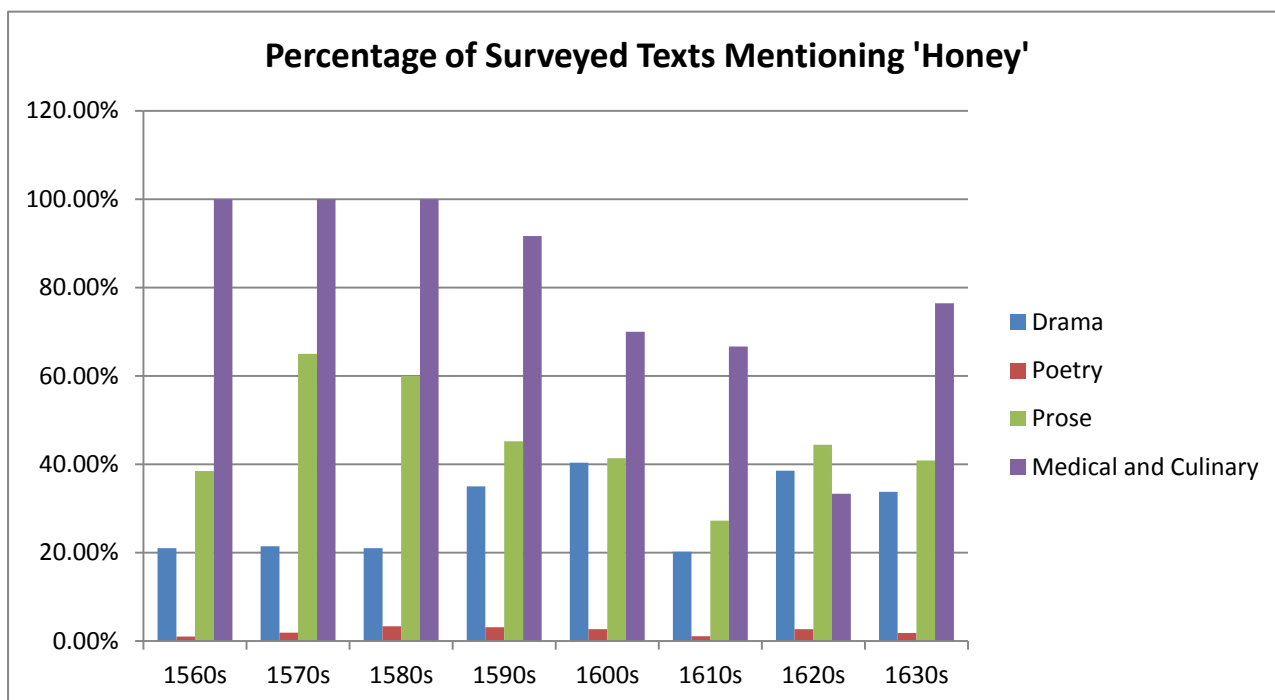


Fig. 1.22

Findings: Medicine, Disease, Poison, and Tobacco

Further evidence for dramatists' intriguing ambivalence towards theatricality emerges from their employment of words specifically associated with medicine and disease. Fluctuations in contemporary writers' use of the term 'physic' are particularly illuminating in this respect. From the 1560s to the 1610s, changes in the percentage of prose texts featuring this word correspond exactly to those seen in medical literature, indicating that 'physic' is being used in these works in accordance with contemporary medicinal developments (Fig. 1.23). Notably, uses of 'physic' demonstrate a definite downward trend in both of these literary categories, which continues in prose into the 1630s and which is also apparent in uses of the related words 'medicine' and 'remedy' (Figs. 1.24 and 1.25). However, whilst 'remedy' and 'medicine' follow the same pattern in drama as they do in these other literary forms, the percentage of plays containing the word 'physic' increases in every decade between the 1560s and 1600s, and then again (after a slight decline in the 1610s) in the 1620s and 1630s. The marked disparity in the frequency patterns of these three related words invites a consideration of why 'physic' is the only one whose trend in drama diverges from that in

poetry and prose. As a general term encompassing a range of healing procedures and practices, ‘physic’ is clearly distinguished from the narrower term ‘medicine’, which denotes more specifically a remedial substance to be ingested or placed upon the body. ‘Physic’ is, however, exclusively associated with the treatment of human bodies and minds, separating it from the more all-purpose ‘remedy’, which can refer to the amendment of unfortunate situations as well as to the healing of physical ailments. What emerges from this assessment of the slightly different meanings of these words is that, of the three, ‘physic’ is the most readily applicable to drama itself. Although clearly not a ‘medicine’ in the strictest sense of the term, drama has from antiquity been imbued with the ability to promote spectators’ mental and physical wellbeing, purging them of unwanted humours and unruly emotions through the process of *catharsis*.²⁰ That ‘physic’ is also the only one of these words to demonstrate an upward trend in Renaissance drama – and that it does not do so in contemporary poetry or prose – therefore seems more than coincidental, appearing to suggest early modern dramatists’ particular interest in drama’s longstanding association with the promotion and preservation of health. However, to assume that this identification is straightforwardly positive would neglect to account for the ambivalent status of ‘physic’ in Renaissance England, its potential curative powers being offset by a contemporary awareness of its ability to cause harm if incorrectly administered or ineptly prescribed.²¹ As such, the disproportionate increase in uses of ‘physic’ in plays beginning in the late sixteenth century may signal playwrights’ interest in drama’s ability to both heal and harm its consumers. The apparent absence of this association from drama produced in the earliest decades covered by this study once again suggests the existence of an external catalyst for this trend.

²⁰ Thomas Rist, ‘Catharsis as “purgation” in Shakespearean Drama’, in *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*, ed. by Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 138–54 (p. 139).

²¹ Tanya Pollard, “‘No Faith in Physic’: Masquerades of Medicine Onstage and Off”, in *Disease, Diagnosis and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. by Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 29–41 (p. 31).

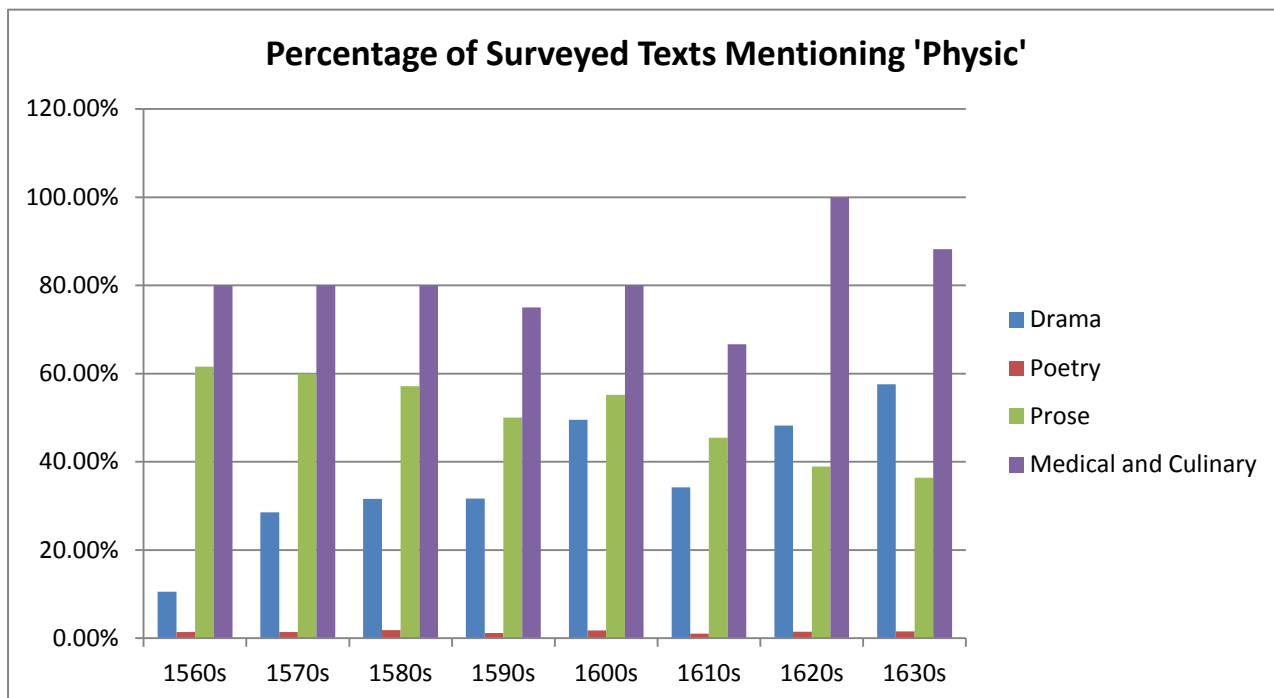


Fig. 1.23

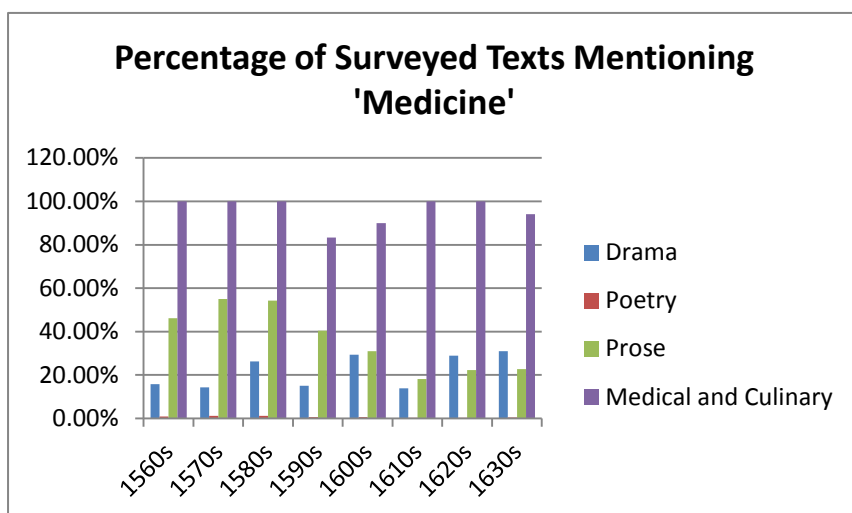


Fig. 1.24

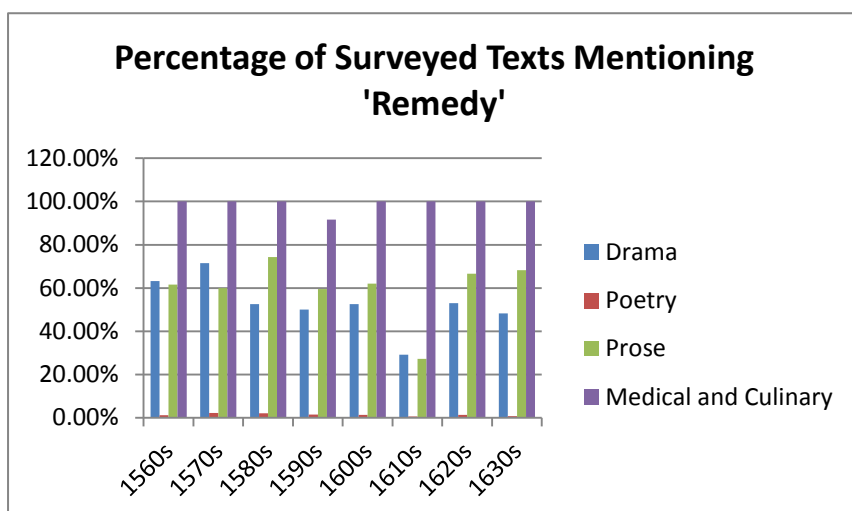


Fig. 1.25

Renaissance playwrights' interest in the complexity of drama's social function is still more apparent in their use of the word 'plague', a term with moral and emotional as well as medical significance in early modern England. At first glance, the statistics relating to 'plague' do not seem especially revealing, with its appearances following the same general pattern in drama as they do in prose and medical literature (Fig. 1.26). However, the timing of the occasional discrepancies between the different forms is significant. Although 'plague' is mentioned in a high percentage of medical texts throughout the entire period under consideration, the three decades in which it is most prevalent – the 1560s, 1600s, and 1620s – are all decades in which England experienced especially serious plague outbreaks.²² The trend in drama, however, is decidedly different. Out of the eight decades considered here, uses of 'plague' in drama are at their lowest in the 1560s, with only 31.58% of plays published in this decade referring to the disease which appeared in 90.00% of contemporaneous medical texts and which was ravaging the country's population at the time. This discrepancy may be an effect of LION's aforementioned arrangement of plays based on their date of publication rather than performance. Although this system affects every decade, its influence on mentions of 'plague' is likely to be particularly extreme in the 1560s due to the relatively plague-free decades by which it was preceded and from which many of its printed texts originate.²³ Whilst assigning precise dates to sixteenth-century plays is notoriously difficult, it is safe to say that, of the nineteen plays LION registers as belonging to the 1560s, at least four – and perhaps as many as nine – were first performed in the 1550s or even earlier, potentially skewing the data for 'plague' in this decade.²⁴ However, a similar discrepancy in 'plague' usage occurs again in the 1620s, with 'plague' appearing in every medical text surveyed but only in 49.40% of plays printed between 1620 and 1629. Once

²² Charles Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain from A.D. 664 to the Extinction of Plague* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), pp. 338–39, 470, and 507–10.

²³ Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain*, p. 304.

²⁴ These four being the Anonymous *Jacob and Esau* (c. 1550s) and *Nice Wanton* (c. 1550), Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1552), and Richard Wever's *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1550).

again, this data must be interpreted cautiously, with the fact that only three medical texts met the criteria for inclusion in the data for this decade rendering the fact that they all mention ‘plague’ less informative than it might have been had the sample size been larger. Nevertheless, the 1620s did see a major plague outbreak, and the fact remains that this does not seem to have captured the attention of contemporary dramatists. Indeed, the percentage of plays mentioning ‘plague’ in the 1620s demonstrates an increase of only 1.30% from the previous decade, in which no comparable outbreaks took place. By contrast, for prose works this number increases by a much more considerable 23.74%.

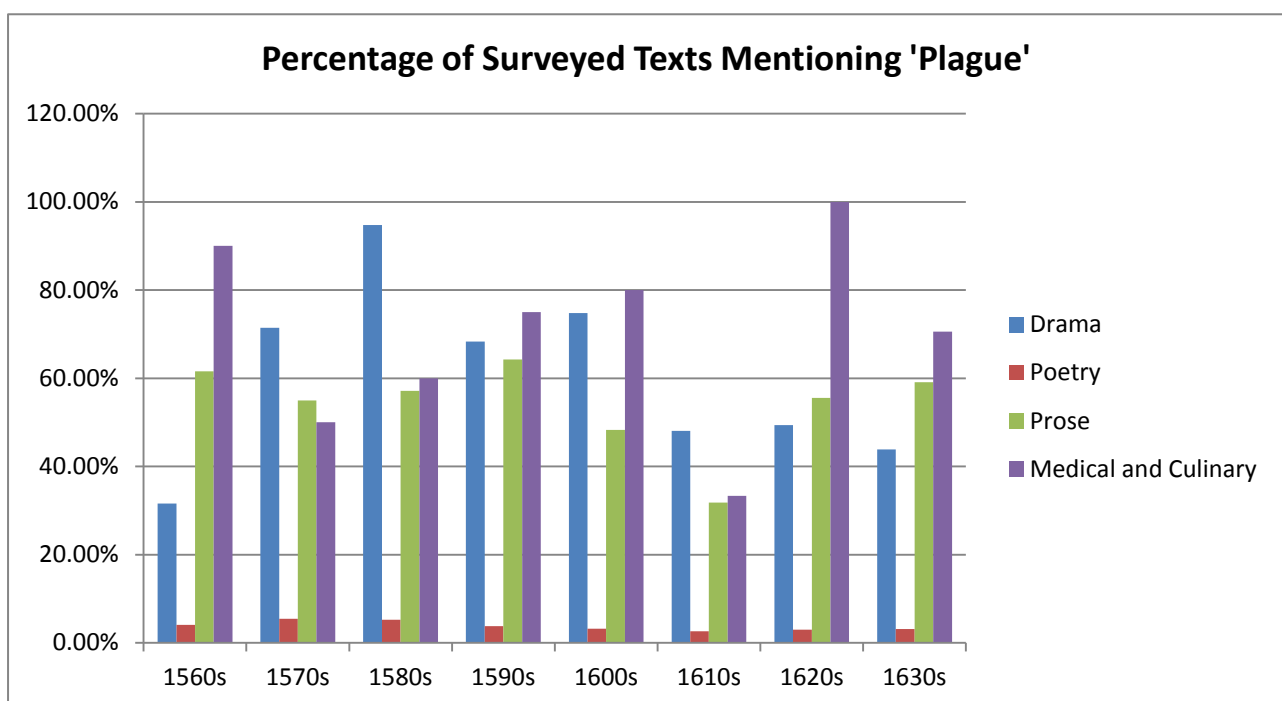


Fig. 1.26

Even more interestingly, the amount of plays in which ‘plague’ is mentioned reaches a peak of 94.74% in the 1580s, whilst the numbers for contemporary prose and medical literature remain significantly lower at 57.14% and 60.00% respectively – unsurprisingly, perhaps, since no significant plague outbreak occurred in London in this decade.²⁵ Not only, then, do Renaissance dramatists show relatively little interest in the word ‘plague’ when the

²⁵ Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain*, p. 348.

disease is prolific in their society, but they also demonstrate a disproportionate preoccupation with plague at times when its prevalence is comparatively low. Although changes in the terminology used to frame various illnesses would be one way to account for these unexpected trends, there is no evidence in the data to suggest that linguistic developments are responsible for these findings. While uses of the word ‘disease’ do gradually overtake ‘plague’ over the time period in question, they are neither high enough to compensate for the infrequency of ‘plague’ in plays of the 1560s and 1620s nor low enough to account for its abundance in drama of the 1580s (Fig. 1.27). Another possible explanation for this disparity could be found in the very different functions of drama and prose in Renaissance England. Whereas much of the prose which features on LION’s database for this period is non-fictional in nature, explaining its general adherence to the trends observed in similarly non-fictional medical texts, dramatic works are necessarily either purely fictional or fictionalised. As such, early modern dramatists may reasonably have deemed audiences more likely to be entertained by references to plague only when they were not directly experiencing the worst of its consequences. Logical though this explanation seems, however, it does not account for the relatively high percentage of plays containing the word ‘plague’ between 1600 and 1609, when severe outbreaks of plague forced London’s playhouses to close.²⁶

Since fluctuations in ‘plague’ usage in Renaissance drama do not correspond in any straightforward way to peaks and troughs in the prevalence of plague itself in England at the time, the possibility remains that these trends are motivated by meta-dramatic concerns. As can be inferred from the aforementioned closure of playhouses during particularly virulent plague outbreaks, plays and plague were conceptually associated in early modern England, with theatres rightly being seen as spaces which facilitated the disease’s transmission. Although playwrights might reasonably be expected to make attempts to undermine this

²⁶ Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain*, pp. 494–96.

connection, perhaps through a general reduction of references to ‘plague’ in their work, the data reveal no such straightforward attempt. While there is no obvious upward trend as there is for ‘physic’, neither is there any consistent movement towards eliminating ‘plague’ from these works, not even during devastating outbreaks of the disease in society. This clearly indicates early modern dramatists’ willingness to see performances associated not only with ambivalent concepts such as ‘physic’, but also with something as emphatically negative as ‘plague’.

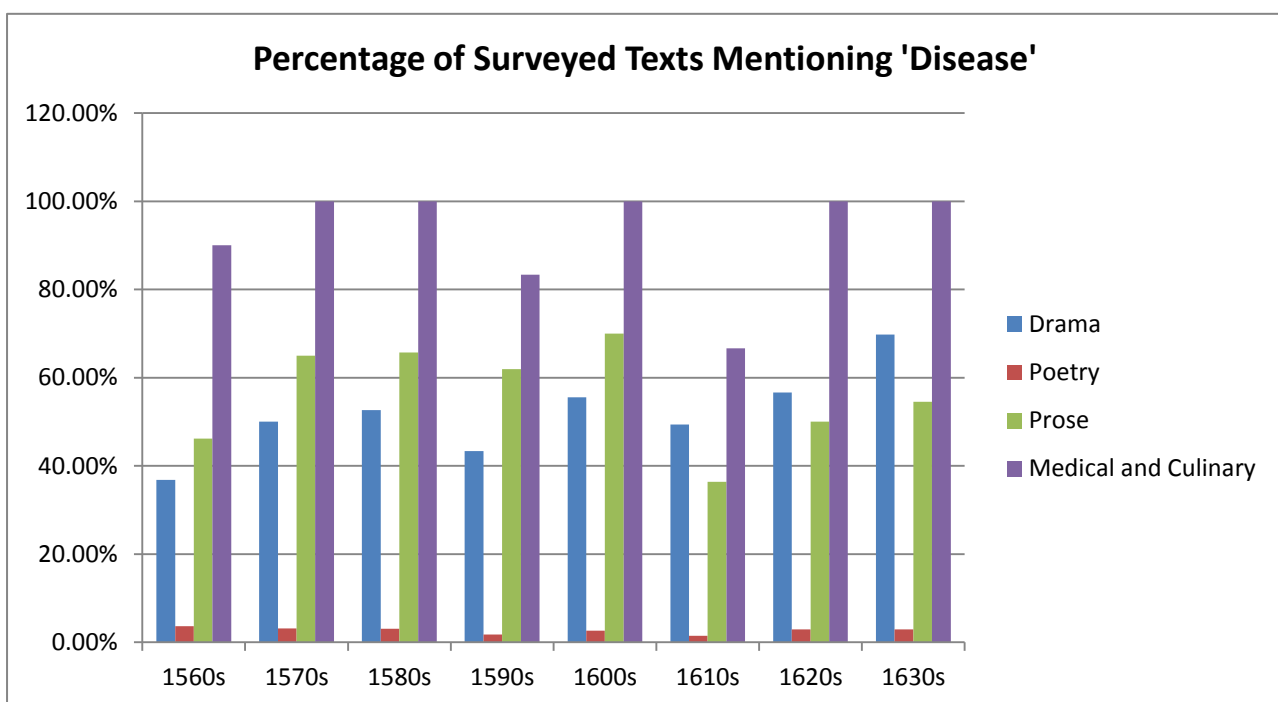


Fig. 1.27

Perhaps nowhere is the link between performances and dangerous substances which infiltrate bodily boundaries more markedly evidenced than in appearances of the word ‘poison’. ‘Poison’ is already very common in prose at the beginning of this period, appearing in 76.92% of prose works published in the 1560s (Fig. 1.28). It then decreases in prominence over the following two decades, diminishes again until the 1610s after a slight increase in the 1590s, and finally climbs in popularity once again between the 1610s and 1630s. Drama, by contrast, employs ‘poison’ comparatively infrequently during the 1560s and 1570s, but the

percentage of plays in which it appears increases steadily thereafter until the 1600s. In other words, in the 1580s and 1590s the amount of plays mentioning ‘poison’ rises while the number of prose works, poems, and medical and culinary texts in which it features falls. Interestingly, although certain styles of play such as tragedies and tragicomedies might reasonably be expected to mention ‘poison’ more frequently than others, this spike in its appearances does not correspond to any generic trends within drama itself. Although the 1580s sees the publication of nearly twice as many plays listed on LION as either tragedies or tragicomedies as the 1590s, between these decades the amount of dramatic texts mentioning poison actually increases from 63.16% to 63.33% (Fig. 1.29). Furthermore, whilst ‘poison’ appears only around a third as often in drama as in medical and culinary literature in the 1560s and 1570s, the void between the two is far narrower thereafter, with a difference of just 3.34% in the 1590s. Evidently, as with many of the other keywords examined so far, beginning in around the 1580s there is a marked increase in references to ‘poison’ in drama that is motivated neither by cultural nor by literary trends. As is the case with ‘plague’, dramatists’ saturation of their plays with references to ‘poison’ to this extent may have established a connection between the two, associating drama with a substance which is not only potentially lethal, but which can also be ingested unknowingly.

This supposition is borne out through close inspection of the plays themselves, wherein poison is recurrently associated with spectatorship and performativity. Such is the case in *Hamlet* (c. 1601), wherein poison and sensory information are aligned not only through their employment of the same passages into the body – as with the oft-noted poisoning of Old Hamlet through his ‘ears’ – but also through their comparable effects upon their consumers.²⁷ So much is apparent in the play’s final scene, where Claudius assumes that Gertrude merely ‘Swoons to see [Hamlet and Laertes] bleed’ during their fencing match

²⁷ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), III, pp. 1121–63 (I. 5. 63); Allison K. Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 108–09.

when in fact she has been poisoned by the ‘drink’ intended for Hamlet.²⁸ Shakespeare here presents the effects of watching a violent scene – as audiences are doing at this point alongside the characters onstage – as outwardly indistinguishable from those of consuming poison. Meta-theatrical resonances also attend upon poison in Barnabe Barnes’s *The Devils Charter* (1607), where it is not attending spectacles but performing in them which is shown to entail the threat of being poisoned. Throughout the play, Lucretia is repeatedly associated with self-conscious performativity, as when, after resolving to murder her husband Gismond for his jealousy, she vows ‘To consummate the plot of [her] revenge’ before going on to describe Gismond as ‘the subject of [her] Tragedy’ – phrases which depict her as controlling the action of this scene in an explicitly meta-theatrical sense.²⁹ Her association with theatricality continues when, having bound and gagged Gismond and instructed him to write a message absolving her of the scandalous accusations he has levelled at her, she assures him that ‘if [he] wilt subscribe, [she] will not kill’.³⁰ However, she promptly goes back on this promise and exacts ‘mortall vengeance’ on him, before congratulating herself on having ‘perform’d a cunning parte’, her earlier pledge having been nothing but an act.³¹ It is therefore particularly significant that, when Lucretia is murdered by her brother Caesar later in the play, it is by means of her cosmetics, into which ‘rancke poyson’ has been introduced.³² Given her prior association with theatricality, that Lucretia is murdered in the process of literally masking her true features holds pronounced meta-theatrical resonances, suggesting that performativity exposes its practitioners – implicitly including not only Lucretia but also the boy actor playing her in contemporary performances – to poisonous influences. Both Shakespeare and Barnes thereby lend implicit support to Stephen Gosson’s claim that playwrights, as the distributors of such shows, are malicious figures who ‘disperse

²⁸ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, v. 2. 261–62.

²⁹ Barnabe Barnes, *The Devils Charter* (London: George Eld, 1607), sig. C1^v.

³⁰ Barnes, *The Devils Charter*, sig. C2^v.

³¹ Barnes, *The Devils Charter*, sigs C2^v–C3^r.

³² Barnes, *The Devils Charter*, sig. H1^v.

their poyson through all the worlde’, risking the lives and souls of those attending and performing in their plays.³³ The prevalence of ‘poison’ throughout contemporary drama, and its general upward trend from the 1580s onwards, may signal a general endorsement of this view amongst playwrights of this era.

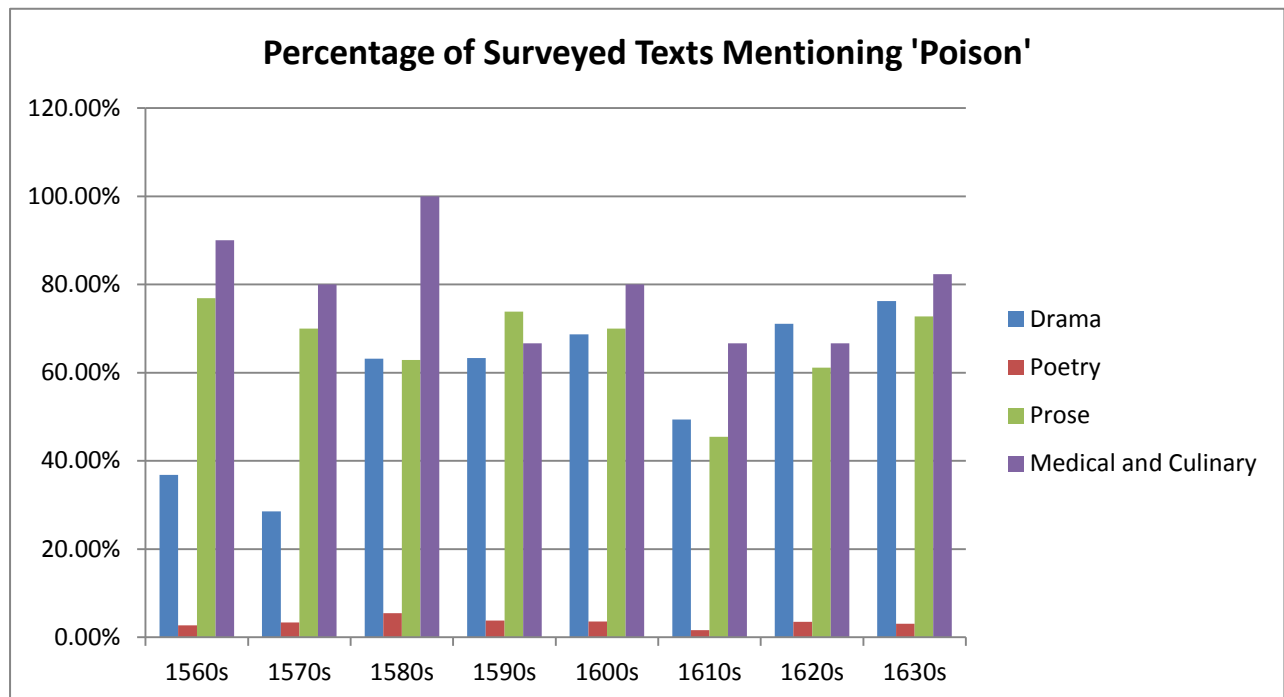


Fig. 1.28

³³ Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), sig. A1^r.

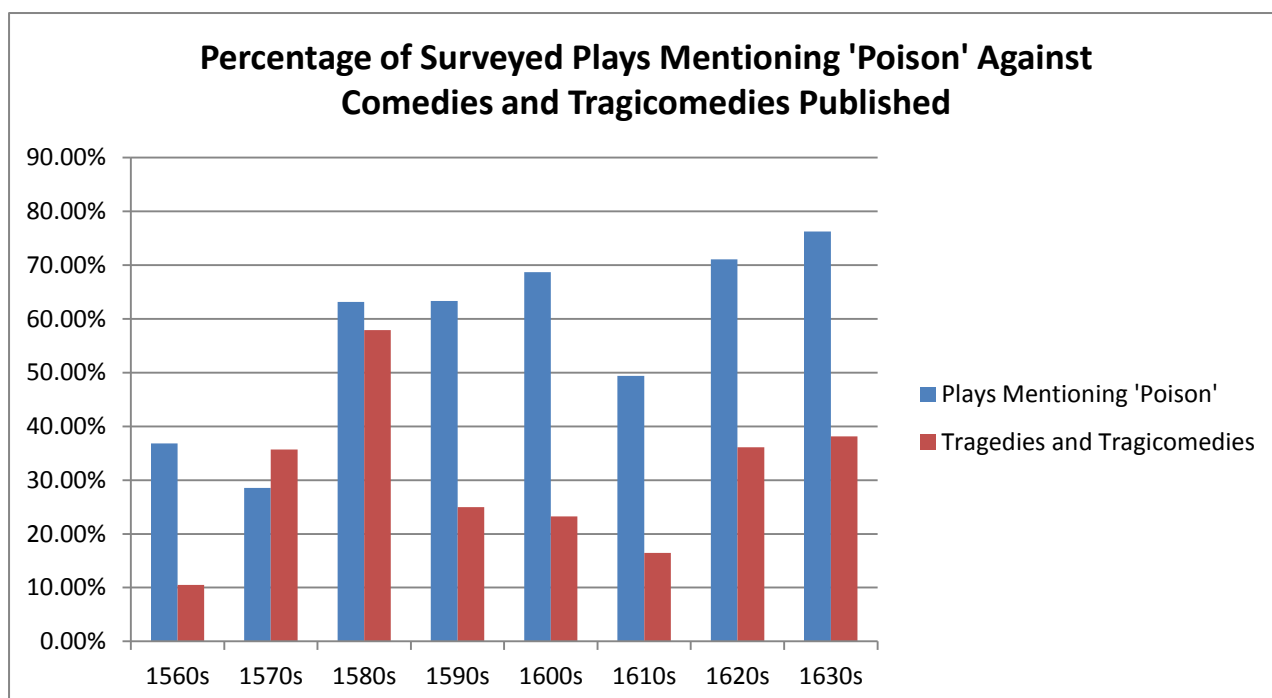


Fig. 1.29

A potential explanation for playwrights' apparent penchant for associating drama with dangerous substances emerges upon consideration of their references to 'tobacco', a product which throughout the Renaissance occupies a liminal position between sensory object and foodstuff.³⁴ First appearing in medical and culinary literature in the 1590s, 'tobacco' uses increase in the 1600s and (discounting the 1610s and 1620s as unreliable) again in the 1630s, suggesting a growing interest in tobacco from a culinary and medical standpoint (Fig. 1.30). A similar, though not identical, frequency pattern emerges in contemporary poetry and prose, with uses of 'tobacco' climbing steadily in both forms until the 1620s, after which point its appearances fall in poetry whilst continuing to rise in prose. The trend seen in drama, however, is markedly different. As in the other textual forms under consideration, 'tobacco' emerges in drama in the 1590s and undergoes a surge of popularity in the 1600s. However, its uses then decrease slightly in the 1610s before falling again very sharply in the 1620s, despite continuing to increase in poetry and prose during these decades. A resurgence of 'tobacco' in the 1630s still leaves the percentage of plays in which it appears at only 17.99%, lower than it had been in the 1600s and 1610s.

³⁴ Anthony Chute, *Tabacco* (London: William Barlow, 1595), p. 45; Hugh Plat, *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies Against Famine* (London: Peter Short, 1596), sig. B2^r.

In light of the trends we have already observed in ‘physic’, ‘plague’, and ‘poison’, the most surprising fact to emerge from these statistics is perhaps not that tobacco occupies a different relationship to drama than to poetry or prose, but instead that it is less rather than more popular in plays than in other literary forms. As well as occupying an uneasy culinary position during this period, tobacco obviously possesses a prominent olfactory dimension that in theory imbues it with elevated meta-dramatic potential. After all, both tobacco-users and theatregoers are paying for an ephemeral sensory experience which is also capable of functioning as a performative statement of its participants’ status. The comparison is self-evident, yet it is apparently eschewed by contemporary playwrights, who mention ‘tobacco’ not merely in accordance with cultural developments (as is the case with the word ‘sugar’), but actually in opposition to societal trends. Of course, ‘tobacco’ is not excised from Renaissance drama altogether, often being utilised as a topic of comical derision or a vehicle for social satire when it does appear in these texts. A prime example of this approach appears in Thomas Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus* (1599), where we are informed not only that tobacco ‘choakes’ its consumers, but also that anyone who uses it is ‘an ass that melts so much money in smoke’.³⁵ However, its disproportionate decrease in frequency in dramatic literature is too clear to be coincidental, apparently evidencing contemporary playwrights’ desire to prevent viewers from drawing the seemingly obvious drama-tobacco parallel and, consequently, demonstrating their awareness of its latent meta-theatrical potential.

³⁵ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus* (London: S. Stafford, 1600), sigs B3^v and D3^r.

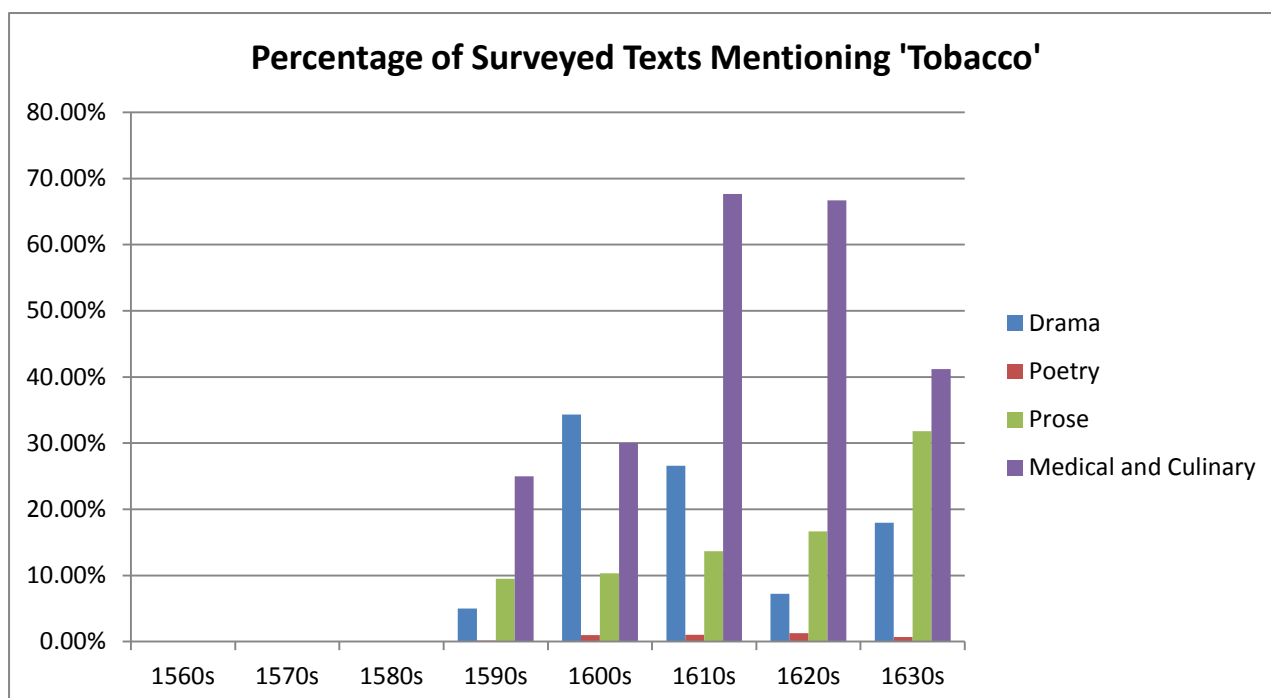


Fig. 1.30

The reasons underlying dramatists' adoption of this approach begin to emerge from a consideration of the prevailing attitudes towards tobacco in early modern England. Although many contemporary texts wholeheartedly commend tobacco, others thoroughly condemning its use had entered print by the time its appearances in drama begin to fall in the 1610s.³⁶ It is important at this point to remember that digital methods of counting word frequencies cannot distinguish between approval and condemnation. As such, the infrequency of 'tobacco' in contemporary plays cannot adequately be explained by playwrights' disapproval of its use, since increased criticism of tobacco would still increase in the frequency with which it is mentioned. An explanation may instead be found in the fact that tobacco is fundamentally different to other early modern foods and medicines in that it is non-essential to the preservation of health, notwithstanding some contemporary writers' insistence on its benefits. As such, whereas food, drink, and medicine occupy a tense and dramatically productive position in Renaissance plays through their status as risky and yet ultimately necessary, tobacco's non-essentiality permits its classification by some writers as categorically detrimental to its users' health. The pseudonymous author of *Work for Chimney-Sweepers*

³⁶ For early modern texts advocating tobacco, see Chute, *Tabacco*; Roger Marbecke, *A Defence of Tabacco* (London: Richard Field, 1602); and John Beaumont, *The Metamorphosis of Tabacco* (London: John Flasket, 1602). More critical is Philaretus, *Work for Chimney-Sweepers* (London: T. Este and Thomas Creede, 1602).

(1602) is therefore able to claim that tobacco contains ‘some deleterious & poysoned nature, & a facultie or operation cleane contrary to the nature of man’ – an accusation which would be far more difficult to level at even the most controversial of foodstuffs.³⁷

A similar line of reasoning explains why both poison and plague might also be considered preferable to tobacco as parallels for drama. Whilst ingesting poison is largely unavoidable due to its concealment behind comparatively safe foods and medicines, and plague is similarly difficult to evade owing to the intangibility of the microbes that, unbeknownst to Renaissance writers, transmit the infection, tobacco cannot be unintentionally consumed in this way. The impression of drama’s dangers as unavoidable created through its association with food, medicine, poison, and plague therefore would not be possible through its affiliation with tobacco, since this would instead open up plays and their viewers to wholehearted condemnation. The downward trend in ‘tobacco’ usage in Renaissance drama therefore reveals that, despite accepting and indeed emphasising the potential threat theatrical performances pose to their audiences, contemporary dramatists nevertheless stop short of denouncing plays as categorically unfit for consumption, always presenting their risks as either necessary or inescapable.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, analysing the frequency patterns of culinary, medical, and sensory words in Renaissance literature provides some remarkable insights into the role of the substances and experiences they represent in early modern drama. Of course, some culinary terms change in drama in response to wider social and cultural developments, as is clearly the case with the word ‘sugar’. Others simply seem to be of limited dramatic interest, particularly dressings and seasonings which appeal only minimally to the distal senses, though their

³⁷ Philaretus, *Work for Chimney-Sweepers*, sig. E3^v.

rejection does show that plays do not adhere strictly to contemporary culinary trends in their employment of keywords. Still others have frequency patterns which deviate in drama from those seen in other literary forms, but for generic rather than meta-theatrical reasons, fluctuating in accordance with the popularity of different styles of play.

However, there are also many words whose diverging trends in drama cannot easily be explained by contemporary medical, culinary, economic, or literary developments, raising the possibility that these words possess meta-theatrical appeal to early modern playwrights. Significantly, many of the products or activities they denote occupy an uneasy social position in contemporary England, with words such as ‘feast’, ‘honey’, and ‘physic’ all possessing positive attributes which are nevertheless qualified by other, less favourable characteristics. Others such as ‘poison’ and ‘plague’, though carrying more explicitly negative connotations, are undetectable to the senses prior to the moment of ingestion, and thereby pose risks that cannot reasonably be avoided. It is therefore particularly significant that, starting in around the 1580s, these words appear more, not less, frequently in drama than in other contemporary literary forms. One possible effect of the disproportionate prevalence of these potentially harmful substances in drama is the establishment of a conceptual association between them and performances, and so between their effect upon consumers (or, in the case of plague, sufferers) and that of drama upon its audiences. Interestingly, an opposing trend emerges for words denoting substances whose dangers are either avoidable or insufficiently counterbalanced by their benefit to consumers, with ‘tobacco’ appearing in a disproportionately low number of dramatic texts. As well as suggesting that food, drink, medicine, and disease may at times operate meta-theatrically in Renaissance drama, these findings thereby indicate their particular aptitude for emphasising the dangers of theatrical performances without presenting plays as irredeemably harmful. The following chapters will explore whether or not it is true that food and drink serve a meta-theatrical role in early

modern performances, and, if so, why playwrights may have wished to present their work in such an ambivalent light. Drawing on my findings here, Chapters Two, Three, and Four explore in detail the reasons why medical and culinary language becomes more prevalent in drama around the turn of the seventeenth century.

Sign or Sacrament: Consuming Medieval Drama

Introduction

In order to appreciate how Renaissance dramatists utilise culinary language in their work, it is necessary to understand the relationship between food and drama in earlier plays. The following chapter explores the role of the culinary in medieval performances, focusing particularly on what the treatment of food and drink in these plays reveals about contemporary attitudes towards drama itself. Throughout this era, individual plays' approaches to food very often correspond with their approaches to drama, with many highlighting the comparable worldliness of both food and performances. However, often these plays simultaneously suggest that no inherent conflict exists between worldliness and spirituality. Instead, their portrayals of food imply that worldly things (including theatrical performances) and spectators' appreciation for them can facilitate rather than impede viewers' spiritual development. Contemporary plays also frequently insinuate that the devotional efficacy of material things depends entirely upon how they are used. Indeed, medieval playwrights regularly employ culinary imagery both to model and to encourage the proper approach to material signifiers more broadly, framing these as gesturing towards, but not embodying, spiritual truths. My argument throughout this chapter draws on a wide variety of medieval drama, including mystery plays (dramatisations of scriptural events produced by craft guilds and in many cases performed on moveable wagons at various points around a city); moralities (which aim to promote Christian values, often using allegorical characters); and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, a conversion play which claims to recount a fifteenth-century Host miracle.¹

¹ Peter Happé, *Cyclic Form and the English Mystery Plays* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 34–40 and 313; Pamela M. King, 'Morality Plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 235–62 (p. 235); Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*: A Re-Reading', *Comparative Drama*, 22.2 (1988), 117–37 (p. 21).

From Earth to Heaven: 'Bodily Foode', Drama, and Doctrinal Instruction

Materiality occupies a complex and at times ambiguous position in medieval Catholicism. On one hand, physical objects including relics, rosaries, and carved and painted images feature prominently in contemporary devotional practices.² Sara Ritchey attributes 'the physical and embodied thrust of later medieval devotion' – in which God was believed to be present in and accessible through 'the material of the world' – to the 'renewed attention to Christ's incarnation' and to His 'material presence' in the Eucharistic bread and wine during the Middle Ages.³ The incorporation of material things into religious practices in this way clearly speaks to a belief in their instructive value, as well as indicating that no clear dichotomy exists in this period between worldliness and spirituality. Nevertheless, Suzanna Ivanič also points out that, despite 'the centrality of sacred objects' in Catholic worship, these were intended to function as 'mere representations of what was depicted and as aids to memory', rather than to be seen as embodying the sacred truths they signified.⁴ Bodies, objects, and images thereby occupy an ambivalent position in medieval Catholicism, with their capacity to guide worshippers towards the divine being tempered by their simultaneous potential to be heretically misused or misinterpreted.

These concerns are reflected in contemporary attitudes towards drama, which, as a practice thoroughly embedded in the material world, holds similarly ambivalent potential. Citing the 'repeated assertions' of medieval church and state officials regarding 'drama's role in instructing the laity in religious matters and virtuous living', Charlotte Steenbrugge demonstrates that, in at least some cases, 'plays were seen to have a devotional function

² See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Dissimilar Similitudes: Devotional Objects in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2020), pp. 17–40.

³ Sara Ritchey, *Holy Matter: Changing Perceptions of the Material World in Late Medieval Christianity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 8 and 12.

⁴ Suzanna Ivanič, 'Early Modern Religious Objects and Materialities of Belief', in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and David Gaimster (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 322–37 (p. 325).

similar to sermons'.⁵ However, she also points to the fifteenth-century anti-theatrical tract *The Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, in which plays are presented as 'a force for evil' precisely because of the 'perceived similarities of the didactic aims and objectives of preaching and religious drama'.⁶ As Jill Stevenson elaborates, the *Treatise* expresses concern that, by introducing 'a degree of confusion between play and worship', religious performances might lead spectators to erroneously 'interpret these plays as religious worship' when in fact they 'only amount to empty gestures, not pious deeds'.⁷ Therefore, although religious performances, like other devotional practices rooted in worldliness, were believed by some to serve a spiritually edifying purpose when utilised appropriately, others saw their capacity to blur the boundaries between the worldly and the divine as precluding their ability to effectively fulfil this function.

These varied perspectives are reflected in the broad range of approaches to materiality within contemporary plays themselves, evidenced clearly through their diverse portrayals of worldly food and drink. For instance, some medieval plays adopt a disparaging attitude towards material food, stressing its fundamental distinction from and inferiority to spiritual concerns. Such an approach is evidenced in the York Cycle's *The Harrowing of Hell* through Christ's declaration that

Be Feende þame [i.e. humanity] wanne with trayne

Thurgh frewte of erthely foode;

I have þame getyn agayne

Thurgh bying with My bloode.⁸

⁵ Charlotte Steenbrugge, *Drama and Sermon in Late Medieval England: Performance, Authority, Devotion* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2017), p. 5.

⁶ Steenbrugge, *Drama and Sermon*, pp. 9–10.

⁷ Jill Stevenson, 'The Material Bodies of Medieval Religious Performance in England', *The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*, 2.2 (2006), 204–34 (p. 210).

⁸ Anonymous, *The Harrowing of Hell*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 143–49 (ll. 9–12).

These lines establish an explicit dichotomy between the ‘foode’ which tempts humanity and the divine ‘bloode’ that redeems them, an opposition which presents food not only as inferior to but indeed as antagonistic towards spiritual fulfilment. A more extensive use of culinary imagery to highlight the inferiority of worldliness to spirituality appears in the Chester Cycle’s *The Shepherds*, wherein audiences are encouraged to condemn the shepherds’ initial attribution of redemptive power to worldly sustenance. The shepherds’ vast overestimation of the value of food becomes apparent early in the play through Tudd’s declaration that ‘Solace would best be seene | That we shape us to our supper’.⁹ Tudd’s conception of transcendental ‘Solace’ as a by-product of his lowly ‘supper’ here indicates his misguided identification of bodily and spiritual nourishment, alerting audiences to the ironic conflict between the spiritual peace the shepherds desire and the worldly means by which they hope to attain it. This point is reiterated at the culmination of the shepherds’ meal through Tudd’s assertion that the ‘lickour’ they drink ‘makes men to live’.¹⁰ Although true in a strictly literal sense, in the context of a nativity play Tudd’s claim is laced with dramatic irony, with spectators being prompted to recognise food’s inability to procure the eternal life which can only come from Christ. The inferiority of perishable, physical nourishment to spiritual fulfilment is also implicit in the rustic – and, in some cases, manifestly unpalatable – nature of the shepherds’ fare, with Tudd’s ‘sowre milke’ quite possibly being incapable of procuring even fleeting gustatory pleasure, let alone spiritual ‘Solace’.¹¹ By emphasising the worldliness and (at times literal) corruption of the shepherds’ food, the playwright plainly indicates their folly for esteeming this produce so highly.

The inferiority of materiality to spirituality is emphasised further in the Chester *Shepherds* through the shepherds’ relationship to medicine and healing over the course of the performance. At the outset of the play, Hankin depicts himself as a devoted caregiver to his

⁹ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 58–69 (ll. 101–02).

¹⁰ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, l. 147.

¹¹ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, l. 123.

animals, expressing his desire to ‘save and heal’ his sheep.¹² However, this claim is almost immediately called into question through Hankin’s following demonstration of his knowledge of curative herbs. As well as being decidedly limited, extending to only eight different plants, Hankin himself concedes that some of these – including, notably, the poisonous ‘henbane’ – have the power to bring ‘a whole man [...] to grownde | Within a little whyle’, drawing attention to the very fine line between medicinal and poisonous substances.¹³ More alarming still is his desire to take ‘tallow’ from his sheep, a detail which calls the sincerity of his professions to care for the animals into question by implying that he is only interested in using their bodies to supply his own needs – an impression enhanced by the disturbing presence of ‘sheepes head sowsed in ale’ in the shepherds’ rustic feast.¹⁴ These details imbue Tudd’s claim to have been preparing ‘Penyegrasse and butter for fatt sheepe’ with a troubling double meaning, rendering it unclear whether these ingredients are intended to feed the sheep or to season them for consumption by their supposed caregivers.¹⁵ This impression is surely further facilitated if ‘Penyegrasse’ can be identified with ‘Marsh pennywort’, also known as ‘sheep-killing penny-grass’ in some sixteenth-century texts.¹⁶ These repeated indications that the shepherds’ motives are more self-serving than selfless lend considerable dramatic irony to Hankin’s early assertion that a ‘better shepperd’ than himself ‘on no syde | Noe yearthlye man maye have’.¹⁷ Indeed, as Robert Adams rightly notes, *The Shepherds* firmly establishes its titular characters as ‘corrupt guardians of the chosen flock’, emphasising their status as flawed worldly parallels to Christ the ‘Good Shepherd’ Who appears at the conclusion of the play.¹⁸ The shepherds’ lack of capacity for (and, apparently, interest in) healing their sheep

¹² Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, l. 12.

¹³ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, ll. 18–21.

¹⁴ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, l. 121.

¹⁵ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, l. 79.

¹⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “‘sheep-killing penny-grass’, in penny-grass (*n.*), sense 3,” July 2023 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4921916264>> [last accessed 4 February 2024].

¹⁷ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, ll. 7–8.

¹⁸ Robert Adams, ‘The Egregious Feasts of the Chester and Towneley Shepherds’, *The Chaucer Review*, 21.2 (1986), 96–107 (p. 104).

evidences the limitations of both worldly medicine and its providers, indicating the manifest superiority of Christ's spiritual succour to Hankin's deadly 'henbane'.

However, a more nuanced impression of the relationship between materiality and spirituality emerges in the thematically proximate *The Second Shepherds' Play* of the Towneley Cycle, which offers a far more positive view of food and fleshly concerns than its Chester counterpart. Although the shepherds of the Towneley play are also preoccupied with acquiring sufficient food, in contrast to their Chester equivalents their discussions of food often carry serious undertones. So much is evident in Daw's complaint that despite working 'when master men wynkys', he and his companions must subsist on 'dry' bread, with 'both dyners and drynkys' being in short supply.¹⁹ This lament plainly derives not from a desire for gluttonous excess but rather for fair treatment from their masters, enabling it to draw sympathy rather than derision from spectators – an effect augmented by its generalised nature, as it encompasses not only the shepherds' own situation but also that of other 'Sich servandes [...], that swettys and swynkys'.²⁰

Audiences' sympathy for the shepherds is enhanced further through the playwright's ingenious inclusion of the villainous Mak, whose criminal conduct offsets the shepherds' honesty. As well as vindicating Daw's assertion that anyone in Mak's presence must 'take hede to his thyng' when he decides to 'borrow' one of the shepherds' sheep, Mak variously demonstrates pride, lechery, and even an affinity for occult magic during his time onstage.²¹ Additionally, in contrast to the shepherds' measured and eminently reasonable complaints about their hardships, Mak begs for food whilst declaring that he has eaten 'not a nedyll | Thys moneth and more'.²² The hyperbolic nature of this assertion calls its legitimacy into question, assisted by Daw's sceptical assertion that 'Seldom lyys the Dewyll [i.e. Devil] dede

¹⁹ Anonymous, *The Second Shepherds' Play*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 42–57 (ll. 155–57).

²⁰ Anonymous, *The Second Shepherds' Play*, l. 154.

²¹ Anonymous, *The Second Shepherds' Play*, ll. 200, 295, 206, 237, and 278–81.

²² Anonymous, *The Second Shepherds' Play*, ll. 233–34.

by the gate', preventing audiences from sympathising with Mak as we do with the shepherds.²³ By contrast, in the Chester *Shepherds* Mak's counterpoint Garcius actually fulfils the opposite function, making his masters seem less admirable by comparison. As well as distancing himself from their gluttony by claiming to have 'No hape to [their] meate' whilst caring for their 'sheepe' alone, Garcius unsuccessfully petitions the shepherds for his 'wages' before complaining about his 'ragged' clothing.²⁴ Whereas the Towneley shepherds are depicted as oppressed workers, Garcius's complaints position those of the Chester play as oppressors themselves who delegate their own tasks to Garcius whilst neglecting to pay him for his efforts. Therefore, although both plays use food to present the shepherds as embedded in worldly affairs and to illustrate their subjection to fleshly desires, this subjection itself is given a far less negative inflection in the Towneley version of the tale.

The conflicting approaches of the Towneley and Chester shepherds' plays towards worldliness is further evidenced through their starkly diverging portrayals of the culinary gifts presented to Christ by each set of shepherds. In *The Second Shepherds' Play*, Coll offers Jesus 'a bob of cherys', a gift both non-scriptural and manifestly useless to a newborn from a practical perspective.²⁵ Greg Walker posits that these 'cherys' serve a symbolic function, with their miraculous availability during winter in the world of the play (though not, of course, in the wider context of the summer performance) and their 'blood-red colour' representing Jesus's miraculous birth and future sacrifice.²⁶ According to this interpretation, instead of appearing in a literal capacity these 'cherys' instead serve a dramaturgical and didactic purpose, guiding viewers' thoughts Heavenward whilst simultaneously foreshadowing the events to come in the cycle's later plays. Very different is the impact of Hankin's gift to Jesus of a 'spoon | For to eat [His] pottage with at noone' in the Chester *Shepherds*, which

²³ Anonymous, *The Second Shepherds' Play*, l. 229.

²⁴ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, ll. 208–10 and 219–26.

²⁵ Anonymous, *The Second Shepherds' Play*, l. 718.

²⁶ Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, p. 42.

generates humour through the incongruity between the homely gift and its divine recipient.²⁷ The same is true of the Fourth Boy's later gift of a 'nuthook', reasoning that even 'God in [His] manhoode' will desire 'sweetemeat' as a child and that the hook will alleviate Joseph's discomfort as he collects 'apples, payres, and ploomes' for Jesus.²⁸ The Fourth Boy's explanation for his choice emphasises not so much Christ's humanity as his own, with his projection of his own childish desires onto Jesus emphasising the distance rather than the proximity between them. Therefore, whilst the Chester *Shepherds* uses food to present materiality as a distraction from or a counterpoint to spiritual concerns, the Towneley *Second Shepherds' Play* offers a more sympathetic view of materiality as something which not only does not conflict with spirituality, but which may even be complementary to it.

The meta-theatrical significance of these disparate attitudes towards materiality becomes apparent upon consideration of the two plays' starkly contrasting conclusions. At the end of the Chester *Shepherds*, the three shepherds renounce their former profession, resolving respectively to go 'Over the sea' to 'preach', to 'wach [sic] and wake' in an anchorage, and to 'fully refuse' the world by living as a 'hermitte'.²⁹ Significantly, the shepherds' renunciation of their pastoral role here corresponds exactly with the performers' renunciation of their role as participants in the production. This juxtaposition has the effect of aligning the play itself with the shepherds' former, materially oriented lives, implicitly presenting religious drama as a catalyst to devotion rather than as constitutive of it by suggesting that true worship takes place beyond, instead of through or within, theatrical performances. The Towneley shepherds, by contrast, undergo no comparable transformation, exiting the stage at the culmination of the play only to return to their flock – their discovery of Christ pointedly not prompting them to leave their worldly profession for more explicitly devotional pursuits. Furthermore, the Towneley shepherds' vow to recount their experiences

²⁷ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, ll. 573–74.

²⁸ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, ll. 634–41.

²⁹ Anonymous, *The Shepherds*, ll. 658–60, 669, and 670–679.

‘Full oft’ can be interpreted as an allusion to the repetition of this performance by these and other actors in the future, thereby endorsing the validity of dramatic renditions of Biblical stories rather than signalling the necessity of moving beyond this practice.³⁰ It is therefore apparent that the disparate attitudes to food evidenced in the Chester *Shepherds* and the Towneley *Second Shepherds’ Play* are linked with the plays’ diverging approaches to drama itself. Whilst both of these plays indicate the fundamental worldliness of religious performances by aligning them with food, they each offer very different views of the relationship between worldliness and spirituality. Although refraining from portraying food and plays as inherently immoral, the Chester *Shepherds* very clearly presents both as subservient to spiritual concerns, essentially depicting religious performances as distinct from and inferior to genuine worship. By contrast, the Towneley play portrays both food and drama as potential devotional aids, arguing that material things are capable of facilitating spiritual advancement by catalysing pious thoughts.

Indeed, many medieval plays use spectators’ appreciation for worldly food to enhance their own didactic efficacy, though this approach does not in all cases correspond with a positive attitude towards either food consumption or materiality more broadly. So much becomes clear upon consideration of culinary product placement in these performances. As Jonathan Gil Harris has shown, product placement was an engrained aspect of medieval civic drama, with craft guilds regularly ‘using their pageant wagons as shop-window displays for their trades’, using them to increase ‘community awareness of their skills, tools, and related products’.³¹ Although in some cases this form of self-promotion operates in a playful but ultimately morally neutral capacity, at times these advertisements interact productively with the content of performances to inflect or emphasise their moral messages. A particularly

³⁰ Anonymous, *The Second Shepherds’ Play*, l. 750.

³¹ Jonathan Gil Harris, ‘Properties of Skill: Product Placement in Early English Artisanal Drama’, in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 35–66 (p. 47).

interesting example of this occurs in the A-Text of *The Norwich Grocers' Play*, a retelling of the Fall of Man in which Eden is described as being populated by limitless supplies of 'frutes pleasant'.³² The implied presence of diverse fruits onstage throughout the performance plainly denotes its suitability for production by the Grocers, with this scenery not only lending visual appeal to the play but also tempting spectators into purchasing the produce once it has served its theatrical function. By exposing (and indeed profiting from) spectators' susceptibility to the visual appeal of Eden's fruit – amongst which, surely, the Forbidden Fruit must have been designed to stand out – this particular act of product placement uses viewers' own bodily appetites to illustrate the lasting consequences and generational transmission of Eve's original sin. As well as being of obvious benefit to the Grocers themselves, the use of fruit in this way enhances the didactic efficacy of the (now lost) Norwich Cycle as a whole by rendering explicit its relevance to contemporary audiences, thereby ensuring that the instruction it offers is taken personally.³³

Though the A-Text of *The Norwich Grocers' Play* clearly utilises viewers' gustatory desires in the service of an educational goal, it is plain that in doing so it does not condone these desires themselves, instead promoting a view of fleshly lusts as a consequence of humanity's fallen state. However, some medieval plays take this notion one step further, making use of spectators' bodily and sensory desires in service of their educational aims without simultaneously condemning these inclinations. Such may be the case in *Lucidus and Dubius*, a dialogue between the spiritually enlightened Lucidus and his sceptical pupil Dubius in which Lucidus describes Eden as

a place grene and swete,

³² Anonymous, *The Norwich Grocers' Play [Text A]*, at *From Stage to Page: Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Gerard NeCastro, <http://web.archive.org/web/20110518184350/http://www.umm.maine.edu/faculty/necastro/drama/non-cycle/norwich_b.html> [last accessed 6 February 2014], l. 18.

³³ Joanna Dutka, 'The Lost Dramatic Cycle of Norwich and the Grocers' Play of the Fall of Man', *The Review of English Studies*, 35.137 (1984), 1–13.

of spysis, trees, and of flouris,

with-oute hungere.³⁴

The concluding words ‘with-oute hungere’ here permit multiple interpretations, a complication emphasised through the sensory ambiguity of Lucidus’s description of Heaven as a ‘swete’ place filled with ‘spysis’. If these words are taken in their olfactory sense – a reading supported by the following reference to Eden’s implicitly fragrant ‘flouris’ – Lucidus seems to be suggesting that food does not exist in Paradise, establishing a categorical distinction between gastronomic and spiritual pleasure. However, the prominent gustatory connotations of the words ‘swete’ and ‘spysis’ also permit a reading of Lucidus’s claims wherein there is no ‘hungere’ in Eden only because the desire to eat can immediately be satisfied, perhaps with fruit from the ‘trees’ which grow there. If interpreted in this latter way, these lines identify rather than contrast material and spiritual pleasures, with the playwright using sensory experiences within spectators’ frame of reference to allow them to gain a clear view of Paradise.

A less ambiguous example of this approach emerges in *The Mary Play*, where upon first appearing to Mary the Angel presents her not with ordinary food but instead with ‘*manne in a cowpe of gold, lyke to confeccyons*’.³⁵ By placing her experience firmly beyond audiences’ comprehension, Mary’s nourishment with divine ‘*manne*’ here at first seems to take seriously the argument presented in the *Tretise* that drama ‘takȳ away þe drede of God’ and with it ‘oure bileve’ by reducing Biblical stories to quotidian rather than marvellous events, and to attempt to mitigate this effect.³⁶ However, this initial impression of inconceivability is undermined by the additional details the playwright offers, with the manna

³⁴ Anonymous, *Lucidus and Dubius*, at *From Stage to Page: Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Gerard NeCastro,

<<http://web.archive.org/web/20120118191639/http://www.umm.maine.edu/faculty/necastro/drama/comedy/lucidus.html>> [last accessed 13 May 2023], ll. 206–08.

³⁵ Anonymous, *The Mary Play*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 168–95 (p. 178).

³⁶ Anonymous, *The Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, ll. 17–18.

being described as ‘*lyke to confeccyons*’ and as being presented in ‘*a cowpe of gold*’. Although manna itself precludes human understanding, ‘*gold*’ and ‘*confeccyons*’ do not. By likening this otherworldly foodstuff to products simultaneously recognisable to and likely beyond the financial reach of the vast majority of the play’s contemporary spectators, the playwright presumes upon – and leaves unchallenged – audiences’ equation of material worth with spiritual value. The playwright’s utilisation of spectators’ fleshly desires for spiritual instruction continues in Mary’s declaration ‘All maner of savowrys in þis mete I fynde, | I felt nevyr non so swete ner so redolent’.³⁷ Despite clearly highlighting manna’s superiority to ordinary foodstuffs, the playwright does so by emphasising its ‘swete’ flavour, referring to a gustatory (and olfactory) experience recognisable to viewers. Both *Lucidus and Dubius* and *The Mary Play* therefore utilise audiences’ familiarity with the bodily and sensory pleasures of eating to provide viewers with greater insight into joyful otherworldly experiences, with worldly dining being utilised in these plays as a gateway to spiritual understanding.

That worldly desires can be not only compatible with but potentially even complementary to spiritual enlightenment despite their subservience to Heavenly things is also rendered plain through the portrayal of food and feeding in the York Cycle’s *The Fall of the Angels*. At first, food seems to occupy a similar position in this play as it does in the Chester *Shepherds*, evidenced when the Seraphic Angel tells God that the angels should ‘stande styll, | Lorde, to be fed with þe fode of Thi fayre face’, adding that ‘whoso þat fode may be felande, | To se Thi fayre face, es noght fastande [i.e. fasting]’.³⁸ The insinuation that only those in God’s presence are ‘nought fastande’ firmly subordinates the physical nourishment supplied by food to the spiritual sustenance provided by contact with the divine, suggesting that worldly food is to God as fasting is to feasting. However, likening the unfathomable experience of God’s presence to the quotidian act of eating in order to convey

³⁷ Anonymous, *The Mary Play*, ll. 539–40.

³⁸ Anonymous, *The Fall of the Angels*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 12–15 (ll. 77–78 and 81–82).

the angels' pleasure in this way presupposes spectators' generally positive impression of food and fullness. Rather than discouraging viewers' high regard for culinary consumption, *The Fall of the Angels* instead utilises this to instructive effect, an approach which undercuts the notion of sensory pleasure and spiritual enlightenment as necessarily in conflict. This idea emerges once again later in the play when the Second Demon laments that in Hell 'All [their] fode es [sic] but filth'.³⁹ The playwright's decision to present the fallen angels not as starved of nourishment altogether but rather as provided only with disgusting food (or food which seems disgusting, compared with the 'fode of [God's] fayre face' that they have relinquished) frames their punishment not as the lack of bodily necessities but as the absence of sensory pleasure. Therefore, although *The Fall of the Angels* acknowledges the manifest inferiority of physical to spiritual experiences, it nevertheless does not set the two in conflict, instead anticipating, accepting, and utilising audiences' worldly desires to the advancement of their spiritual knowledge.

The theatrical significance of this idea becomes apparent through the Seraphic Angel's proposal that he and his companions should 'stande styll' while basking in God's presence. This phrase highlights their passivity throughout this act of consumption, an impression enhanced through the angel's use of the passive expression 'be fed with' instead of the more active "feed on". As well as symbolically representing the central role of unearned, divinely conferred grace in individuals' salvation, this portrayal of the angels as being supplied with nourishment simply by viewing God's face works to align them with the play's audiences, who are in this moment 'fed' with the same sensory information available to the angels. *The Fall of the Angels* therefore not only establishes an implicit parallel between eating and theatrical spectatorship, but also utilises both culinary and sensory consumption to conceptualise the experience of divine revelation. Without going so far as to

³⁹ Anonymous, *The Fall of the Angels*, l. 108.

equate worldly comestibles with the ‘fode of [God’s] fayre face’, *The Fall of the Angels* nevertheless presents both food and sensory information in a decidedly positive light, conceiving of no inherent conflict between physical and spiritual pleasures.

The association between food and theatricality emerges once again later in the York Cycle, with *Joseph’s Trouble About Mary* simultaneously emptying food and drama of any negative moral valences despite acknowledging their shared materiality. So much is evident when Joseph confronts one of Mary’s maidservants with his suspicions regarding Mary’s fidelity, and she informs him that Mary’s only visitor during his absence has been ‘an aungell’ who ‘ilke a day anes | With bodily foode hir fedde has he’.⁴⁰ The dramatist’s specification of ‘bodily foode’ here precludes the identification of this substance with spiritual nourishment, and indeed the suggestive connotations of the word ‘bodily’ fuel Joseph’s suspicions further, leading him to conclude that ‘som man in aungellis liknesse | With somkyn gawde has [Mary] begiled’.⁴¹ Joseph’s assumption here exposes his negative attitude towards ‘bodily foode’, which he evidently sees as an instrument of temptation that operates as a prelude to (or perhaps a euphemism for) sexual impropriety. Although Joseph’s fears seem to play on a preconceived notion amongst contemporary spectators of food as spiritually threatening, audiences’ awareness that Joseph’s doubts regarding Mary’s faithfulness are in fact unfounded implicitly challenges his pejorative view of ‘bodily foode’. By exonerating the Angel’s gift whilst firmly maintaining that it is nothing more than ‘bodily’ nourishment, *Joseph’s Trouble About Mary* undermines food’s conventional association with temptation, deception, and immorality, denying the existence of any conflict between the worldly and the spiritual.

Joseph’s Trouble About Mary’s positive attitude towards food is mirrored in its favourable portrayal of performances, which are similarly presented as aligned with rather

⁴⁰ Anonymous, *Joseph’s Trouble About Mary*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 32–37 (ll. 125–36).

⁴¹ Anonymous, *Joseph’s Trouble About Mary*, ll. 136–37.

than opposed to their spiritual subject-matter despite their material and sensory basis. At first glance, the play's preoccupation with the inability of Joseph's senses to provide him with accurate knowledge of the divine appears to contest the notion that audiences can utilise performances as devotional aids. The theme of sensory unreliability emerges in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* when, after discovering that Mary is 'with childe full grete', Joseph declares that her 'wombe allway it wreges [her], | þat [she] has mette with man'.⁴² As Walker notes, Joseph is portrayed sympathetically throughout this play, with his doubts about Mary's virtue and his reluctance to believe her version of events reflecting 'humankind's difficulties coping with the nature of divine mysteries'.⁴³ These lines are nevertheless freighted with dramatic irony, exposing Joseph's misplaced faith in the bodily senses which lead him to a conclusion that audiences know to be incorrect.

From a dramaturgical perspective, Joseph's sensory fallibility plays a key role in building audiences' anticipation for the moment when the mystery of Jesus's conception is finally revealed to him. So much is apparent when, upon first being addressed by the Angel, Joseph responds with the complaint 'A, I am full werie, lefe, late me slepe', revealing the failure of his senses to alert him to the angelic nature of his interlocutor.⁴⁴ When the Angel attempts to rouse Joseph a second time, his exclamation 'We! Now es þis a farly fare' momentarily allows audiences to believe that he finally comprehends the significance of this interaction.⁴⁵ However, this impression is instantly undercut through the following lines 'For to be cached bathe here and þare, | And nowhere may have rest', which comically reveal the persistence of Joseph's ignorance.⁴⁶ The repeated failure of Joseph's senses to supply him with reliable insight into spiritual truths seems to imply the inability of performances – which

⁴² Anonymous, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, ll. 43 and 165–66.

⁴³ Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, l. 248.

⁴⁵ Anonymous, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, l. 253.

⁴⁶ Anonymous, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, ll. 254–55.

must be absorbed through spectators' equally unreliable senses – to provide accurate doctrinal instruction.

Nevertheless, closer inspection reveals that, rather than interrogating the educational viability of religious performances, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* actually exploits Joseph's sensory fallibility to insist upon drama's capacity to transmit genuine knowledge of the events it portrays. This is because Joseph's inability to access divine realities through his senses establishes him as a stand-in for spectators, who are similarly incapable of gaining direct sensory access to the original events represented in the play. It is therefore significant that Joseph's eventual enlightenment is brought about neither by direct sensory contact with the truth nor through faith alone but instead through the Angel's verbal exposition. Finally resolving to speak with the Angel, Joseph invites it to 'Say, what arte þou? Telle me this thyng'.⁴⁷ Considerable emphasis is placed on the opening words 'Say' and 'Telle' in this line, contrasting Joseph's current desire to passively receive this information at second-hand with his former reliance on the primary evidence of his senses. Joseph's request is followed by twenty-five lines of explanation from the Angel, interrupted only once by Joseph's question 'And is this soth, aungell, þou saise?'.⁴⁸ Only then does Joseph understand, expressing his comprehension in explicitly sensory terms with the declaration 'Nowe lorde God full wele is me | That evyr þat I þis sight suld see'.⁴⁹ By metaphorically describing his newfound understanding as a form of 'sight', Joseph draws no distinction between knowledge acquired at first- and second-hand. This comment has wide-reaching theatrical implications, for if audiences are throughout this play aligned with Joseph, then clear parallels also exist between the Angel's narration and the performance itself, through which viewers' are permitted insight into events which we cannot witness at first-hand. Joseph's claim that the Angel's oration enables him to 'see' the events as if through his own senses therefore simultaneously

⁴⁷ Anonymous, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, l. 256.

⁴⁸ Anonymous, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, ll. 257–82.

⁴⁹ Anonymous, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, ll. 283–84.

implies that no difference exists between the knowledge gained by viewing performances and that which would have been acquired if one were present at the original events they portray.

As such, while *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* emphasises Joseph's sensory limitations, it emphatically does not do so in order to present experiential contact with the material world, and with performances specifically, as inherently problematic. Instead, the play uses Joseph's reliance on the Angel's account of Christ's conception to establish a parallel between the Angel's narration and the play itself, with the efficacy of the former attesting to the educational viability of the latter by establishing attendance at performances as a valid substitute for experiential knowledge. Mirroring its positive approach to 'bodily foode' despite its difference from spiritual sustenance, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* therefore presents plays as facilitating rather than conflicting with doctrinal instruction, even whilst acknowledging performances' representational rather than sacramental status.

An extended exploration of how the fundamental worldliness of performances contributes to their instructive potential rather than impeding it also takes place in the late fifteenth-century morality play *Mankind*. This suggestion initially seems somewhat counterintuitive in light of the negative theatrical connotations so obviously attendant upon the play's Vices. Many scholars have interpreted *Mankind's* Vices as distracting audiences from the play's moral messages, with Stanton B. Garner, Jr describing them as constituting 'the heart of the play's diverting theatricality' and claiming that their 'disrupting' actions not only win over Mankynde but also jeopardise spectators' 'attempt[s] to abstract higher meaning from the theatrical moment'.⁵⁰ After being interrupted by Myscheff during the Vices' first appearance onstage, Mercy exclaims 'Avoyde, good broþer! 3e ben culpable | To interrupte thus my talking delectable', framing Myscheff's intrusion as a disruption of the

⁵⁰ Stanton B. Garner, Jr., 'Theatricality in *Mankind* and *Everyman*', *Studies in Philology*, 84.3 (1987), 272–85 (pp. 276–77).

play's instructive message rather than as an integral aspect of it.⁵¹ This suggestion is corroborated by Nowadays's insistence that the Vices' behaviour 'ys no parte of [Mercy's] pley', again creating the uncomfortable impression that the Vices' influence is not safely contained within the world of the performance.⁵² Rather than presenting the Vices as allegorical straw-men to be effortlessly overcome by Mercy, the playwright therefore establishes them as posing a genuine moral threat to spectators, with their corruptive influence extending beyond the limits of the 'pley'.

The 'diverting theatricality' of the Vices is imbued with extensive meta-theatrical significance later in the play when Myscheff, New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought interrupt the action immediately prior to the entrance of the central Vice Titivillus, declaring that they 'xall gaper mony onto, | Ellys þer xall no man hym se'.⁵³ Estella-Antoanetta Ciobanu argues for a metaphorical interpretation of these lines, suggesting that 'the entrance fee routine' is merely 'evoked' at this point in the play.⁵⁴ Laurence M. Clopper similarly posits that this may be a 'begging joke', noting the 'considerable time' it would have taken to collect payment from every spectator in this way and questioning the 'necessity' of such an extended interruption when it would have been 'simpler and more profitable [...] to collect money at the door'.⁵⁵ Even so, it is not impossible that a smaller amount of money did change hands at this point, with Walker suggesting that a momentary disruption of the action whilst a 'hat' or similar vessel passes between some spectators is not only dramatically feasible but potentially theatrically productive. As well as creating a suspenseful pause which heightens audiences' anticipation of Titivillus's appearance, some such action would also make sense of the sixteen lines of extraneous dialogue which takes place between New Gyse's declaration and

⁵¹ Anonymous, *Mankind*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 259–79 (ll. 64–65).

⁵² Anonymous, *Mankind*, l. 84.

⁵³ Anonymous, *Mankind*, ll. 458–59.

⁵⁴ Estella-Antoaneta Ciobanu, 'Theatricality in *Mankind*: The Devil's "Real Presence" between the Sacred and the Profane', *Linguistă și Literatură*, 10.1 (2007), 253–61 (p. 258). Italics in original.

⁵⁵ Laurence M. Clopper, 'Mankind and Its Audience', *Comparative Drama*, 8.4 (1974), 347–55 (pp. 347–48).

Titivillus's entrance.⁵⁶ Even if interpreted symbolically, the break introduced here foregrounds the theatrical context of the performance, inviting spectators to question whether they are genuinely in attendance to learn how to eschew vice, or if they merely wish to see vacuous dramatic spectacles like 'a man wyth a hede þat [is] of grett ominpotens'.⁵⁷ A literal rendering of this scene, where viewers are invited to pay the Vices directly for the privilege of seeing the demon Titivillus, would still more starkly alert audiences to the potential moral dangers of patronising such performances.

Although *Mankind*'s portrayal of the Vices therefore appears to offer a decidedly negative view of theatrical productions, the play's conclusion casts this seemingly anti-theatrical suggestion in a far more nuanced light. Walker argues that *Mankind*'s Vices initially appear to be 'more attractive' than its Virtues, whose 'rather heavy didacticism' only succeeds as a result of the Vices' 'far more menacing and sinister' demeanour in the wake of Mankynde's corruption.⁵⁸ Garner concurs, noting that although 'didacticism and the things of the spirit triumph' at the play's conclusion, they nevertheless do so 'in concert with a brilliant display of the things of the world, and of the stage', with the Vices' vibrant theatricality never convincingly being eschewed by Mercy's dreary 'didacticism'.⁵⁹ However, Walker and Garner's readings of *Mankind* as advocating a transition from entertaining vice to solemn virtue neglect to take into account the manner in which Mercy eventually triumphs over the Vices. Rather than overcoming their theatrical dalliance with measured, sober instruction, Mercy must instead resort to a form of slapstick violence not unlike that previously monopolised by the Vices themselves in order to drive them away, causing them to exclaim in pain as he 'skaryth [them] wyth a bales'.⁶⁰ That Mercy must combat the Vices using the same 'knockabout humour' which characterises their own actions holds significant theatrical

⁵⁶ Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p. 258.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, *Mankind*, l. 462.

⁵⁸ Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p. 259.

⁵⁹ Garner, 'Theatricality in *Mankind* and *Everyman*', p. 280.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, *Mankind*, l. 808.

implications, seemingly conceding that the sensory appeal of physical comedy is more effective at eradicating vice than dry moralising despite its simultaneous potential to incentivise immorality.⁶¹ A similar message emerges in other contemporary plays, including in *Occupation and Idleness*, where after failing to spur Ydelnes to virtue using sober instruction, Doctrine and Occupation instead resolve to beat him into acquiescence, with Doctrine's exclamation 'Have here one two, and thre!' presumably being accompanied by an entertaining piece of dramatic slapstick.⁶² This, too, succeeds, beating the vice out of Ydelnes just as Mercy beats the Vices away from Mankynde.⁶³ Therefore, rather than establishing a dichotomy between theatrical Vices and dull Virtues, both *Mankind* and *Occupation and Idleness* instead identify entertainment with instruction, endorsing performances as a valid instructive tool precisely because of their worldliness. As such, they also implicitly suggest that moralists should utilise rather than spurn the power of spectacular dramaturgy, with the Vices' manifest sensory appeal plainly evidencing the risks of leaving theatricality only to those with less honourable intentions.

Always Read the Label: Consuming Food and Plays Correctly

It is therefore clear that many medieval plays align performances with food in order to acknowledge the fundamental worldliness of drama whilst simultaneously contending that no inherent conflict exists between religious devotion and bodily desires, material objects, or worldly pastimes. However, this explicitly pro-theatrical message is qualified by the simultaneous insistence in much contemporary drama that worldly things must be engaged with correctly in order to be of spiritual value. So much is apparent in the proverbial

⁶¹ Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p. 210.

⁶² Anonymous, *Occupation and Idleness*, at *From Stage to Page: Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Gerard NeCastro, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100610030653/http://www.umm.maine.edu/faculty/necastro/drama/comedy/occupation_full.html> [last accessed 13 May 2023], l. 757.

⁶³ Anonymous, *Occupation and Idleness*, ll. 785–89.

attribution of gluttony and drunkenness to medieval dramatic Vices, a trope which initially seems to cast food and drink itself in a negative light by associating gastronomic pleasure with moral corruption. Such is the case in *Wisdom* when, following their temptation by Satan, the Mightes Wyll, Mynde, and Understondyng become preoccupied with ‘mete and drynke and ease’, planning to enjoy a ‘good dyner’ together which they expect to be accompanied by plenty of ‘wyne’.⁶⁴ Similarly, in *Mankind* the eponymous hero’s first instinct upon being corrupted by Titivillus is to ‘hast [him] to þe ale-house’, with the Mightes and Mankynde’s interest in food and drink signifying their eschewal of spiritual piety in favour of worldly pleasures.⁶⁵ Fondness for wine in particular operates in many contemporary plays as a form of theatrical shorthand for characters’ engagement in fleshly pursuits, as evidenced in *Mundus et Infans* through Folye’s characterisation as haunting London’s ‘tavernes’ in order to ‘drynke the wyne’ on offer there.⁶⁶ Wine is further vilified later in the play when Folye envisages using it to corrupt Manhode, promising to ‘drawe hym suche a draught of drynke | That Conscience he shall awaye cast’.⁶⁷ In *Youth*, meanwhile, wine is closely associated with lechery, evidenced when Riot invites Youth to join him at a ‘tavern’ with the promise that there he can not only ‘drink diverse wine’, but also ‘have a wench to kiss | Whensoever [he] wilt’.⁶⁸ *Mundus et Infans* and *Youth* therefore present wine-drinking not only as problematic in and of itself, but also as potentially facilitating other forms of sinful conduct.

Nevertheless, in both of these plays it is not wine-drinking in general but excessive wine-consumption specifically which facilitates immorality; ‘suche a draught’ as will subdue Manhode’s conscience in *Mundus et Infans*, and the amalgamation of ‘diverse’ wines in *Youth*. In *Mankind*, too, the Mightes and Mankynde’s feasting and drinking come at the

⁶⁴ Anonymous, *Wisdom*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 235–57 (ll. 814, 822, and 825).

⁶⁵ Anonymous, *Mankind*, l. 610.

⁶⁶ Anonymous, *Mundus et Infans*, l. 585.

⁶⁷ Anonymous, *Mundus et Infans*, ll. 651–52.

⁶⁸ Anonymous, *Youth*, at *From Stage to Page: Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Gerard NeCastro, <<https://web.archive.org/web/20100610025750/http://www.umm.maine.edu/faculty/necastro/drama/comedy/youth.html>> [last accessed 13 May 2023], ll. 283–88.

expense of their physical and spiritual labours, leaving open the possibility that it is the manner rather than the fact of their use which constitutes a misdemeanour.⁶⁹ Rather than offering a reductive view of comestibles as inherently problematic for their close association with fleshly pleasures, these plays instead offer the more nuanced argument that the moral alignment of food and drink depends on how they are used. This point recurs in a wide range of medieval plays, as when in the York Cycle's *The Fall of Man* Eve explains to Satan that she and Adam may 'Take al þat us goode þought' from the fruit trees in Eden, a phrase which admits the possibility that they are free to consume food for pleasure rather than simply out of necessity.⁷⁰ Eve's following claim that 'a tree outt [sic] is tane' from those permitted to them which 'Wolde do harme to neyghe it ought' strongly suggests that it is not food consumption in general so much as it is Eve's 'glotonye' – the extension of her desire for food beyond the prescribed limits – which constitutes a sin.⁷¹ This idea is expressed in no uncertain terms in *Lucidus and Dubius*, wherein the literal-minded Dubius ponders how apples can be so dangerous when 'A man may have a pek for a peny!'.⁷² Lucidus then informs him that it is not

for the applis worthynes,
but for [man's] unbuxumnes,
that he wolde of the appel note
þat God had hem bothe forbode.⁷³

In doing so, Lucidus contends that it is not any inherent quality of the Forbidden Fruit itself but rather Adam and Eve's disobedience which brings about mankind's corruption. Similarly, in *Mankind* Mercy qualifies his stern advice to Mankynde to 'Dystempure not yowr brayn wyth goode ale nor wyth wyn' with the assertion that 'Measure ys treasure. Y forbyde yow not

⁶⁹ Anonymous, *Wisdom*, ll. 381–92; Anonymous, *Mankind*, l. 586–87.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, *The Fall of Man*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 21–24 (l. 31).

⁷¹ Anonymous, *The Fall of Man*, ll. 32–33 and 360.

⁷² Anonymous, *Lucidus and Dubius*, l. 192.

⁷³ Anonymous, *Lucidus and Dubius*, ll. 194–97.

þe use'.⁷⁴ Mercy here explicitly presents of the moral value of 'ale' and 'wyn' as contextually determined rather than inherent, sanctioning even recreational drinking provided that this is informed by the guiding principle of moderation.

These plays' approach to food and drink as compatible with virtue only insofar as they are consumed appropriately finds an intriguing parallel in contemporary approaches to performances themselves. Evidence for what constitutes proper consumption in a theatrical context emerges in the *Tretise*, which condemns plays on the grounds that they encourage spectators to think not 'of þeire gode feiþ wiþinneforþe, but more of þeire sizt wiþouteforþ'.⁷⁵ The *Tretise* here contends that it is wrong to focus only on the sensory exterior of theatrical performances, implying that in order to benefit from religious drama spectators must instead extrapolate from the staged material to their own spiritual lives. Many medieval plays themselves critique excessively shallow, materially oriented approaches to religious doctrine by attributing these to either dim-witted or explicitly corrupt characters. Throughout *Lucidus and Dubius*, for instance, Dubius continually interrupts Lucidus with inane questions that evidence his excessive preoccupation with the material details of scriptural stories, as when he asks how Jesus was endowed with 'clothis so sone' if He was entombed 'al naked'.⁷⁶ The comical absurdity of Dubius's greater interest in Jesus's clothing than in His miraculous resurrection warns viewers against similarly focusing too extensively on incidental material details. A more sinister variation on this theme appears in *Youth*, where after being informed by Charity that if he repents he will see 'angels singing with saints bright | Before the face of God' the degenerate Youth protests that he would require 'a ladder to climb so high', and that doing so might cause him to 'break [his] neck'.⁷⁷ In contrast to Dubius's apparently innocent vacuity, Youth's literalness here comes across as intentionally facetious, constituting a

⁷⁴ Anonymous, *Mankind*, ll. 236–37.

⁷⁵ Anonymous, *The Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, l. 106.

⁷⁶ Anonymous, *Lucidus and Dubius*, ll. 499–502.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, *Youth*, ll. 94–102.

deliberate attempt to discredit Charity's advice. Both of these plays thereby suggest that adopting an inappropriately materialistic approach to doctrinal and moral instruction has the capacity to undermine its effectiveness. This holds clear and troubling implications for religious performances, corroborating the *Tretise's* claim that plays can be rendered not only didactically useless but potentially even morally threatening when spectators attend to their sensory components instead of heeding their edifying messages.

Several contemporary plays use culinary imagery to foreground the importance of looking beyond material signifiers to the spiritual reality they signify. This constitutes a particularly prominent trope in the York Cycle, wherein wine is repeatedly presented as the drink of choice for Christ's antagonists; Pilate encourages his wife to drink 'wynne' before leaving his court in *Christ Before Pilate I*, whilst Herod calls for 'wyne' to facilitate sleep in *Christ Before Herod*.⁷⁸ However, since these characters are predictably invested with a multiplicity of other vices in order to highlight their antagonism to Christian values, it seems significant that the nature of their wine drinking does not appear to be overtly sinful.⁷⁹ Unlike that of the Vices and corrupt worldly figures in *Youth*, *Mankind*, and *Mundus et Infans*, these Biblical tyrants' wine consumption remains within the bounds of moderation and does not directly contribute to any more execrable conduct, indicating that its function in these plays goes beyond that of offering a general condemnation of drinking or drunkenness.

The dramaturgical and didactic reasons behind the decision to present Pilate and Herod as wine-drinkers but not as drunkards may find explanation in wine's Eucharistic role in medieval Catholic England. As Jay Zysk explains, throughout this period orthodox Catholics adhered to the doctrine of transubstantiation, believing that at the instigation of the officiating priest 'the sacramental signs of bread and wine become Christ's body and blood at

⁷⁸ Anonymous, *Christ Before Pilate I*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 99–111 (ll. 93–94 and 101); Anonymous, *Christ Before Herod*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 112–22 (l. 41).

⁷⁹ Anonymous, *Christ Before Pilate I*, ll. 19 and 50–52; Anonymous; *Christ Before Herod*, ll. 53–55.

the level of substance'.⁸⁰ To view this process as anything other than a literal transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood was considered heretical, and as such members of the mystery and morality plays' original audiences would likely have viewed wine and Christ's blood not merely as closely linked but instead as potentially interchangeable substances. The fondness of Christ's enemies for a drink with such prominent conceptual ties to His divine blood ironically signifies their misplaced appreciation for the worldly as opposed to the spiritual, as well as indicating their misconception of Jesus as a human rather than a divine figure. Undiluted by concurrent associations with drunkenness, the tyrants' consumption of wine reflects their inappropriate relationship not with alcohol, but with Christ. This reading is corroborated by the portrayal of wine in *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas*, where following Caiaphas's request for 'wyne of þe best' one of his soldiers presents him with a drink whilst inviting him 'this cuppe saverly for to kisse'.⁸¹ This reference to a 'kisse' upon the chalice recalls Caiaphas's betrayal of Jesus with a 'kiss' and foreshadows this action later in the cycle, establishing a clear parallel between Jesus and the cup of wine.⁸² Rather than cautioning spectators against drunkenness, these plays instead utilise wine's liturgical significance to stress the importance of looking past material signifiers to the spiritual reality underlying them; of recognising Christ's divine blood behind the sight, smell, and taste of Earthly wine.

The meta-theatrical significance of this message is afforded particular attention in *Christ Before Herod*, wherein Herod's fondness for wine exists alongside his conception of Jesus as a source of entertainment, evidenced when he enthuses on two separate occasions about the 'games' or 'good game' he envisages having with the captive Christ.⁸³ Of great

⁸⁰ Jay Zysk, *Shadow and Substance: Eucharistic Controversy and English Drama Across the Reformation Divide* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), p. 22.

⁸¹ Anonymous, *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 89–98 (ll. 75 and 82).

⁸² Matthew 26. 48–49.

⁸³ Anonymous, *Christ Before Herod*, ll. 120 and 166.

significance when interpreting Herod's approach to Jesus here is its apparently exceptional nature. Indeed, at the outset of the play Herod's court is characterised by order and solemnity, evidenced when he instructs his courtiers to 'se þat no durdan be done' and that 'no noyse be neghand þis none' while he sleeps.⁸⁴ Moreover, on first learning that something which 'bodur outhir bourdyng [i.e. merriment] or bales [i.e. troubles] to brewe' is taking place Herod exclaims 'Þanne gete we some harrowe full hastely at hande!', taking more heed of the threat of 'bales' than the promise of 'bourdyng'.⁸⁵ It is only when Herod discovers that it is Jesus Who has been brought to him that he bids his guests 'welcome' and begins to anticipate the spectacle to follow.⁸⁶ This initial impression of the gravity of Herod's court precludes a reading of his excitement at Jesus's arrival as evidencing his immoderate fondness for entertainments in general, with his approach to 'bourdyng' very closely paralleling his approach to 'wyne'. This may suggest that both are informed by a similar fault, with Herod's anticipation of having 'good game' with Jesus constituting a critique not of excessive revelry but of a failure to recognise the presence of divinity within and behind a material surface. Furthermore, rather than establishing him as the medieval equivalent of a pantomime villain whose hyperbolic immorality invites only derision, this surprisingly restrained portrait of Herod enhances the play's didactic potential by encouraging spectators to consider more seriously whether they, too, are subject to this flaw. Whilst contemporary viewers may not have considered attendance at religious plays to be symptomatic of an excessive fondness for revelry, many may have been guilty of attending to the spectacular rather than the instructive elements of these performances, the fault attributed to them by the *Tretise. Christ Before Herod's* condemnation of Herod not for excessive carousing in general, but for viewing Jesus as a source of entertainment specifically, therefore serves to challenge spectators rather than providing a reassuring affirmation of their moral superiority to Herod.

⁸⁴ Anonymous, *Christ Before Herod*, ll. 42 and 46.

⁸⁵ Anonymous, *Christ Before Herod*, ll. 81–82.

⁸⁶ Anonymous, *Christ Before Herod*, l. 117.

Interestingly, however, in taking this approach *Christ Before Herod* also encourages introspection rather than complacency in viewers, potentially helping spectators to avoid repeating Herod's mistake rather than simply warning them against it. Another way in which *Christ Before Herod* creates this effect is through its characterisation of Jesus, Who says 'nozȝt o worde' in response to the provocations of Herod and his attendants.⁸⁷ In this particular instance, Jesus's refusal to provide any verbal or visual entertainment subverts Herod's attempts to transform Him into a theatrical spectacle, further exposing and undermining Herod's inappropriately shallow approach to the divine. However, Christ's marked lack of theatricality throughout the York Cycle as a whole also works to eliminate the distinction between the plays and the events they represent, thereby encouraging spectators to identify the staged events with reality and, implicitly, aligning those who approach them merely as entertainments with Herod himself. In almost every appearance He makes throughout the York Cycle, Jesus is portrayed as eschewing performativity. So much is the case in *Christ Before Pilate II*, for instance, when after the soldiers taunt Jesus and 'scourge [Him] with whips' they express their shock that He 'list not lyft up [H]is lippis | And pray us to have pety on [H]is paunch'.⁸⁸ Indeed, Jesus's only speech in *Christ Before Pilate II* follows Pilate's request that He 'Speke' to 'excuse' Himself of the crimes He is charged with committing.⁸⁹ Instead of remaining silent or simply repeating the terse scriptural words 'Thou hast said', Christ at this point delivers a succinct sermon on the importance of controlling one's speech 'gudly like as God wolde', allowing the playwright to draw self-reflexive attention to Christ's silence whilst studiously avoiding imbuing this personification with any individuated personality.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Anonymous, *Christ Before Herod*, l. 270.

⁸⁸ Anonymous, *Christ Before Pilate II*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 123–33 (p. 130 and ll. 370–71).

⁸⁹ Anonymous, *Christ Before Pilate II*, l. 299.

⁹⁰ Matthew 26. 64; Anonymous, *Christ Before Pilate II*, l. 302.

As well as imbuing Jesus with a dignified air that sets Him apart from His less admirable stage companions, His reservation throughout the York Cycle eliminates as far as possible the distinction between the represented and the real Christ. This is perhaps because an overtly theatrical representation of Jesus would risk highlighting the unreality of the production by calling excessive attention to the non-scriptural words of the playwright and the human voices and bodies of the actors onstage. Jesus's silence and inaction, conversely, preserve the dramatic illusion as far as possible, enabling spectators to more easily suspend their disbelief and to identify the staged figure with Jesus Himself. This approach has a particularly significant influence on the dramaturgical impact of *The Crucifixion*. Walker draws attention to this play's intensely self-conscious use of theatricality, describing the concealment of Jesus from audiences 'until the moment when the Cross is lifted and the powerful icon of the crucified Christ suddenly becomes visible' as a 'master-stroke of didactic dramaturgy'.⁹¹ However, I would contend that the profundity of this scene is also partly indebted to Jesus's un-theatrical portrayal in the cycle's earlier plays, which by collapsing the distinction between performer and Christ encourages spectators to approach this moment as a solemn event of acute sacral significance rather than, as might the dramatised Herod, as a source of spectacular entertainment. The York Cycle therefore not only highlights but also mitigates the dangers of viewing performances too superficially, with its portrayal of Christ and His antagonists guiding audiences to recognise the spiritual import of the staged material.

Another play which utilises food to illustrate the importance of distinguishing the worldly from the spiritual is the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*. In this play, the merchant Aristorius, as part of his plot to steal the Eucharistic wafer and sell it to the Jewish character Jonathas, arranges a feast for the priest Isoder with the intention of sending him to sleep,

⁹¹ Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p. 134.

during which they share ‘a lofe of lyght bred’ accompanied by ‘Romney Red’ wine.⁹² The combination of bread and red wine here strongly recalls the components of the Eucharist, with their consumption in a secular context by Aristorius signalling his failure to comprehend their spiritual significance – a fault which explains his misconception of the Host as a material object to be bought and sold. This impression is strengthened further through the praise Aristorius directs towards the wine accompanying their meal, insisting that ‘There ys no precyouser, fer nor nere, | For all wykkyd metys yt wyll degest’.⁹³ In light of this feast’s status as a worldly counterpart to the Mass, this compliment evidences Aristorius’s forgetfulness of the salvific power of Christ’s blood, which is surely ‘precyouser’ than any Earthly wine. The play therefore critiques Aristorius’s inability to distinguish between the medicinal purgation of ‘wykkyd metys’ from the stomach and the spiritual cleansing of ‘wykkyd’ deeds from the soul. In the anti-Semitic terms typical of much medieval English literature, the play’s Jewish characters are similarly presented as mistaking the spiritual for the worldly, a trait which is once again evidenced in their approach to food and drink. Early in the play, Masphat describes how Christ’s followers ‘faryd as dronk men of pymente or vernage’ after receiving the Holy Ghost, a comparison which indicates Masphat’s inability to differentiate spiritual elation from bodily intoxication.⁹⁴ This materialistic approach to Christian doctrine appears again in Jonathas’s insistence that Christians ‘beleve on a cake’, with Jonathas and his companions resolving to test whether or not the Host contains ‘eny blood’.⁹⁵ Although this testing takes the form of a ‘newe Passyon’, Ernst Gerhardt also draws attention to its prominent culinary dimension, describing the experiment as ‘an extended kitchen scene [...] in which the Jewish characters put culinary implements to destructive

⁹² Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 213–33 (ll. 260–62).

⁹³ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, ll. 266–67.

⁹⁴ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, l. 348.

⁹⁵ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, ll. 120 and 372.

rather than productive ends'.⁹⁶ Their treatment of the Host as a purely culinary object in this way constitutes a further attempt by the playwright to indicate their excessively literal approach to Christian mysteries, evidenced when not the Eucharistic wafer but Christ, the 'Bread of Heaven', emerges livened/leavened from the 'ovyn' into which the Host was placed.⁹⁷

However, even whilst foregrounding the importance of recognising the spiritual reality underlying certain material signifiers, *The Play of the Sacrament* warns against the similarly erroneous practice of conflating the two – and, specifically, of identifying theatrical representation with sacramental reality. This notion is implicit in the embedded performance of the physician Brundyche and his disgruntled servant Colle, whose intrusion into the play is highly dramaturgically significant. Throughout his time onstage, Colle expounds at length upon Brundyche's devotion to fleshly pleasures, depicting him as a drunkard who is a 'dettter' in 'every taverne' and hinting at his sexual licentiousness by noting his particular fondness for treating 'wydowes, maydese, and wyfes'.⁹⁸ In addition to these slights against his character, Colle also casts doubt on Brundyche's medical competence, comparing his judgement to that of 'he þat hathe noon eyn' and claiming that 'Thowh a man w[e]re ryght heyle, he cowl soon make hym sek!'.⁹⁹ This scene's apparent superfluity to the central plot has presented a challenge for many scholars of the play, with some going so far as to speculate that it may have originated in another performance and strayed into the Croxton play at a later date.¹⁰⁰ This claim has received considerable criticism, and has largely been supplanted by the view articulated by Heather Hill-Vásquez that Brundyche acts as a corrupt worldly parallel for 'Christ, the spiritual healer [W]ho replaces all fleshly physicians', serving

⁹⁶ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, l. 723; Ernst Gerhardt, 'Food Production in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Comparative Drama*, 49.3 (2015), 313–33 (p. 315).

⁹⁷ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, p. 228.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, ll. 463; 515.

⁹⁹ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, ll. 460; 539.

¹⁰⁰ Jillian Linster, 'The Physician and His Servant in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Early Theatre*, 20.2 (2017), 31–48 (pp. 33–34).

the same function as the titular characters of the Chester *Shepherds*.¹⁰¹ Walker concurs with this interpretation, noting that Brundyche ‘brings only a parody of healing’ whereas ‘Christ, the true “medicine for the soul”, offers the real thing’.¹⁰² This reading finds additional support in Christ’s explicitly medicinal role within the play, where as well as enacting what many members of the play’s original Christian audiences would interpret as an act of spiritual healing by instigating the Jewish characters’ conversion to Christianity, Jesus also fulfils Brundyche’s reneged promise to make Jonathas’s damaged hand ‘*hole agayn*’.¹⁰³

In light of this fact, the self-conscious theatricality of Colle and Brundyche’s interlude takes on additional significance. The meta-theatrical nature of this episode becomes clear immediately through Colle’s opening address to the ‘fayre felawshyppe’ of spectators surrounding the performance space, which alongside Brundyche’s later acknowledgement of the ‘grete congregacyon’ standing before them creates the illusion that these characters are operating within the real world of audiences rather than the play-world of the other characters.¹⁰⁴ This effect is enhanced through Colle and Brundyche’s explicit performativity throughout this scene, evidenced in Colle’s formulaic ‘*proclamation*’ of his master’s alleged skills – a routine he is later instructed to repeat by Brundyche himself.¹⁰⁵ Like his and Brundyche’s direct acknowledgement of the audience, Colle’s stylised proclamations call attention to the theatrical context of this performance, thereby deconstructing the dramatic illusion established in the first section of the play-proper and heightening spectators’ emotional distance from its events by foregrounding their unreality.

The timing of this interlude therefore seems particularly meaningful, with its conclusion coming just sixty lines before the theatrical climax of the performance, when the

¹⁰¹ Heather Hill-Vásquez, ““The precious body of Crist that they tretyn in ther hondis”: *Miraclis Pleyinge* and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*”, *Early Theatre*, 4.1 (2001), 53–72 (p. 65).

¹⁰² Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p. 214.

¹⁰³ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, p. 229.

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, ll. 445 and 521–22.

¹⁰⁵ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, p. 225 and l. 524.

‘ovyn’ containing the Host ‘*must ryve asunder and blede out at þe cranys, and an image appere owt with woundys bledynge*’.¹⁰⁶ Although it is unclear how this revelation scene would have been staged, its manifestly spectacular nature seems calculated to extract astonishment from audiences.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, its significance is surely altered by Colle and Brundyche’s impertinent interruption, which by drawing spectators’ attention away from the play’s plot and towards its setting ensures that audiences remain acutely aware of the theatricality of this revelation. Michael Jones argues that the oven scene functions as a moment of pro-theatrical commentary, which by highlighting the ability of performativity to convert the Jewish characters contributes to the play’s self-conscious ‘promotion’ of drama.¹⁰⁸ However, I would contend that the placement of this scene immediately after the interlude instead calls attention to the fundamental distinction between this performance and the sacred event it purports to represent. In light of Colle and Brundyche’s explicit association with worldliness, their extensive use of performativity appears to align plays themselves with matters of the flesh rather than those of the spirit. As a result, their intrusion at this point does not merely generate dramatic tension by delaying the play’s anticipated dénouement but actually ensures that viewers carry not an admiration for performativity but an impression of its hollowness and its distance from Christian miracles into the culmination of the performance. Despite its apparent thematic incongruity, Colle and Brundyche’s interruption therefore serves a function perfectly complementary to that of the Croxton play’s central plot. Whilst the events depicted within the play caution against the failure to recognise spiritual truths behind material signifiers, the juxtaposition of the physician-scene with the revelation of the Host’s divine essence prompts audiences to acknowledge the fundamental distinction between signs and sacraments, miracles and plays.

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, p. 228.

¹⁰⁷ See Greg Walker, ‘And Here’s Your Host...: Jews and Others in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*’, *Jewish Culture and History*, 11.2 (2009), 41–56 (p. 55, Footnote 19).

¹⁰⁸ Michael Jones, ‘Theatrical History in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*’, *ELH*, 66.2 (1999), 223–60 (pp. 232–35).

Conclusion

It is therefore evident that food occupies a meta-theatrical role in a wide range of medieval plays, with dramatic representations of food in this era being used to defend performances' didactic function on the condition that they are consumed appropriately by audiences. Rather than presenting food as diametrically opposed to religious piety and moral virtue owing to its worldliness, contemporary plays instead suggest that the culinary can function as a gateway to spiritual knowledge, provided that it is neither appreciated purely for its own sake nor erroneously imbued with sacred qualities. By simultaneously highlighting the parallels between food and drama, contemporary playwrights suggest that theatrical performances can serve a positive devotional role so long as they, too, are approached neither as meaningless sources of sensory pleasure nor, alternatively, as sacred events in and of themselves.

Nutritious Fare to Junk Food: Shifting Attitudes to Drama in Post-Reformation England

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that the recurrent alignment of food and drama in medieval plays foregrounds their shared worldliness without simultaneously reflecting negatively on performances themselves. Indeed, medieval dramatists seem to use this parallel to suggest that plays, like food, are safe and even beneficial when engaged with appropriately. The self-professed corporeality of medieval drama, in conjunction with its alignment with Catholic worship, is often used to explain the antagonism of many sixteenth-century Protestants towards performances of all kinds. Arthur F. Marotti, for instance, links ‘the Puritan hostility [...] to theatre’ in this era to ‘the perceived connection between aesthetic representation and idolatry’.¹ Similarly, Michael O’Connell attributes sixteenth-century Protestants’ proverbial distrust of drama to the way in which it ‘overpowers’ spectators through its ‘sensual appeal’ and ‘engrosses its participants by its very physicality’.² However, this assertion is in many ways inadequate as a means of explaining Reformers’ eschewal of sensory-oriented performances in the later sixteenth century, as other scholars have noted. Although Huston Diehl identifies early Protestantism’s ‘deep distrust of the visible, the theatrical, and the imaginary’, she disputes the suggestion that anti-theatricalism is an inherent element of Reformed doctrine, contending that the Reformation instead fostered the emergence of a new, ‘uniquely Protestant’ form of drama.³ Significant support for Diehl’s argument arises from the fact that throughout the middle decades of the sixteenth century drama was regularly employed as a tool for disseminating Protestant doctrine. As Jeffrey Leininger points out,

¹ Arthur F. Marotti, ‘In Defence of Idolatry: Residual Catholic Culture and the Protestant Assault on the Sensuous in Early Modern England’, in *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. by Lowell Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp.27–51 (p. 35).

² Michael O’Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 19.

³ Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theatre in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 2 and 5.

‘[f]ar from being simply an occasional event, the use of drama by the English Reformers was a deliberate, comprehensive, and often co-ordinated programme with the purpose of destroying the traditional faith and erecting a new one in its place’.⁴ Katrin Beushausen even points out that the authors of these Protestant plays regularly ‘directed anti-theatrical tropes against the hypocrisy and spectacle of the Catholic Church, not against theatre in its entirety’.⁵ This complicates the simple dichotomy between Reformed doctrine and theatricality, and raises the question of ‘why evangelical ministers came to abandon drama as a medium for communicating godly ideas to general audiences’ – a subject which Erin E. Kelly identifies as under-explored.⁶

Throughout this chapter, I will contribute to this discussion by assessing the various factors influencing drama’s transition from a tool for the dissemination of religious doctrine to a recreational practice widely condemned as antagonistic to Reformed theology.⁷ I will begin by examining alterations to the treatment of food in Reformation-era plays, focusing particularly on contemporary dramatists’ frequent portrayal of culinary and spiritual matters as opposed rather than aligned. I will then move on to consider the factors influencing drama’s transition throughout the sixteenth century from an instrument of spiritual instruction to a pastime viewed by many Protestant polemicists as a secular distraction from moral and eschatological matters, thoroughly embedded in the now-maligned world of food and materiality. In doing so, I will consider in turn the increased importance of controlling audiences’ interpretations of religious performances after the Reformation, the inherent

⁴ Jeffrey Leininger, ‘Evangelical “Enterluders”’: Patronage and Playing in Reformation England’, *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 4.1 (2002), 48–93 (p. 50).

⁵ Katrin Beushausen, *Theatre and the English Public from Reformation to Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 36.

⁶ Erin E. Kelly, ‘Doubt and Religious Drama Across Sixteenth-Century England, or Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Plays?’, in *The Chester Cycle in Context, 1555–1575: Religion, Drama, and the Impact of Change*, ed. by Jessica Dell, Helen Ostovich, and David Klausner (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 47–64 (p. 60).

⁷ Erin E. Kelly, ‘Doubt and Religious Drama Across Sixteenth-Century England, or Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Plays?’, in *The Chester Cycle in Context, 1555–1575: Religion, Drama, and the Impact of Change*, ed. by Jessica Dell, Helen Ostovich, and David Klausner (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 47–64 (p. 60).

conflict between the dramatic form and religious Reformers' privileging of meaning over appearance, and the impact of Calvinism on both the style and the function of contemporary plays. Although culinary imagery is not always centre-stage in this chapter, understanding how the changing theological climate of sixteenth-century England influenced contemporary attitudes towards drama is essential to comprehending, in turn, the role of the drama-as-food metaphor in early modern performances.

Before proceeding further, it is important to highlight the fact that the (largely Puritan) anti-theatricalism of the later sixteenth century does not emerge directly from the Reformation itself. Concerns regarding the social impact of performances are, of course, present in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, with David Kathman pointing out that 'in the spring of 1542 the London city authorities moved to suppress [playing in livery company halls] as part of a wave of general repression'.⁸ However, Kathman also notes that these prohibitions were 'mostly aimed at [P]rotestant [R]eformers', a fact which plainly indicates that this earlier form of theatrical condemnation and repression was not motivated by the same force that spurred the critiques offered by anti-theatrical polemicists later in the century.⁹ Indeed, the apparent lack of conflict between Protestantism and performances in the first half of the sixteenth century strongly suggests that the vitriolic anti-theatricalism which emerges later on does so in reaction to something which occurs after the Reformation rather than arising organically from Reformed doctrine.

Since the surge of anti-theatrical tracts in the 1570s follows fast on the heels of the construction of London's first purpose-built playhouses, the obvious candidate for a contributing factor seems to be the contemporary rise in drama's popularity and the subsequent commercialisation of performances which this facilitated. This is certainly the view put forward by Jonas Barish, who suggests that anti-theatricality 'moves into high gear'

⁸ David Kathman, 'The Rise of Commercial Playing in 1540s London', *Early Theatre*, 12.1 (2009), 15–38 (p. 19).

⁹ Kathman, 'The Rise of Commercial Playing', p. 19.

with ‘the building of the playhouses [...], the creation of a permanent class of professional actors under the aegis of the crown, and the gradual tightening of government control over all theatrical activity’.¹⁰ However, many scholars now take exception to the notion that the establishment of these playhouses constituted a significant alteration in the contemporary theatrical landscape. Andy Kesson, Lucy Munro, and Callan Davies, for instance, argue that ‘Elizabethan playhouses emerged from a longer history of commercial playing that stretched back to at least the beginnings of the [sixteenth] century’.¹¹ Kathman is more specific, claiming that by the 1540s there is ‘evidence of players paying to rent out playing venues such as livery company halls, and evidence of early authorities trying to suppress or control independent plays being performed outside the traditional channels’ and noting ‘the use of London inns for plays starting in the 1550s’.¹² Maura Giles-Watson places the origins of English commercial drama even earlier, claiming that the contemporary playwright and publisher John Rastell ‘leased property fronting on Old Street in Finsbury where he built a house and erected London’s first purpose-built stage for dramatic performances’ in 1524.¹³ This evidence suggests that drama had been operating on a semi-professional basis for decades before the first records of specially designated public theatres appear, rendering it unwise to attribute the moral objections of anti-theatrical pamphleteers to the advent of the London playhouses. Indeed, by allowing stricter regulations to be placed upon performances, the emergence of purpose-built theatres was theoretically able to limit the theatrical dissemination of politically and theologically subversive messages. Taken together, these details indicate that the anti-theatricalism of the later sixteenth century was motivated by factors occurring in or throughout the three decades separating the Reformation from the

¹⁰ Jonas Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 83.

¹¹ Andy Kesson, Lucy Munro, and Callan Davies, ‘London Theatrical Culture, 1560–1590’, <<http://oxfordre.com/literature/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-1194?print=pdf>> [last accessed 24 June 2023], p. 3.

¹² Kathman, ‘The Rise of Commercial Playing’, pp. 18 and 30.

¹³ Maura Giles-Watson, ‘John Rastell’s London Stage: Reconstructing Repertory and Collaborative Practice’, *Early Theatre*, 16.2 (2013), 171–84 (p. 172).

construction of London's commercial theatres. Determining what those factors were provides crucial insights into Renaissance conceptions of theatrical performances, and so into the significance of the drama-as-food conceit on the early modern stage.

Food, Drama, and Worldliness in Sixteenth-Century Plays

As noted above, it is a common scholarly contention that Puritan moralists' condemnation of theatricality stems from sixteenth-century Protestantism's inherent distrust of materiality. Although some contemporary dramatists do adhere to this view by identifying a conflict between the sensory and the divine, this approach is by no means limited to Reformers. For instance, despite his 'obvious Catholicism', John Heywood – whose plays maintained favour in the Henrician court of the 1530s, notwithstanding his 'opposition to the Reformation' – expresses such sentiments in *The Four PP* (c. 1533), where in response to the false devotional objects presented by the Pardoner the Potycary asks in disgust if he is required to 'praise relykes when they stynke'.¹⁴ Despite its prominence within medieval Catholicism, relic worship was a target for satirists long before the Reformation, with the Pardoner of *The Four PP* clearly descending from the same tradition as Geoffrey Chaucer's Pardoner, another unscrupulous pedlar of false relics.¹⁵ The Potycary's revulsion at the relics set before him also closely echoes that of Gratian Pullus in Erasmus's *A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake* (1526).¹⁶ Here, the emphatic materiality of the 'arm [...] with the bloodstained flesh still on it' presented before the pilgrims implicitly casts aspersions upon the practice of revering saintly relics, and indeed rather than kissing this particular relic Gratian Pullus instead shrinks away,

¹⁴ Greg Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 433; John Heywood, *The Four PP*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 433–54 (l. 537).

¹⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Pardoner's Prologue*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 194–96.

¹⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, trans. and ed. by Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 619–74 (p. 619).

‘looking rather disgusted’.¹⁷ Though in Heywood’s case the critique is softened by the explicit falsity of the relics in question, *The Four PP* nevertheless implies a conflict between worldliness and holiness, with relics’ sensory tangibility providing a clue to their illegitimacy.

Nevertheless, this is a surprisingly uncommon view within Reformation-era plays, which instead often deconstruct the notion of a firm dichotomy between the material and the spiritual in a manner comparable to their medieval counterparts. This is certainly the case in John Bale’s *The Three Laws* (c. 1548), a dramatisation of what Bale identifies as the scriptural transition from Natural to Mosaic to Christian law. Throughout this play, instead of denigrating medical cures for their bodily rather than spiritual function Bale utilises spectators’ appreciation for worldly medicine to advance his critique of Catholicism, which he associates specifically with counterfeit cures. So much is apparent when Sodomismus claims that Idololatria

can by sayenge her *Ave Marye*,
And by other charmes of sorcerye,
Ease men of toth ake, by and bye,
Yea, and fatche the Devyll from Hell.¹⁸

Bale’s association of the Catholic ‘*Ave Marye*’ prayer with ‘other charmes of sorcerye’ here is entirely unsurprising, with his insistence that both can ‘fatche the Devyll from Hell’ straightforwardly presenting Catholic devotional practices as harnessing demonic rather than divine power. However, this relatively simple message is complicated by the incongruous suggestion that this prayer can also ‘Ease men of the toth ake’. It is possible to interpret this claim as offering a critique of what Bale sees as Catholicism’s excessively corporeal focus, presenting devotional practices undertaken with the intention of procuring physical health (as

¹⁷ Erasmus, *A Pilgrimage for Religion’s Sake*, p. 643.

¹⁸ John Bale, *The Three Laws*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 493–535 (ll. 413–16).

opposed to spiritual wellbeing) as invoking the ‘Devyll’ rather than God. Indeed, Bale highlights the subservience of the physical to the spiritual elsewhere in his dramatic corpus, as when in *King Johan* (1538) Sedicyon claims that ‘If your ale be sower and your breade moulde, certayne, | Now wyll they waxe swete, for the Pope hath blest ye agayne’.¹⁹ Even if not taken as an outright falsehood on Sedicyon’s part, this assertion attributes to the pope power only over the material world of culinary items, ironically belittling his authority by foregrounding its limitations.

However, there are signs throughout *The Three Laws* that Bale’s approach to materiality is more nuanced than it first appears. Key to the interpretation of Sodomismus’s claims is Infidelitas’s earlier insistence to Naturae Lex that by taking a ‘fart’ in ‘serupp or in sowse’ he can procure ‘easement of [his] toth’.²⁰ This manifestly offensive and facetious claim recalls some of the more outlandish medieval medical cures, which despite their longevity in print were beginning to fall out of favour in the sixteenth century.²¹ The repetition of the ‘toth’ image in Sodomismus’s claim about the ‘*Ave Marye*’ conceptually aligns the prayer with Infidelitas’s mock cure, suggesting its comparable worthlessness as a medicinal remedy. This alignment of Catholicism with ineffective medicine continues in Idololatria’s later declaration that

If ye cannot slepe, but slumber,
Geve otes unto Saynt Uncumber,
And beanes in a serten number
Unto Saynt Blase and Saynt Blythe,
Geve onyons to Saynt Cutlake,
And garylyke to Saynt Cyryake,

¹⁹ Bale, *King Johan*, in *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed. by Peter Happé, 2 vols (Bury St. Edmunds: D. S. Brewer, 1985), I, pp. 29–99 (Part II, ll. 857–58).

²⁰ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 196–99.

²¹ Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 193.

If ye wyll shurne the head ake,

Ye shall have them at Queen-hythe.²²

Idololatria's claim that physical healing can be procured by offering food to the saints amalgamates the miraculous with the quotidian, with the presentation of these claims in the form of a list advancing this impression by establishing the veneration of saints as a recipe for health. However, the bathetic conflict between devotional appeal and such quotidian foods as 'otes', 'beanes', 'onyons', and 'garylyke' simultaneously casts doubt upon the medicinal validity of this devotional act. As such, rather than presenting physical health as unimportant, Bale instead utilises spectators' belief in the benefits of properly practiced medicine to further disparage Catholicism, which emerges from *The Three Laws* as a quack remedy capable of advancing neither the physical nor the spiritual health of its practitioners. Elsewhere in the play, Bale uses culinary imagery to the same effect, as when he describes Ambycyon's purported aim to 'fede' the general public with both 'draffe' and 'tradycyons'.²³ By aligning the 'tradycyons' of Catholicism not with foodstuffs in general but with unwholesome 'draffe' in particular, rather than opposing dining and devotion Bale instead forges a link between the two in order to present Catholicism as devoid of spiritual nutrition, and so as worthy of eschewal.

A thorough iteration of this point also appears in *Jacob and Esau* (c. 1550s), an interlude detailing the titular brothers' Biblical contest for their father Isaac's blessing, and in which their differing relationships to food reflect upon their respective familial, social, and spiritual positions.²⁴ From the outset, audiences are introduced to Esau's habit of blowing his hunting horn at uncivil hours, a practice through which he and his servant Ragau 'disease [their] tent and neighbours all' by awakening them 'over early eche day'.²⁵ Though Esau

²² Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 531–38.

²³ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 1261–62.

²⁴ Genesis 25. 24–27. 46.

²⁵ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1568), sig. A2^v.

describes these neighbours as ‘clubbishe loutes’, Ragau’s contradictory portrayal of them as ‘men honest | That labour all the day, and would faine be at rest’ presents their behaviour as more commendable than Esau’s, whose nightly hunting emerges as unnatural and discourteous by comparison.²⁶ John E. Curran, Jr arguing that the play encourages spectators to recognise ‘how mistaken we are to identify God’s favour with human merit’, insists that ‘there is truly no way to transform Esau’s hunting [...] into a heinous crime’.²⁷ Though Curran is of course right that there is no moral injunction against impoliteness, his argument overlooks the fact that Esau’s ill-timed hunting comprises part of a larger narrative around sourcing, preparing, and consuming food throughout the interlude – a narrative which draws unfavourable comparisons between Esau and the play’s other characters. For one, we are informed in no uncertain terms that Esau’s excursions are frequently unsuccessful.²⁸ As well as negating the argument that Esau is a valuable asset to his community despite the unsociable hours he keeps, the hunger which results from these fruitless expeditions leads Esau and Ragau to fantasise about consuming such uncouth and unpalatable substances as ‘dead horse’, ‘Acornes’, ‘Bearies’, ‘hey’ [i.e. hay], ‘strawe’, ‘horsebread’, and ‘cat’, and even to fear the prospect of cannibalism.²⁹ Interestingly, even when provided with appropriate fare Esau declines to eat in accordance with early modern cultural norms, being mocked by Mido for eating ‘greedily’ and choosing to ‘take the pot and sup’ instead of using a ‘dishe’.³⁰ Taken together, these examples of Esau’s inappropriate engagement with food situate his conduct as anathema to civilised society, thereby discouraging audiences from affording him our sympathy.

²⁶ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. A2^v.

²⁷ John E. Curran, Jr, ‘*Jacob and Esau* and the Iconoclasm of Merit’, *SEL 1500–1900*, 49.2 (2009), 285–309 (p. 293).

²⁸ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sigs A2^v and B4^r–B4^v.

²⁹ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sigs A2^v, B4^r–B4^v, and C1^r–C1^v.

³⁰ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. C3^r.

By contrast, the play's elect characters prepare and consume food in a decidedly more respectable manner. For instance, whilst cooking a meal for Isaac his wife Rebecca orders her housemaid Abra to 'looke that all [her] vessell be clene', to 'see the spitte be scoured as cleane as any pearle', and to 'let no foule corner be about all the tent', thereby ensuring the cleanliness not only of the food but also of the utensils used to make it and even the environment in which it is prepared.³¹ By indicating her civility, Rebecca's meticulous kitchen-craft subtly vindicates her and her son Jacob's cause over that of the discourteous and profligate Esau. A similar effect is created when Esau derides Jacob for choosing to 'tarrie and sucke mothers dugge at home' instead of hunting with him.³² By accusing Jacob of relying on breast milk for his sustenance, Esau portrays his brother as passive and dependent, contrasting this with the active self-reliance he demonstrates through hunting. Interestingly, however, by framing Jacob's sustenance not merely as homely cooking but as his mother's milk specifically, Esau's mocking claim also foregrounds the extreme discrepancy between their respective communal and familial ties, presenting Jacob as fundamentally interlinked with Rebecca whilst Esau himself sometimes goes unseen by his mother for a 'whole weeke' or even 'twaine'.³³ It is therefore telling that it is not Jacob but Esau who goes hungry, his decision to 'sterve [himself] for folowing [his] game' reflecting negatively upon his solitary lifestyle.³⁴ Since it is Rebecca's advice which ultimately enables Jacob to usurp his brother's birthright, both his corporeal and his spiritual success are attributed to his entanglement in this communal system, whilst Esau's isolation leaves him deprived of both physical nutriment and paternal blessing. Jacob and Esau's starkly contrasting approaches to food thereby reflect their very different relationships to their community, enabling the playwright to praise the elect Jacob's strong social and familial bonds whilst criticising the reprobate

³¹ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. E2^r.

³² Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. A3^r.

³³ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. B3^v.

³⁴ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. C1^v.

Esau's misguided attempts at self-sufficiency. Therefore, rather than conceptualising the difference between election and reprobation as that between spiritual and culinary concerns, *Jacob and Esau's* author presents both brothers as engaging closely with worldly food. By using Jacob's culinary practices to indicate his civility and communal focus whilst Esau's denote his coarseness and isolation, *Jacob and Esau* (like many of its medieval predecessors) presents food itself as morally neutral, with the morality of its producers and consumers being reflected in the context and manner rather than in the fact of its use.

Nevertheless, whilst depictions of food and medicine in medieval plays commonly establish worldliness as a potential gateway to spirituality, representations of the culinary in Reformation-era plays more often evidence perceived tensions between the material and the spiritual. Returning to *The Three Laws*, so much becomes clear through Bale's attempt to reproduce his medically inflected condemnation of Catholicism by associating the play's Vices with food adulteration, leveraging audiences' awareness of the importance of food security to censure these characters and the conduct they represent. Idololatria in particular is associated with food spoilage, as evidenced when she declares

No man shall tonne nor bake,
 Nor meate in season make,
 If I agaynst hym take,
 But lose hys labour at length.³⁵

She then goes on to claim that she can corrupt ale 'If the bruar please [her] natt', and to attest to her ability to 'Cause trees and herbes to dye, | And slee all pullerye' at will.³⁶ Bale's description of Idololatria as not merely ruining individual dishes but instead as disrupting commercial food production at its source may recall medieval accounts of witchcraft,

³⁵ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 450–57.

³⁶ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 450–57.

effectively redirecting these superstitions towards Catholicism.³⁷ By presenting Idololatria as a social rather than a spiritual blight, Bale implicitly acknowledges and capitulates to spectators' privileging of economics over eschatology, an approach which identifies spiritual welfare with material prosperity.

It is therefore interesting that Bale's allegorical approach becomes somewhat strained at this point, since it is unclear how idolatry causes the culinary disasters ascribed to its personified representation. This becomes particularly obvious upon comparing Idololatria with Avaritia, whose association with those who live by others' toil and 'have good drynke and meate' whilst those who produce these commodities 'have not to eate | The substance of a pease' offers a logically cohesive demonstration of how avarice negatively impacts communities.³⁸ Although Bale's depiction of Idololatria certainly presents her as reprehensible, it does so by imbuing her with generally vicious qualities rather than by using her actions to demonstrate the actual social effects of idolatry – which, though spiritually threatening, does not directly cause food spoilage. Bale's attempt to utilise viewers' appreciation for worldly things to enhance the didactic impact of *The Three Laws* therefore destabilises the play's allegory, implying the existence of an inherent conflict between worldly concerns and his particular brand of Protestantism. This renders Idololatria's aforementioned association with Catholicism, sedition, and demonic magic particularly intriguing, since these are all practices which early modern anti-theatricalists see as affiliated with drama itself.³⁹ Similarly, the fact that Idololatria 'sumtyme [...] wert a he' but now has become 'a she' foreshadows anti-theatricalists' concerns regarding the impact of theatrical

³⁷ Christopher Kissane, *Food, Religion, and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 131.

³⁸ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 991–98.

³⁹ See, for instance, William Prynne, *Histrio-Mastix* (London: Edward Allde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes, and William Jones, 1633), sigs Ggg*3^r–Ggg*4^r and Dddd3^r–Dddd3^v.

cross-dressing on performers.⁴⁰ Although Bale himself clearly does not align Idololatria with drama, his portrayal of her may contribute to the later identification of the two by indicating the existence of an inherent conflict between moral instruction and material concerns. Evidence from *The Three Laws* therefore indicates that no sudden, radical shift from exploiting drama's materiality to denouncing it takes place within Protestantism over the course of the sixteenth century, with the seeds of Renaissance anti-theatricalism already being sown in Reformation performances.

Worldliness and spirituality are even more explicitly opposed elsewhere in *The Three Laws*, as when Infidelitas mistakenly identifies Naturae Lex as a 'coke [i.e. cook]' based on the heart he carries as a sign of his presence 'In the hart of man'.⁴¹ As Walker explains, Infidelitas here mistakes 'the spiritual symbol' of God's law ingrained in human hearts 'for the corporeal main ingredient of a stew', an error which signals Infidelitas's worldly preoccupations and ridicules his inability to distinguish between culinary ingredients and spiritual signs.⁴² This notion recurs later in the play when Infidelitas contests Evangelium's claim that he must have heard of him 'by the voice of God', insisting instead that 'he that spake of [Evangelium] was sellynge of a cod | In an oyster bote' and so conflating divine revelation with the shouts of market-cries.⁴³ Such literal, food-centric thinking is also attributed to a Vice in Bale's other surviving morality *King Johan*, evidenced when Sedicyon responds to King Johan's advice to 'powder' his speech 'with wisdom and honeste [sic]' by insisting that he is 'no spyker', taking 'powder' in its 'grosse capasyte' rather than metaphorically.⁴⁴ Later, when the personified Englande claims that her people are 'ever fed' with Catholicism's 'vyle cerymonyes', Sedicyon interjects to insist that, on the contrary,

⁴⁰ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 425–26; David Cressy, 'Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 35.4 (1996), 438–65 (pp. 442–44).

⁴¹ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 236 and 112.

⁴² Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, p. 498 (Footnote 30).

⁴³ Bale, *The Three Laws*, ll. 1349–51.

⁴⁴ Bale, *King Johan*, Part I, ll. 49–50 and 53.

‘sumtyme they eate bothe flawnes and pygyn pyes’.⁴⁵ By utilising food to symbolise these Vices’ inappropriately literal approach to spiritual concepts through their reduction of divine symbols and theological instruction to their culinary exterior, in each of these plays Bale implicitly establishes food itself as opposed to religious piety.

This tactic is also characteristic of later Tudor interludes, wherein food is almost exclusively utilised to signify immoral characters’ preoccupation with worldly pleasure at the expense of spiritual peace. This is certainly the impression created in Robert Wever’s *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1550), wherein Hipocrisye invites the titular character to accompany him to ‘breaakfast’ instead of attending church.⁴⁶ By establishing dining as an alternative to hearing a sermon, Wever directly opposes the physical nutrition procured by eating and the spiritual nourishment which results from receiving religious instruction, an impression advanced through the connotations of religious fast-breaking and devotional negligence embedded within the name of this particular meal. William Wager takes a comparable approach in *The Longer Thou Livest the More Foole Thou Art* (1559), wherein Moros interrupts Discipline, Piety, and Excercitation’s serious debate regarding whether or not Moros can be educated to inform them that ‘There be good Poddings at the signe of the Plough, | You never did eate better Sauserlinges’.⁴⁷ Moros’s culinary interjection here evidences his prioritisation of food over the question of whether his own salvation is possible, and, in doing so, provides compelling evidence that it is not. More telling still is Moros’s response when Discipline instructs him to repeat the words

I will love and feare God above all,

He might vouchsafe to give me Sapience:

I will not cease on His holy name to call,

⁴⁵ Bale, *King Johan*, Part I, ll. 73–74.

⁴⁶ Robert Wever, *Lusty Juventus* (London: Abraham Veale, 1550), sig. C3^v.

⁴⁷ William Wager, *The Longer Thou Livest the More Foole Thou Art* (London: Wyllyam How, 1569), sigs B1^r–B1^v.

That He may open mine intelligence.⁴⁸

Though Moros complies, the lines emerge significantly altered, transformed into the declaration

I will love porridge when they be sod, Beef & al

For Motton good Sause is Salte and Onnions,

Up unto the hie dishe when my Dame they call,

While she openeth the Pie, I picke the Pinions.⁴⁹

Food here literally usurps the place of the devotional words, manifestly demonstrating its antagonism to theological instruction. Finally, a subtler variation on this theme appears in *Jacob and Esau*, wherein Rebecca vows to ‘make such broth, that when all things are in, | God Almighty selfe may wet His finger therein’.⁵⁰ The image conjured here of God sampling Rebecca’s homely ‘broth’ is striking, appearing to deconstruct the dichotomy between the culinary and the divine. Nonetheless, the phrase ‘God Almighty selfe’ (“even God”) actually suggests that the proximity between the two envisioned here is unusual, and that there is something special about Rebecca’s ‘broth’ which renders it suitable for divine consumption. As such, rather than nullifying the opposition between food and God these lines actually affirm its validity, situating Rebecca’s broth as the exception which proves the conventional rule.

Importantly, however, whereas medieval performances align drama with food in order to foreground its materiality, many Reformation-era plays conversely associate performances with spiritual as opposed to material pursuits, with the result that their disparagement of food does not simultaneously reflect negatively on drama. Of course, sixteenth-century plays regularly condemn frivolous entertainments, associating such pastimes with Vices and flawed human protagonists. Such is the case in *Lusty Juventus*, which in typical interlude fashion

⁴⁸ William Wager, *The Longer Thou Livest*, sig. B3^r.

⁴⁹ William Wager, *The Longer Thou Livest*, sig. B3^r.

⁵⁰ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. E3^r.

follows the contest between Virtues (Good Counsaill and Knowledge) and Vices (Hypocrisie, Felowship, and Abhominable Lyving) for the soul of the titular protagonist. From the outset of the play, Lusty Juventus demonstrates an intense interest in worldly entertainments, asking Good Counsaill where he might go to ‘heare any minstrels play’ and ‘have a daunce or two, | To passe the tyme away in pleasure’.⁵¹ Later in the century, moralists such as Phillip Stubbes similarly critique worldly music and dancing, aligning them with performances as facilitating moral dissolution when practiced improperly, ‘without respect either of sex, kinde, tyme, place, person, or any thyng els’.⁵² However, although Lusty Juventus mentions his fondness for such activities, there is no indication here that they are conceptually aligned with the play itself. On the contrary, Good Counsaill – a spokesman for the play’s moral message – condemns these frivolous entertainments, asserting that since ‘there is no such passing the tyme apoynted in the scripture’ Lusty Juventus should ‘walke as [he is] bound to do, | Accordyng to the vocation whych God hath called [him] to’.⁵³ Since Good Counsaill’s virtuous instruction constitutes an inherent component of the performance whilst the vacuous entertainments enjoyed by Lusty Juventus are never directly represented onstage, the play is implicitly aligned with the former rather than the latter. This evidence vindicates Nicoletta Caputo’s description of *Lusty Juventus*’s author as ‘a faithful Protestant seriously engaged in creating a doctrinal accord around the dictates of the Edwardian Church’.⁵⁴ The same impression is created in William Wager’s *The Longer Thou Livest*, wherein after witnessing Moros’s fondness for songs Discipline states that fools like him ‘set at nought Vertue’ and are ‘geven to pastime vaine’.⁵⁵ Although Moros’s pleasure in frivolous entertainments could be interpreted as reflecting spectators’ enjoyment of the performance, the fact that the play

⁵¹ Wever, *Lusty Juventus*, sig. A2^v.

⁵² Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London: John Kingston, 1583), sigs O4^r–P7^v; Anonymous, *A Treatise of Daunces* ([n. p.]: [n. pub.], 1581).

⁵³ Wever, *Lusty Juventus*, sig. A2^v.

⁵⁴ Nicoletta Caputo, “‘All you that be young, whom I do now represent’: Doctrine, Deception and Discontent in *Lusty Juventus*”, *Renaissance Studies*, 35.3 (2020), 425–43 (p. 426).

⁵⁵ William Wager, *The Longer Thou Livest*, sig. A3^v.

itself is composed not of vain songs but of Discipline's instructive advice effectively distances it from the fruitless pursuits of the reprobate Moros. Like Wever, William Wager here establishes drama as a means of combating rather than perpetuating vice, with both playwrights firmly distinguishing instructive plays from unedifying secular entertainments.

Contrary to both their medieval antecedents and their late sixteenth-century descendents, plays published in the decades immediately following the Reformation regularly highlight the distance rather than the proximity between plays and food. This tendency is evident even in the private theatrical entertainments of the early sixteenth century, which at first glance appear to possess a considerably closer relationship than medieval public performances to food. For one, Melissa Smith notes that these interludes were often staged 'in the banqueting halls of private homes as after-dinner entertainment or even as a distraction between courses'.⁵⁶ Indeed, Walker postulates that the two parts of *Fulgens and Lucrez* (c. 1497) were allocated to 'dinner at midday and supper in the evening, respectively', and the comparable structure of *Of Gentylnes and Nobylte* (1525) indicates that it, too, may have been performed in this way.⁵⁷ Additionally, Kathman points out that in the following decades 'Livery companies typically hired players in conjunction with [...] feasts at which they chose and inducted new officers, and sometimes also at such feast times as Christmas and Candlemas', indicating a persistent link between lavish dining and drama.⁵⁸

However, although Denise E. Cole argues that this form of staging could have facilitated the identification of interludes with food – especially in combination with performers' probable use of 'the same doorways from which the edible performances

⁵⁶ Melissa Smith, 'Personifications of Plague in Three Tudor Interludes: *Triall of Treasure*, *The longer thou livest, the more foole thou art*, and *Inough is as good as a feast*', *Literature and Medicine*, 26.2 (2007), 364–85 (p. 365).

⁵⁷ Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, p. 307; John Heywood and John Rastell, *Of Gentylnes and Nobylte* (London: John Rastell, 1525).

⁵⁸ Kathman, 'The Rise of Commercial Playing', p. 18.

emerged’ – this impression is largely absent from the plays themselves.⁵⁹ At the outset of the late fifteenth-century interlude *Fulgens and Lucres*, the character identified only as ‘A’ throughout the text draws attention to the performance’s culinary setting, asking audiences ‘Have not ye etyn and your fill | And payd no thinge therefore?’.⁶⁰ By explicitly presenting the preceding meal as evidencing the host’s generosity, these lines subtly portray the play itself as a comparable aspect of this hospitality, indicating the shared social function of the dinner and the interlude. Nevertheless, by situating the performance after rather than during the meal these lines also reveal that the two do not compete for spectators’ attention, with viewers being distracted neither by the mechanical process of eating nor by an intrusive feeling of hunger as the action unfolds.⁶¹ Indeed, later in the play ‘A’ sardonically remarks that the performance keeps audiences ‘from theyre dyner all day’, jesting that if the action were

ones overe past,
Some of them wolde falle to fedyng as fast
As thay had bene almost pyned.⁶²

As such, despite recognising the temporal and spatial proximity of feasting and theatrical spectatorship in this era, Medwall here frames the two as mutually exclusive, even antagonistic activities, presenting performances as following, interrupting, and delaying meals rather than as being identified with them.

A variation on this theme emerges in *Jacob and Esau*, a play whose recurrent denigration of materiality renders its apparent alignment of food and drama particularly intriguing. Food’s association with the corporeal as opposed to the spiritual in this play

⁵⁹ Denise E. Cole, ‘Edible Performance: Feasting and Festivity in Early Tudor Entertainment’, in *The Senses in Performance*, ed. by Sally Barnes and André Lepecki (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 92–104 (p. 94).

⁶⁰ Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 305–47 (ll. 3–4).

⁶¹ For Shakespeare’s use of spectators’ hunger, see Sally Templeman, “‘What’s this? Mutton?’: Food, Bodies, and Inn-Yard Performance Spaces in Early Shakespearean Drama”, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 31.1 (2013), 79–94 (p. 87).

⁶² Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*, ll. 1414 and 1416–18.

becomes apparent when Esau, upon being questioned by Ragau regarding his decision to sell his birthright for pottage, issues the dismissive rejoinder ‘Better a mease of pottage than nothing’.⁶³ Esau’s characterisation of his birthright as ‘nothing’ and as inferior to ‘pottage’ suggests that he values tangible over incorporeal rewards. As such, Curran is wrong to contend that Esau’s claim is justified owing to the fact that his efforts ‘have borne tangible fruit, whereas Jacob’s have not’.⁶⁴ By valuing Esau’s tangible contributions over Jacob’s intangible ones in this way, Curran risks falling victim to the very ‘idolatry’ he interprets the play as warning against.

At the same time, throughout *Jacob and Esau* food is often imbued with theatrical qualities, particularly through its role in Rebecca’s plan to deceive Isaac into blessing Jacob rather than his elder brother, which necessitates disguising goat’s meat as the venison Isaac has requested from Esau. This objective explains the profusion of herbs incorporated into the dish, which include

time and percelie, spinache, and rosemary,

Endive, suckorie, lacteux, violette, clary,

Liverworte, marigolde, sorell, hartes tong, and sage:

Peniryal, purselane, buglosse and borage.⁶⁵

Although these copious flavourings seem excessive from a purely gustatory standpoint, they clearly facilitate Rebecca’s purpose of concealing (rather than enhancing or complementing) the flavour of the meat they accompany. Alongside the inherent performativity with which this deceptive act imbues it, Rebecca’s meal is also infused with dramatic significance through its status as a component of Jacob’s own disguise, supplementing his attempts to feel

⁶³ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. D4^v.

⁶⁴ Curran, ‘*Jacob and Esau* and the Iconoclasm of Merit’, p. 294.

⁶⁵ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. E3^r.

and even to smell like Esau and so helping Jacob to obey Rebecca's explicitly theatrical instruction to 'play [his] parte well, and sticke unto it throughout'.⁶⁶

However, the apparent alignment of drama with food here is undercut by Isaac's reaction to this meal. Although Isaac evidently values Esau's culinary contributions, noting that 'many a good morsel [Esau] bringeth home to [him]', his insistence that Jacob's meal has 'refreshed [his] soul' establishes it as spiritually as well as corporeally nourishing.⁶⁷ The playwright's repeated reminders that Rebecca's plan accords with God's will enhances this impression, stressing this particular meal's status as a means to a divinely ordained end.⁶⁸ Indeed, purely material food is markedly un-theatrical in this play, with no sensory details being supplied about either the 'pottage' Jacob gives to Esau or Esau's own offering for Isaac, which are respectively consumed and prepared offstage.⁶⁹ By emphasising the theatrical dimension to the spiritually nourishing meal Jacob offers to Isaac whilst minimising the performativity of the purely material comestibles produced and consumed by Esau, *Jacob and Esau* firmly associates theatrical performances with spiritual rather than corporeal sustenance.

Controlling the Uncontrollable: The Problem of Interpretation

As we have seen, rather than immediately eschewing drama as an activity fundamentally rooted in worldliness, early Reformers instead attempt to reclaim moralistic plays for their own cause by framing them as spiritually rather than corporeally nourishing, and therefore as opposed to rather than aligned with food. However, over the course of the sixteenth century it also becomes increasingly clear that the dramatic forms of Catholic England are unsuited to the needs of post-Reformation moralists. For instance, many early sixteenth-century

⁶⁶ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. E1^r.

⁶⁷ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sigs B3^v and F1^v.

⁶⁸ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sigs B4^r and D2^r.

⁶⁹ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sigs C3^r and F2^v.

interludes conceptualise vice in a considerably more relativistic manner than their medieval antecedents. As Kent Cartwright explains, whilst medieval moralities generally ‘favour clarity of representation’, the ‘shift toward humanist and secular subjects’ in early sixteenth-century drama ‘privileged ambiguity in a character’s presentation’.⁷⁰ Such is clearly the case in John Skelton’s *Magnyfycence* (c. 1519), a play detailing the corruption and subsequent redemption of the titular prince and in which the virtuous adviser Measure’s claim that ‘Lyberte with Measure nede never drede’ is immediately qualified with the warning that ‘If Lyberte sholde lepe and renne where he lyst | It were no vertue, it were a thyng unblyst’.⁷¹ This point is reiterated towards the end of the play by Lyberte himself, who claims to be ‘a vertue yf [he] be well used’, but ‘a vyce where [he is] abused’.⁷² Although Lyberte’s use of theatrical terminology here in his references to characterised Vices and Virtues situates *Magnyfycence* within a recognisable morality tradition, his statement also complicates what many medieval moralities conceptualise as the stark dichotomy between Vices and Virtues by suggesting that Lyberte can shift seamlessly between the two roles. Whilst the claim that liberty is only beneficial in certain circumstances is relatively straightforward and fits easily into the morality format, it nevertheless imbues this play with a degree of moral ambiguity that is largely absent from its medieval forebears. Whereas *Mankind*’s audiences are left in no doubt about the respective moral alignments of Mercy and Myscheff, *Magnyfycence*’s spectators are invited to consider whether and to what extent liberty is morally and socially useful, encouraging rather than curtailing debate. Aaron Kitch identifies the same approach in Medwall’s *Fulgens and Lucres*, pointing out that within the ‘fixed character types’ of medieval drama ‘there is no room for the kind of debate about noblesse’ which takes place

⁷⁰ Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 25.

⁷¹ John Skelton, *Magnyfycence*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 349–407 (ll. 130–34).

⁷² Skelton, *Magnyfycence*, ll. 2099–100.

over the course of this performance.⁷³ Indeed, Lucrez herself repeatedly urges audiences not to interpret her choices as instructive, insisting before announcing her decision to marry the virtuous but lowborn Gayus that this ‘may not be notyde for a generall precedent’.⁷⁴ Lucrez repeats this assertion later on, insisting that she ‘wyll not dispise | The blode’ of her highborn yet dubiously moral suitor Cornelius and urging her real and onstage auditors alike not to interpret her words ‘by a sinister way’.⁷⁵ Whilst circumventing accusations of sedition by presenting the play as an entertaining depiction of a particular situation rather than as a didactic illustration of a general rule, these statements simultaneously invite readers to contemplate whether or not Lucrez’s decision is acceptable. As such, without eschewing didacticism altogether both *Magnyfycence* and *Fulgens and Lucrez* permit spectators considerably more interpretative freedom than that allowed by many of the medieval moralities from which they emerge.

However, Medwall and Skelton’s willingness to afford their audiences interpretative licence is not at all representative of the approach of their counterpoints in the following decades, who instead take pains to prevent spectators’ active critical engagement with their plays. Whilst this is partially attributable to the public setting of these later performances, which in the view of their authors risked their subjection to dangerous misinterpretations by uneducated viewers, it may also have been influenced by their religious context. As Kitch points out, whereas medieval moralities often aim to remind audiences of doctrinal truths they should already ‘*know*’, Reformed drama aims to disseminate new messages which spectators must ‘*interpret*’ from the action itself.⁷⁶ As a result, controlling audiences’ interpretations of performances becomes more important during the Reformation. Indeed, Kelly identifies ‘the shift from medieval religious drama to [R]eformation drama’ as

⁷³ Aaron Kitch, ‘Medwall’s “Condicyon”: *Fulgens and Lucrece* and the New Tudor Drama’, *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 68.1 (2005), 1–8 (p. 3).

⁷⁴ Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucrez*, l. 1862.

⁷⁵ Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucrez*, ll. 2189–90 and 2197.

⁷⁶ Kitch, ‘Medwall’s “Condicyon”’, p. 3. Italics in original.

‘characterised by stronger attempts to delimit audience interpretation of plays’, with these ‘attempts’ involving ‘extensive use of prologues, epilogues, direct address to the audience, and careful limiting of stage spectacle’.⁷⁷ Matyjaszczyk finds evidence of this approach in the two extant versions of *The Norwich Grocers’ Play*, wherein the pre-Reformation “A” text relies on showing the action on stage’ whilst the later “B” text leans to a much greater extent towards telling the audience what is happening in an explicit way’.⁷⁸

Matyjaszczyk also identifies this overt didacticism in Bale’s plays, which ‘frequently resort to explaining instead of just showing and making the audience interpret the events for themselves’.⁷⁹ Bale’s endeavours to maintain control over the effects of his drama begin with attempts to control spectators’ approaches to performances as a whole. Although Peter Happé argues that Bale demonstrates a ‘manifest concern’ with ‘involving [audiences] in religious experience’, evidence from Bale’s dramatic corpus suggests instead that he regularly attempts to establish distance between spectators and the events depicted onstage.⁸⁰ This is certainly the effect created in *Johan Baptystes Preachynge* (1538) when Turba Vulgaris proclaims that he ‘represent[s] the comen people of Jewry’.⁸¹ By claiming not to *be* but merely to ‘represent’ this group, Turba Vulgaris self-consciously acknowledges his own mimetic function, forcing audiences to remain conscious of the theatrical context and didactic purpose of the play rather than permitting them to sink into the dramatic illusion. Bale employs a similar technique in *King Johan*, where less than one hundred lines after Sedicyon has introduced himself King Johan instructs him to do so ‘onys agayne’, thereby attempting to ensure that audiences do not lose sight of Sedicyon’s allegorical function by viewing him as a

⁷⁷ Kelly, ‘Conflict of Conscience and Sixteenth-Century Religious Drama’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 44.3 (2014), 388–419 (p. 407).

⁷⁸ Joanna Matyjaszczyk, ‘Struggles with Dramatic Form in Sixteenth-Century English Biblical Plays’, *ANGLICA: An International Journal of English Studies*, 31.1 (2022), 5–27 (p. 8).

⁷⁹ Matyjaszczyk, ‘Struggles with Dramatic Form’, p. 14.

⁸⁰ Peter Happé, ‘John Bale and the Practice of Drama’, *Reformation*, 18.1 (2013), 7–20 (p. 18).

⁸¹ Bale, *John Baptystes Preachynge*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 480–91 (l. 101).

generalised Vice.⁸² Katherine A. Gillen attributes Bale's approach to his recognition that 'Catholic cycle plays shared traits in common with Catholic sacramental practices', a view which leads him to '[insist] on the distinction between theatrical signs and divine realities' in order to 'avoid idolatry in his own plays'.⁸³ Gillen's argument finds support in *The Temptation of Our Lord* (1538), a dramatic rendition of Jesus's temptation by Satan during His forty-day fast in the desert, when Bale's dramatic persona Baleus Prolocutor insists that if spectators truly 'folowe Christ', then 'with Hym [they] must be beate', presenting Christianity as necessitating active participation from its adherents.⁸⁴ In doing so, Bale distinguishes true devotion from the passive reception of moral instruction that takes place when viewing a performance, implying that dramatic spectatorship does not constitute a devotional act. This indicates that spectators' relationship to plays is of particular consequence to Reformers, evidencing the theological as well as the theatrical necessity of distancing audiences from the action presented onstage.

Indeed, controlling audiences' interpretations is especially important with respect to *Temptation* owing to the particularly controversial nature of its themes. The relationship between fasting and piety was fraught throughout the sixteenth century, with Protestants contesting Catholicism's proscriptive rules whilst still recognising the value of culinary moderation. This approach is reflected clearly in contemporary sumptuary laws. As Johanna B. Moyer points out, whereas regulations governing food consumption in Catholic regions in contemporary Europe generally limit both 'the type and amount of food eaten', those in Protestant areas are 'less likely to focus on what a person ate and more likely to restrict how

⁸² Bale, *King Johan*, Part I, ll. 90 and 185.

⁸³ Katherine A. Gillen, 'From Sacraments to Signs: The Challenges of Protestant Theatricality in John Bale's Biblical Plays', *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 80.1 (2011), 15–25 (pp. 18–19).

⁸⁴ Matthew 4. 1–11; Bale, *The Temptation of Our Lord*, in *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, II, pp. 51–63 (l. 28).

much a person ate', concentrating on meals' context rather than their content.⁸⁵ Moreover, whilst in medieval drama the moral valences of food depend upon how it is used, in Reformation plays it is intent rather than action which determines the morality of fasting, which can be spiritually fruitful when signifying religious devotion but dangerous when employed in the hopes of obtaining divine favour. This aspect of Reformed doctrine creates significant problems from a dramaturgical perspective, since fasting as a sign of piety in accordance with Protestant beliefs is externally indistinguishable from what Reformers consider the misguided practice of fasting in order to achieve salvation. Bale is thereby forced to intervene, guiding spectators' interpretations by explaining the motives of the play's characters rather than merely representing their actions.

Throughout *Temptation*, Bale takes pains to ensure that audiences do not interpret Jesus's fast as signalling the devotional necessity of fasting, with Jesus explaining the reasons behind His excursion into the desert at the outset of the play before hastily warning audiences to 'Thynke not [Him] to fast because [He] wolde [them] to fast, | For than [they] thinke wronge and have vayne judgement'.⁸⁶ Jesus then clarifies that His abstinence is designed to 'provoke' Satan and to provide an opportunity to demonstrate how 'the worde of God', rather than 'fastynges' themselves, can be used to counteract demonic temptation.⁸⁷ This idea is reiterated when Christ later refuses to heed Satan's urgings to 'Make of these stones breade', explicating that 'No offence is it to eate whan men be hungrye' and that He 'shall not spare to eate' when 'meate' is provided by God.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in the play's epilogue Bale anxiously warns audiences to 'Lete non report us that here we condempne fastynge, | For it is not true –

⁸⁵ Johanna B. Moyer, "'The Food Police': Sumptuary Prohibitions on Food in the Reformation', in *Food and Faith in Christian Culture*, ed. by Ken Albala and Trudy Eden (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 59–82 (pp. 62–63).

⁸⁶ Bale, *Temptation of Our Lord*, ll. 8–9.

⁸⁷ Bale, *Temptation*, ll. 11–14.

⁸⁸ Bale, *Temptation*, ll. 69–77.

we are of no soch mynde'.⁸⁹ Bale's repeated reiteration of the same essential point evidences his awareness that neither Jesus's motives for fasting nor his own view of the practice are immediately apparent from the action of the play itself, which is open to a dangerously wide range of interpretations. Bale's depiction of fasting in *Temptation* thereby offers a compelling illustration of how sixteenth-century Protestantism's focus on intention rather than action collapses the distinction between vice and virtue in Reformation drama, forcing contemporary playwrights to employ explicit didacticism in the form of directly addressing audiences instead of allowing the action of their plays to speak for itself.

The limitations of this approach find unlikely expression in Richard Mulcaster's *The Passage of Our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth* (1559), an account of Elizabeth I's pre-coronation procession. This was a spectacular event, performed across multiple venues in London and orchestrated both to praise and to advise Elizabeth before her coronation. However, Mulcaster's account also reveals that the procession is heavily inflected by its producers' concerns about conveying their messages clearly. Mulcaster notes that each pageant is accompanied by a written explanation of its meaning, as well as a child actor who must '[declare] unto [Elizabeth] the hole meaning of the said pageant'.⁹⁰ Robert E. Stillman concludes from this that throughout the production 'a premium is placed upon the rhetorical virtue of *claritas*', and these precautions may certainly have gone some way towards ensuring that all attendees, literate and otherwise, received something of the flavour of the pageant.⁹¹ However, the accompaniment of these shows by spoken vernacular commentary and, additionally, written exposition in both English and Latin also seems to indicate organisers'

⁸⁹ Bale, *Temptation*, ll. 392–93.

⁹⁰ Richard Mulcaster, *The Passage of Our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth* (London: Richard Tottill, 1559), sig. A4^v.

⁹¹ Robert E. Stillman, "'Nothing More Nedeful': Politics and the Rhetoric of Accommodation in Queen Elizabeth I's Coronation Procession', in *Spectacle and Public Performance in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by R. E. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 51–78 (p. 58).

unwillingness to allow the performance to stand alone, evidencing their anxiety that it may not be interpreted as intended.

Justification for such paranoia seems to appear when Mulcaster notes how, before arriving at the pageant stationed at ‘Soper lanes’, Elizabeth ‘required the matter somewhat to be opened unto her, that her grace might the better understand, what should afterward by the child be sayd to her’.⁹² Though we are informed that earlier in the procession Elizabeth I struggles to hear some of the children’s speeches, this does not sufficiently account for her actions here, as she is said to give this child ‘most attentive eare’, requesting ‘that the peoples noyse might be stayde’ as she listens.⁹³ Even if the Queen’s request for additional verbal exposition constitutes a self-conscious performance of her willingness to listen to her advisers rather than genuinely revealing her uncertainty as to this pageant’s meaning, it nevertheless relies on an assumption that misinterpretation of even these obsessively controlled displays is at least theoretically possible. Her reaction thereby not only corroborates organisers’ fears regarding the pageants’ interpretative openness, but also exposes the failure of their precautionary measures to mitigate this problem, demonstrating how each additional layer of exposition defers rather than prevents the moment when audiences must resort to their own interpretation of the material presented to them. Attempts to strictly control the reception of the ‘Soper lanes’ pageant therefore succeed only in revealing the impossibility of bridging the gap between producers’ intentions and spectators’ interpretations. And, as Kelly succinctly explains, such ‘obvious’ (and, it must be said, largely ineffective) attempts to ‘limit interpretative possibilities’ raise questions over drama’s ability to convey the kind of unambiguous messages required of it by some sixteenth-century Reformers.⁹⁴

⁹² Mulcaster, *Passage*, sigs C1^r–C1^v.

⁹³ Mulcaster, *Passage*, sig. C1^v.

⁹⁴ Kelly, ‘Doubt and Religious Drama’, p. 58.

Appearances Can('t) Be Deceiving: The Limits of Dramatic Didacticism

Emerging tensions between post-Reformation theology and contemporary drama are also attributable to sixteenth-century Protestantism's intense preoccupation with the potential disconnection between appearance and reality. In particular, many plays of this era call attention to the inability of the senses to accurately discern the truth. Such is the case in Lewis Wager's *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (1558), where Infidelitie argues that Mary's sins will go unpunished by citing the fact that God has never before been 'sene', implicitly using this fact to question God's existence.⁹⁵ Of course, this suggestion is blatantly unacceptable to contemporary Christian spectators, with Infidelitie's reasoning evidencing not the absence of God but rather the fallibility of the human senses, which are unable to detect His presence. A particularly sceptical approach to the senses appears in *Jacob and Esau*, wherein Rebecca's conviction that 'eating such meate as he doth love' will 'move' Isaac to offer Jacob instead of Esau his blessing evidences her belief in the persuasive power of gustatory pleasure.⁹⁶ However, despite Isaac's blindness the acuity of his other senses continually threatens to thwart the plan constructed by Rebecca and Jacob, causing them to worry that Isaac 'will feele [Jacob], before that he will eate' or that he will 'smell what [they] have thus farre begone'.⁹⁷ They therefore take precautions to prevent discovery, with Rebecca claiming that in order to 'ravishe' his father Jacob must cover his skin in 'rough' clothes and dress in Esau's 'best apparel, whose fragrant flavour, | Shall conjure Isaac to beare thee his favour'.⁹⁸ Even so, Mido informs them that Isaac has 'hearde [their] yong kidde blee' before Jacob's performance even begins, with Isaac himself later stating that although he feels 'right Esau by the heare [i.e. hair]', 'yet the voice of Jacob sowneth in [his]

⁹⁵ Lewis Wager, *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (London: John Charlewood, 1566), sig. C3^r.

⁹⁶ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. F1^v.

⁹⁷ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sigs E1^r and E2^r.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. E4^v.

care'.⁹⁹ These comments implicitly establish hearing as an especially difficult sense to deceive, a suggestion which accords with Reformers' general (though not universal) privileging of audition over the other senses as a means of accessing divine truths.¹⁰⁰

Tellingly, however, this is not the view taken by Isaac himself. As Curran points out, rather than trusting his hearing to provide accurate insight into the reality of the situation, Isaac seemingly disregards it, acknowledging but making no attempt to resolve the contradictions between what he hears and what he tastes, smells, and feels.¹⁰¹ Therefore, rather than portraying Isaac as being deceived by his gustatory, olfactory, and tactile impressions into accepting Jacob for Esau, the playwright instead suggests that Isaac does not read too much into the information supplied by any of his senses. Since this approach ultimately enables the fulfilment of God's preordained plan, Curran concludes that Isaac's literal and figurative 'blindness' epitomises 'the appropriate way for humans to approach the world'.¹⁰² By highlighting the ease with which the senses can be deceived and simultaneously presenting the disregard for sensory information as spiritually efficacious, *Jacob and Esau* warns viewers against being unduly influenced by sensory impressions.

Moreover, many contemporary plays foreground the inability of the senses to provide accurate insight into the thoughts and emotions of others. This idea emerges in *Magnyfycence*, where the titular king's insistence that 'no man can wryte' of his inward penitence self-consciously highlights both his own inability to verbally convey his contrition and Skelton's powerlessness to theatrically represent his inward conversion.¹⁰³ Thomas Norton makes a similar point in *Gorboduc* (1561), with Porrex's claim that his true feelings

⁹⁹ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sigs E4^r and F1^v.

¹⁰⁰ Jennifer Rae McDermott, "'The Melodie of Heaven': Sermonizing the Open Ear in Early Modern England", in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern England*, ed. by Wiets de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 177–97 (pp. 178 and 185–86). For an example of some contemporary counterarguments, see Jackie Watson, "'Dove-like Looks" and "Serpents Eyes": Staging Visual Clues and Early Modern Aspiration', in *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558–1660*, ed. by Simon Smith, Jacqueline Watson, and Amy Kenny (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 39–54 (pp. 39–42).

¹⁰¹ Curran, 'Jacob and Esau and the Iconoclasm of Merit', pp. 292–94.

¹⁰² Curran, 'Jacob and Esau and the Iconoclasm of Merit', p. 292.

¹⁰³ Skelton, *Magnyfycence*, l. 2390.

can never be ‘Known’ to Gorboduc as they are felt by himself suggesting that his outward demeanour does not reliably reflect his emotions.¹⁰⁴ The disconnection between exterior and interior is imbued with more threatening implications in *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene*, which goes to great lengths to deconstruct its own prologue’s assurance that ‘evill will never said well’.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the veracity of this statement is called into question from the play’s opening lines, as Infidelitie enters singing ‘With heigh down down and downe a down a, | Salvator mundi Domine, Kyrieleyson’.¹⁰⁶ The juxtaposition of senseless “filler” words with devotional declarations in these lines indicates Infidelitie’s misguided conflation of the sacred and the secular, suggesting that he does not take his religious duties seriously. However, even if he is only mindlessly repeating these expressions of piety as if they have no more meaning than ‘heigh down down and downe a down a’, this does not overwrite the fact that he is technically ‘[saying] well’. By abstracting these phrases from their devotional context, Lewis Wager compellingly foregrounds the potential disconnection between what is spoken and what is intended, thereby undermining the prologue’s claim that vice cannot disguise itself as virtue. Whereas *Magnyfycence* and *Gorboduc* merely present characters as being inconvenienced by others’ inability to access their interior state, *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* lends this problem additional significance, establishing our inability to assess others’ intentions as a potential threat to our own moral safety.

The theatrical implications of this division between exterior and interior are rendered explicit later in the interlude when Infidelitie boasts of his ability to conceal his malevolence behind a ‘visour of vertue’.¹⁰⁷ The word ‘visour’ here carries explicit theatrical resonances, as does Infidelitie’s later insistence that each day he has a different ‘garment to weare, |

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Norton, *Gorboduc* (London: William Griffith, 1565), sig. C7^v.

¹⁰⁵ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sig. A2^r.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sig. A3^v.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sig. A4^r.

Accordyng to [his] worke and operation', and together these phrases establish a direct connection between immoral conduct and performativity.¹⁰⁸ This association is ubiquitous on the Reformation stage, with Kelly noting Reformers' tendency to associate Catholicism in particular with 'theatricality' in order to condemn what they saw as the vain pageantry of its devotional practices and its excessive focus on worldliness.¹⁰⁹ Matyjaszczyk argues that the frequent association of dissimulation with religious heresy in sixteenth-century plays contributes to the emergence of suspicions around theatricality itself, claiming that

if an anti-Catholic treatise condemns Catholic rituals as a spectacle devoid of true faith, that point may be fairly taken, but if a performance stages "false" faith as a mere theatrical show, it puts into question its own theatricality and its ability to ever tell the truth.¹¹⁰

However, Matyjaszczyk's argument overlooks the fact that the Vices of medieval drama, too, are frequently presented as dissimulating in order to corrupt their fallible human quarry, with the establishment of Catholicism itself as the vice to be eschewed constituting the only post-Reformation innovation.¹¹¹ The employment of deception to immoral ends had therefore been denounced in dramatic performances for more than a century before the emergence of late sixteenth-century anti-theatrical discourses, indicating a contemporary awareness of the distinction between performances, in which audiences are aware of the pretence, and deceptions, in which they are not. Gillen even contends that sixteenth-century Reformers may have embraced theatricality as a defining feature of their own religious practices. As she points out, the 'transformation of the Eucharist from a miracle into a representative sign of Christ's sacrifice' after the Reformation imbues it with an 'air of theatricality' that distinguishes it from what Reformers perceived as the feigned 'miracle' at the centre of the

¹⁰⁸ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sig. E2^r

¹⁰⁹ Kelly, 'Conflict of Conscience and Sixteenth-Century Religious Drama', p. 406.

¹¹⁰ Matyjaszczyk, 'Struggles with Dramatic Form', p. 22.

¹¹¹ Consider, for instance, the deceptive disguises employed by Satan in both the Chester Cycle *Adam and Eve* and in *Wisdom*, as noted in the previous chapter.

Catholic Mass.¹¹² Therefore, contrary to Matyjaszczyk's claims, the condemnation of Catholicism as superficial and performative in post-Reformation plays does not satisfactorily explain why drama itself becomes implicated in this critique in the second half of the sixteenth century.

A variation on this approach appears in Bale's *King Johan* through the Cardynall's interpretation of the king's 'hevynes' at being overthrown as 'a grett lykellhod and token of amendment', misreading the purpose underlying his 'owtward remorse'.¹¹³ By ascribing this error to the Cardynall – a high-ranking member of the Catholic clergy – Bale implicitly accuses Catholicism of fostering in its adherents a fallacious belief that superficial appearances straightforwardly reflect reality. Nevertheless, this message is complicated by the fact that instructive drama itself relies on a comparable form of credulity, with our recognition of the Cardynall's naïvety depending on the assumption that King Johan's recent rejection of the Cardynall as a 'lewde scysmatyke' accurately represents his beliefs.¹¹⁴ Another helpful illustration of this paradox arises when, after Englande hears Sedicyon advise the Cardynall to 'laye yokes' upon her, she announces to the audience 'Ye maye see, good people, what these same merchauntes are, | Their secrete knaveryes, their open factes declare'.¹¹⁵ Englande's suggestion here that 'open factes' of speech and action can reveal 'secrete knaveryes' sits uneasily with the play's earlier illustration of the potential disconnection between appearance and reality. A similar example emerges in *The Three Laws*, wherein Evangelium responds to Infidelitas's blasphemous jesting with the words 'As thu art, thu speakest, after thy hartes abundaunce, | For as the man is, soch is hys utteraunce'.¹¹⁶ Although the first line quoted here is clearly addressed to Infidelitas, the transition from 'thu' to the more general 'the man' in the second line suggests that this

¹¹² Gillen, 'From Sacraments to Signs', p. 19.

¹¹³ Bale, *King Johan*, Part II, ll. 533–35.

¹¹⁴ Bale, *King Johan*, Part II, l. 487.

¹¹⁵ Bale, *King Johan*, Part II, ll. 814 and 818–19.

¹¹⁶ Bale, *The Three Laws*, l. 1367.

constitutes direct advice to audiences. As well as conflicting with the messages offered elsewhere in these plays, Englande and Evengelium's claims that outward conduct is a straightforward signifier of inward character also exist in tension with their theatrical context, wherein the performers playing these characters act and speak in a manner which does not necessarily correspond with their interior realities. In these cases, the dramatic setting itself undermines Bale's argument that vice will appear in a recognisable guise by exposing the disparity between speech and thought, action and intent. This reveals a fundamental instability within post-Reformation didactic drama, which at times discourages, and at other times relies upon, audiences' faith in the connection between appearance and reality.

Furthermore, in order for theatrical illustrations of feigned virtue to be didactically effective spectators must be aware of which characters are employing deceptive tactics, requiring the paradoxical exposure of the discrepancy between their true nature and their adopted persona. In most cases, audiences are made privy to corrupt characters' intentions before the latter assume their disguises, as when in *Temptation* Satan introduces himself to audiences before acknowledging that he must adopt a 'godly pretence outwardly' in order to converse with Jesus.¹¹⁷ This revelation is, of course, explicitly theatrical, suggesting that in reality we may not be conscious of individuals' real intentions because they do not explicitly confess these to us. Nevertheless, in many cases the true alignment of these characters makes itself known through their following performances, with their interior nature persistently disrupting their assumed disguise. A compelling example of this technique appears in *King Johan* when Clergye is offered forgiveness after feigning contrition in order to regain favour with the king, who asks only that Clergye adopt him as his 'governere'.¹¹⁸ However, Clergye responds to this request with the assertion that 'the Pope shall be [his] rulare', and when questioned hastily corrects himself with the exclamation 'Ha, ded I stomble? I sayd my

¹¹⁷ Bale, *Temptation*, l. 39.

¹¹⁸ Bale, *King Johan*, Part I, l. 511.

prynce shall by my rulare'.¹¹⁹ Although King Johan accepts this vow, Clergye's 'stomble' reminds audiences of his concealed allegiance, with this revelation of his inward nature rendering King Johan's failure to see through Clergye's act less comprehensible because of its seeming avoidability. Intriguingly, one effect of this device is the creation of distance between spectators and King Johan, as it generates the impression that we would not make the same error as him. This establishes audiences as observing and perhaps ridiculing King Johan's actions here rather than learning from them as is often the case in medieval moralities, signalling a movement away from instruction and towards undiluted entertainment.

Moreover, seeing through these characters' disguises does not always depend solely on prior knowledge of their transformations. So much is exemplified in David Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* (1552), a Scottish morality play which deals with contemporary social and political affairs alongside moral issues. At one point in the play, in order to 'steir' the king Rex Humanitas towards immorality the Vices Flatterie, Falset, and Dissait resolve to 'turne [their] claitthis, and change [their] stiles', adopting a 'disgyse' to prevent their recognition.¹²⁰ These disguises successfully deceive Rex Humanitas, who believes that with 'Sapience and Discretioun' – the adopted personas of Falset and Dissait – to assist him he cannot 'faill to rewll this regioun', raising the troubling suggestion that even those who understand the importance of virtue may not always be capable of distinguishing it from vice.¹²¹ Nonetheless, although Rex Humanitas has not seen the transformation of the Vices as audiences have, their performance itself offers plentiful evidence of their true alignment, effectively reassuring audiences that such disguises are far from impenetrable. At first, the Vices themselves frame their dissimulation as indiscernible. Upon first adopting his disguise

¹¹⁹ Bale, *King Johan*, Part I, ll. 512–14.

¹²⁰ David Lindsay, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 535–623 (ll. 719–20).

¹²¹ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 880–81.

as Sapiaentia, for instance, Falset exclaims ‘If this be I, or not, I can not weill say, | Or hes the Feind or farie-folk borne me away?’, disconcertingly implying that performing can facilitate internal as well as external transformations.¹²² Although in Falset’s case this would not necessarily be a bad thing, the same cannot be said for the actors playing the Vices, who by this reasoning risk being genuinely corrupted by their theatrical role. Nevertheless, this fear is soon assuaged by Falset’s performative failure before Rex Humanitas, where he renders his name as ‘Thin Drink’ or ‘Sypeins’ before being corrected by Flatterie.¹²³ Falset’s inability to remember this fact emphatically disproves his earlier claim to have literally transformed into his dramatic persona, reassuring audiences of the moral safety of theatrical performances by exposing their effects upon performers, if not spectators, as illusory. Moreover, Falset’s questionable acting, like that of Clergye in *King Johan*, renders the king’s ignorance difficult to fathom, again preventing audiences from fully identifying with him at this point. As such, even whilst teaching audiences that vice often appears concealed as virtue, Lindsay like Bale promotes the idea that interior character is indeed perceptible so long as we remain alert to the possible conflict between appearance and reality. These playwrights’ reluctance to challenge their viewers with a more realistic account of vice’s potential imperceptibility in favour of the reassuring fantasy that vice is always externally manifest constitutes a potential hindrance to their drama’s didactic efficacy.

Indeed, it is telling that some of the most pro-theatrical works of this period are those which express the least awareness of the potential distinction between interior and exterior. Take, for instance, the *Passage*, throughout which Mulcaster remains keenly aware of the intense theatricality of both the procession and Elizabeth herself. So much is evident when he explains that

¹²² Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 730–31.

¹²³ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 863 and 867.

if a man shoulde say well, he could not better tearme the citie of London that time, than a stage wherein was showed the wonderfull spectacle, of a noble hearted princesse toward her most loving people, & the peoples exceeding comfort in beholding so worthy a soveraigne, & hearing so princelike a voice.¹²⁴

Mulcaster here situates Elizabeth as the entertainment's leading lady, accompanied by a supporting cast of 'gentilmen, Barons, & other the nobilitie of this realme, as also with a notable trayne of goodly and beawtifull ladies, richly appoynted'.¹²⁵ Mulcaster's belief in the benefits of performing in and attending plays is well-documented, with Cartwright pointing out that Mulcaster's 'Merchant Taylor's School in the 1570s and 1580s was remembered for instilling "good behaviour and audacitye" through acting', rendering his readiness to frame Elizabeth as an actress unsurprising.¹²⁶ However, this pro-theatrical outlook is at times accompanied by a relatively reductive identification of external appearances with reality. Such is the case when Mulcaster describes how, whilst listening to a child actor expound upon one of the pageants, there

was noted in the Queenes majesties countenaunce [...], besides a perpetuall attentiveness in her face, a mervelous change in loke [...]. So that she with rejoysing visage did evidently declare that the wordes tooke no lesse place in her minde, than they were moste heartely pronounced by the chylde.¹²⁷

Mulcaster here praises Elizabeth for being an attentive auditor, framing her 'mervelous change in loke' as 'evidently [declaring]' the working of the spectacle 'in her minde', thereby presenting the Queen's expressions as providing direct insight into her thoughts. Mulcaster's approval of drama is therefore tied to a belief in the correspondence between external signs

¹²⁴ Mulcaster, *Passage*, sig. A2^v.

¹²⁵ Mulcaster, *Passage*, sig. A2^r.

¹²⁶ Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism*, p. 49.

¹²⁷ Mulcaster, *Passage*, sig. A3^v.

and internal realities – a belief which, as we have seen, comes under increasing scrutiny throughout this period.

From Instruction to Entertainment: The Influence of Calvinism

Another factor which may have contributed to the condemnation of drama by some late sixteenth-century Protestant moralists is the introduction of Calvinist doctrine to England in the years following the Reformation. Taking the Reformed belief in salvation *sola fide* to its extreme limits, the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination proposes that individuals are predestined to either salvation (for the elect) or damnation (for the reprobate), and that they are incapable of altering their predetermined fate.¹²⁸ Although not especially prevalent in the earliest years of the English Reformation, Calvinism steadily increased in popularity throughout the following decades, with historians including Dewey D. Wallace, Jr claiming that the doctrine of ‘reprobation and double predestination’ was firmly established in England ‘before 1553’.¹²⁹ However, Calvinism poses significant problems for contemporary dramatists, since, as Martha Tuck Rozett succinctly explains, ‘the logic of the doctrine of election undermines the basic didactic principle that one can learn by example’.¹³⁰ Jason Gleckman highlights the potentially seditious implications of depicting predestination onstage, noting contemporary concerns that doing so might ‘[inspire] audience members not in the pastoral directions the Church of England desired, but rather towards the tragic mindset of imagining oneself as a reprobate’.¹³¹ Of course, Calvinism suggests that such thinking is itself a sure sign of reprobation, and that the material presented in plays is capable only of exposing, rather than of instigating, moral recklessness. Nonetheless, the notion that plays

¹²⁸ Dewey D. Wallace, Jr, ‘The Doctrine of Predestination in the Early English Reformation’, *Church History*, 43.2 (1974), 201–15 (pp. 202–04).

¹²⁹ Wallace, ‘The Doctrine of Predestination in the Early English Reformation’, p. 202.

¹³⁰ Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 88.

¹³¹ Jason Gleckman, *Shakespeare and Protestant Poetics* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2019), p. 69.

can neither instruct nor corrupt their audiences, however virtuous or, conversely, indecent the material presented onstage, leads to changes in both the content and the form of contemporary drama which pave the way for the secular performances of the later sixteenth century.

The paradoxical effects of teaching audiences that their spiritual education is impossible are evidenced in *Kyng Daryus* (1565), whose attempts to accommodate Calvinist theology manifest in its formal and thematic divergence from many earlier morality plays. Whereas pre-sixteenth-century religious drama often included a representative human figure whose salvation, like that of spectators, hangs in the balance, Calvinist plays have no room for such ambiguity. As a result, this play's only human character – Kyng Daryus himself – is established as 'good and vertuous', 'lovyng and courtuous' in the prologue, his moral character never subject to question or development at any point throughout the play itself.¹³² Consequently, rather than competing to win over the soul of a mankind-figure, the Vices and Virtues of *Kyng Daryus* merely compete against each other, with the Virtues making a manifestly futile attempt to educate the Vices. On one hand, the absence of a corruptible mankind-figure absolves viewers from implication in the play's messages, permitting spectators to enjoy the performance uninhibited by the consciousness of their own moral responsibilities produced in many earlier moralities. However, this approach also lends a sense of inevitability to many of the interactions which occur throughout the play. So much becomes evident almost from the outset of the performance, when Charytie, after declaring that the only precondition for salvation is that 'a farvent love wee keepe in stoore', asks Iniquytie to repeat this back to him, doubting the validity of his promise to 'kepe it faste'.¹³³ In response, Iniquytie claims that Charytie 'bad [he] shuld kepe [his] money leaste it were

¹³² Anonymous, *Kyng Daryus* (London: Thomas Colwell, 1565), sig. A2^r.

¹³³ Anonymous, *Kyng Daryus*, sig. A3^v.

gone', mockingly substituting material wealth for incorporeal 'love'.¹³⁴ Iniquytie's status as the personification of sin renders his intransigence to Charytie's teachings here entirely unsurprising, and indeed Charytie's following assertion that 'God will [Iniquytie] surely destroye' is rendered both uncontroversial and entirely redundant by the nature of his interlocutor.¹³⁵ Perhaps to mitigate for the absence of dramatic tension resulting from this focal shift, in the second half of the play the quasi-morality theme turns to a preoccupation with an entirely amoral verbal debate, with Stipator Primus, Stipator Secundus, and Zorobabell competing to see who can 'say a weightier matter' than the others.¹³⁶ *Kyng Daryus*'s attempts to adhere to Calvinist doctrine whilst maintaining its dramatic appeal therefore influence both its form and its content, resulting in a play which comforts rather than challenges its viewers.

This shift from instruction to entertainment is also played out in *Jacob and Esau*, another play whose themes are heavily saturated by Calvinist doctrine. The play's preoccupation with predestination is made explicit in its prologue, with the speaker firmly dissociating good works from salvation through the assertion that

before Jacob and Esau yet borne were,
Or had eyther done good, or yll perpetrate:
[...]

Jacob was chosen, and Esau reprobate.¹³⁷

The prologist then reiterates this idea in more general terms, with the explanation that 'it is not (saith Paule) in mans renuing or will, | But in Gods mercy' to determine who will be saved encouraging viewers to apply this rule to themselves.¹³⁸ The possibility of moral improvement via education is raised early in the play itself when Zethar argues that parents

¹³⁴ Anonymous, *Kyng Daryus*, sig. A3^v.

¹³⁵ Anonymous, *Kyng Daryus*, sig. A3^v.

¹³⁶ Anonymous, *Kyng Daryus*, sig. G2^r.

¹³⁷ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. A1^v.

¹³⁸ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. A1^v.

should ‘traîne their children in youth under the rod’ in order that they may not end up like Esau.¹³⁹ However, this argument is immediately deconstructed by Hanan, who points out that Jacob and Esau have in fact been educated together, but that their inherent natures have remained unshaken by these early formative experiences.¹⁴⁰ Curran is therefore right to argue that the concept of moral improvement through education is largely ‘present in *Jacob and Esau* only to be left behind’, with Hanan’s comment undermining the notion that any form of instruction – including that offered by the play itself – can alter individuals’ eschatological fate.¹⁴¹ Tellingly, whilst many contemporary prologues highlight the instructive value of the plays they accompany (as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four), *Jacob and Esau*’s prologue instead asks audiences only that ‘if this storie may your eyes or eares delite, | We pray you of pacience, while we it recite’.¹⁴² Incapable of edifying its spectators, the play can hope only to ‘delite’ their senses, illustrating again how the rise of Calvinist doctrine in sixteenth-century England results in a dramatic form which, unable to provide moral instruction, instead becomes solely preoccupied with supplying entertainment.

Perhaps connected to this shift away from religious instruction is the introduction of a prayer for both secular and religious leaders at the culmination of contemporary plays, a practice identified by John D. Cox as ‘an appropriate way to represent a new source of social cohesion’.¹⁴³ The inclusion of these invocations implies an attempt by playwrights to prevent the relegation of theatrical performances to a form of meaningless recreation, asserting drama’s social value by suggesting that, even when devoid of overt religious and moral significance, plays can still serve to remind spectators of their civic obligations. Nevertheless, rather than successfully justifying performances as socially useful, these prayers in many

¹³⁹ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. A4^r.

¹⁴⁰ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. A4^r.

¹⁴¹ Curran, ‘*Jacob and Esau* and the Iconoclasm of Merit’, p. 292.

¹⁴² Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. A1^v.

¹⁴³ John D. Cox, ‘Stage Devils in English Reformation Plays’, *Comparative Drama*, 32.1 (1998), 85–116 (p. 91).

ways expose post-Reformation drama's fundamental incapacity to serve a clear social purpose. The prayers themselves usually list the figures to whom they encourage obedience in descending order by social rank, with the prayer concluding Thomas Ingelend's *The Disobedient Child* (c. 1560) appealing to God to help 'Queene Elizabeth', 'Our Bysshoppes, pastoures, and Mynisters', 'The Lordes of the Counsell, and the Nobyltye', and finally 'we [His] people'.¹⁴⁴ Contrasting markedly with the religious and political upheaval of the period, this rigid stratification seemingly constitutes an attempt to restore, or at least to create the illusion of, a fixed, inflexible social order. However, this effect is undermined by the considerable scope for variability within this hierarchical structure, particularly regarding the placement of the clergy. Though positioned in *The Disobedient Child* after Elizabeth yet before the 'Nobyltye' and thus afforded extremely high status in contemporary society, the clergy do not appear at all in the prayer which concludes Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1552). Instead, several of the play's characters pray that the Queen herself may be granted the power 'the faith to defende' and 'the Gospell to protect', entirely conflating Church and State authority.¹⁴⁵ Conversely, in the prayer at the end of *Jacob and Esau* 'the whole clergy' – implicitly encompassing its lowest-ranking members – are listed first, even before 'the Quenes majesty', a decision which affords precedence to religious rather than secular leaders.¹⁴⁶ Far from presenting post-Reformation society as unified in its goals and perspectives, these plays' concluding prayers actually expose the heterogeneity of contemporary attitudes towards moral, religious, and social issues. This in turn raises profound questions regarding drama's usefulness as an instructive tool, starkly evidencing its potentially controversial nature by highlighting the extreme variability of its teachings.

It is therefore no coincidence that in this era we begin to see plays which offer critical depictions of performances themselves. Both the social and the moral value of performances

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Ingelend, *The Disobedient Child* (London: Thomas Crolwell, 1570), sig. H1^v.

¹⁴⁵ Nicholas Udall, *Ralph Roister Doister* (London: H. Denham, 1566), sig. I1^r.

¹⁴⁶ Anonymous, *Jacob and Esau*, sig. G4^v.

are called sharply into question in the Interlude to *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, a highly meta-theatrical section of the performance which works to obfuscate the distinction between play and reality. A stage direction at the end of Part One reveals that the Interlude begins with ‘*the Kings, Bischops, and principall players being out of their seats*’, a decision which surely disorients spectators by rendering it unclear whether the following action is part of the theatrical fiction or not.¹⁴⁷ Paradoxically, however, the content of the Interlude serves the contradictory purpose of highlighting the disparity between the idealistic world of the play and the far less appealing one occupied by audiences, thereby questioning not only the ability but also the intention of the play to effect genuine social improvement. At the outset of the Interlude, a Pauper appears begging spectators for ‘almis’, prompting Diligence to brand him a ‘fals raggit loun’ and order him to ‘Swyith out of the feild’.¹⁴⁸ Diligence then commands the ‘officiars’ to ‘cum and chase this carle away’, threatening to bring the play to a premature close if the Pauper cannot be removed.¹⁴⁹ To be sure, Diligence’s tone throughout the play is far from consistent, his speeches ranging from doctrinaire reminders to audiences of ‘The Father and founder of faith and felicite, | That [their] fassioun formed to His similitude’ to solicitations to Rex Humanitas for ‘dinneir’ and ‘drink’ in recompense for his service.¹⁵⁰ Even so, his descent into furious insults and curses at the outset of the Interlude is uncharacteristic. In combination with his self-conscious reference to the performance context through his address to the ‘officiars’, this tonal shift creates the impression that Diligence’s actor is no longer in character at this point, enhancing the illusion that this exchange is unscripted. By starkly, even comically highlighting the potentially extreme distinction between character and actor in this way, Lindsay decisively shatters the performative illusion,

¹⁴⁷ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, p. 578.

¹⁴⁸ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 1934 and 1939.

¹⁴⁹ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 1942–45.

¹⁵⁰ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 1–2, 1807, and 1822.

calling into question the sincerity of the high-minded ideals professed in both the preceding and the forthcoming action of the play.

Indeed, the Interlude goes on to expose the play's inability to accommodate the complaints of this ostensibly "real" Pauper, casting doubt upon its professed intention of supporting the oppressed by encouraging rulers to 'do everilk man justice'.¹⁵¹ After outlining his mistreatment by both legal and ecclesiastical authorities, the Pauper states that he 'will not gif for al [their] play worth an sowis fart, | For their is richt lytill play at [his] hungrie hart'.¹⁵² The Pauper's blunt assessment of the play's lack of practical usefulness here brutally deprives attendees of the comforting illusion that the performance itself has any positive material impact on the suffering of the contemporary Scottish peasantry. This impression continues through the Pauper's exclamation 'Sanct Bryd, Sanct Bryd, send me my ky againe!', an appeal firmly grounded in the Catholic traditions which have been subjected to extensive criticism within the play up to this point.¹⁵³ On one hand, by evidencing the Pauper's theological "backwardness" in the context of post-Reformation Scotland this prayer may prompt the elite Protestant spectators comprising the play's original audience to dismiss or even to ridicule his complaints. However, it also implies that the religious reform so forcefully advocated within the play-proper is emphatically not the priority of the country's poorest citizens. Instead, it suggests that members of the general populace primarily desire juridical integrity and economic security – and, crucially, that they believe these to be more readily obtainable from saints than from contemporary Protestant authorities. Lindsay therefore uses the Interlude to argue that social injustices impede religious reform by facilitating peasants' adherence to Catholicism, implying that this should be addressed as a matter of urgency to quell social unrest. Nevertheless, Diligence brushes over these troubling implications at the conclusion of the Interlude, instead merely asserting that the Pauper

¹⁵¹ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, l. 1891.

¹⁵² Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 1964–65.

¹⁵³ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, l. 2230.

should be put in ‘presoun’ and condemned to ‘hang’ for his impudence.¹⁵⁴ These final words jar with the play’s supposed espousal of the poor’s cause, raising doubts regarding its professed concern for their wellbeing and questioning not only its ability but also its willingness to facilitate genuine social improvement.

More critical still is *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene*, wherein performativity is not only associated with worldliness but also conceptually aligned with food through its comparable function as a corruptive tool employed by the play’s Vices. The negative implications of theatricality become apparent in this play through the Vices’ instructions regarding how Mary should conduct herself, with Cupiditi suggesting that ‘If the colour of [her] haire beginneth to fade, | A craft [she] must have, that yellow it may be made’ whilst Carnall Concupiscence informs her that ‘A painter could make [her] to apere with a lusty courage’.¹⁵⁵ Of course, the most obvious implication here is that sinfulness is accompanied by performativity or ‘craft’, a notion which, as we have already seen, is present in drama from the Middle Ages onwards. However, from the Vices’ temptation of Mary also emerges the hitherto absent notion that performativity itself constitutes a sin. So much is evidenced when we discover that these physical enhancements are directed at ‘yong men’ specifically, calculated to ‘allure’ them and ‘bryng them in’, drawing them towards Mary and sin simultaneously.¹⁵⁶ The same impression is created when Infidelitie recommends that Mary should ‘Let [her] garmentes be sprinkled with rose water’ and use ‘civet, pommander, muske, which be to sell, | That the odor of [her] a myle of [sic], a man may smell’.¹⁵⁷ Rather than merely signifying Mary’s inward vanity, these proposed beautification techniques are here designed to engage others’ senses and entice them into lust. By establishing these theatrical crafts not only as signifying the depravity of their practitioners but as actively

¹⁵⁴ Lindsay, *Ane Satyre*, ll. 2299–300.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sigs C4^r–C4^v.

¹⁵⁶ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sigs C4^r–C4^v.

¹⁵⁷ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sig. D2^r.

threatening to corrupt those who come into contact with them, Lewis Wager implicitly presents performances themselves as a profound threat to audiences' morality.

It is therefore significant that food is also afforded an explicitly theatrical role in this play, evidenced when Concupiscence advises Mary to 'norish' her body with 'fine meats & pure wines [...] | That will cause [her] in all pleasure to florishe'.¹⁵⁸ Though the ambiguity of the word 'florishe' leaves it unclear whether these 'fine meats & pure wines' influence Mary's inward character or only alter her external appearance, the implication either way is that they enhance Mary's sensory – and sensual – appeal, serving the same purpose as the make-up and hair-dye also recommended to her. Lewis Wager's depiction of food as one of the Vices' corruptive tools here follows the post-Reformation convention of presenting food as a worldly distraction from more pious pursuits. However, by simultaneously aligning comestibles with the more explicitly theatrical artifices Mary is encouraged to adopt, Lewis Wager also infuses drama itself with these negative associations, presenting performances as dangerous worldly distractions rather than enlightening spiritual pursuits.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, sixteenth-century anti-theatricalism emerges neither in conjunction with the Reformation itself nor in reaction to the construction of London's public playhouses. Instead, it appears after Reformers' earnest attempts to utilise drama for their own religious cause have proven both ineffective and counterproductive. As well as precluding the accurate transmission of doctrinal points precisely when such accuracy becomes most essential, the dramatic form also undermines contemporary playwrights' endeavours to alert spectators to the potential disconnection between appearance and reality. Even more critical is the fundamental conflict between the morality tradition, which works on

¹⁵⁸ Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentaunce*, sig. D2^r.

the assumption that viewers can be edified by performances, and the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which contends that no such improvement is possible. Therefore, although some branches of Protestantism are more heavily impacted than others, it is clear that post-Reformation playwrights' attempts to harness the affective power of plays for their theological cause are largely unsuccessful. The exposure of drama as a form wholly unsuited to transmitting certain key elements of Protestant doctrine in this era in turn initiates a transition from instructive, moralistic plays to entertaining, secular performances. Rather than identifying this as a spectacular fall from grace, it is more accurate to state that between the 1530s and 1560s Reformed dramatists test drama's capacity as an instructive tool, find it wanting, and subsequently reject it as antagonistic to their values, coming to view plays not as a healthy element of a balanced spiritual diet but instead as the moral equivalent of junk food.

These rapidly shifting approaches to drama over the course of the sixteenth century correspond with changing attitudes towards food within the plays themselves. As indicated in Chapter Two, when medieval plays establish a parallel between food and drama, their concurrent alignment of the material and the spiritual indicates that drama, despite its worldliness, can nevertheless serve a sacral purpose. Conversely, early Reformation plays adopt a considerably more negative view of materiality, associating food and other worldly objects and pastimes exclusively with Vices and other immoral characters. However, these plays also extract drama from its medieval, corporeal context, thereby maintaining the impression that performances carry out a spiritual function. It is only following the discovery of drama's incompatibility with certain Protestant beliefs that the relationship between food and drama shifts once again, with early modern plays being aligned with food despite, and indeed because of, food's continuing status as a symbol of worldliness. Instead of appearing spontaneously in the late sixteenth century, Renaissance playwrights' meta-theatrical use of

food to emphasise drama's potentially dangerous effects therefore develops out of a much longer history of fluctuating relationships between food, drama, worldliness, and spirituality, explaining both the presence and the ubiquity of this trope within early modern plays.

Discerning Palates: Eating, Tasting, and Spectatorship in Early Modern Dramatic Paratexts

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Three, by the later sixteenth century the shared worldliness of food and drama led many pious Protestants to denounce both as possible impediments to spiritual improvement. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate the continuation of this conceptual association between performances and food in a range of early modern dramatic paratexts. The preponderance of culinary imagery in these works has caught the attention of several modern scholars, though it has often been addressed only in a perfunctory manner. Richard Levin, for instance, remarks upon the use of the ‘taste metaphor’ in several Renaissance dramatic paratexts to attribute some spectators’ ‘failure to appreciate’ the plays set before them to ‘a debased taste that could only appreciate inferior art’, though he mentions this only briefly in the context of a broader discussion of contemporary playwrights’ conceptions of their audiences.¹ Elizabeth L. Swann is more expansive in her treatment of this theme, corroborating Levin’s argument whilst also noting the taste metaphor’s broader role ‘both in enfranchising and in managing and regulating the faculty of literary and aesthetic judgement’.² Although Swann does pick up on the ability of the taste metaphor to articulate opposing approaches to audiences’ judgements, her discussion does not extend to dramatic paratexts beyond those attached to Jonson’s plays. Doing so risks creating the impression that this was purely, or at least primarily, a Jonsonian conceit – as, indeed, does Swann’s identification of Thomas Carew’s later reference to the drama-as-food trope as a direct response to Jonson’s prologue to *Epicene*, rather than as responding to a wider literary trope.³ Throughout this chapter, I expand upon Swann and Levin’s arguments, contending that the

¹ Richard Levin, ‘The Two-Audience Theory of English Renaissance Drama’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 18.1 (1986), 251–75 (pp. 256–58).

² Elizabeth L. Swann, *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 65. See also her wider discussion of this idea on pp. 65–69.

³ Swann, *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, p. 66.

authors of early modern dramatic paratexts regularly employ culinary and gustatory imagery not only to appeal for a particular kind of consumption from audiences, but also to conceptualise their views of drama itself. After contextualising my discussion by demonstrating mid-sixteenth-century paratext authors' increasing concerns over the viability of moralistic drama, I will show that the drama-as-food metaphor emerges in the seventeenth century as a means of reconceptualising the nature and function of performances.

Although the term 'paratext' can encompass a wide variety of material, much of which is only accessible to readers (such as illustrations, marginal notes, and typesetting), my investigation focuses exclusively on paratexts intended for delivery onstage. It therefore considers prologues, epilogues, and inductions, but not prefatory poems or authors' or printers' addresses to readers. My analysis also includes paratexts which were composed for the stage but which were ultimately not delivered before an audience, such as the second epilogue to Ben Jonson's *The New Inn* (1629) – a work '*made for the Play in the Poets defence, but the Play liv'd not, in opinion, to have it spoken*'.⁴ Concentrating on paratexts intended for audiences rather than for readers alone in this way ensures that my discussion remains focused on the relationship between food and performed drama specifically, rather than between food and plays as purely textual objects. It is also important to note here that, as Tiffany Stern points out, dramatic paratexts 'were often written by someone other than the playwright', rendering it risky to assume an alignment between playwright and prologist even when their voices appear to overlap.⁵ For this reason, throughout this chapter I take care to distinguish between "dramatists" or "playwrights" (the authors of plays); "paratext authors" (the writers of prologues, epilogues, and inductions); and "prologists" or "epilogists" (the speakers of performed paratexts).

⁴ Ben Jonson, *The New Inn* (London: Thomas Harper, 1631), sig. H1^r.

⁵ Tiffany Stern, "'A Small-Beer Health to His Second Day': Playwrights, Prologues, and First Performances in the Early Modern Theatre', *Studies in Philology*, 101.2 (2004), 172–99 (p. 183).

My argument throughout this chapter draws in many ways on Klawitter's compelling study of the 'play as banquet' metaphor in seventeenth-century dramatic paratexts, wherein he foregrounds its role in defining the 'aesthetic and behavioural standards' of plays and their spectators.⁶ Like Klawitter, I attend closely to the ways in which many early modern paratext authors utilise the drama-as-food conceit to articulate 'the conflict between values and cash', and between playwrights' 'cultural authority' and their 'subjection to market forces'.⁷ However, I also extend on Klawitter's discussion in several significant ways. As well as drawing upon a much wider selection of primary sources than Klawitter, and so providing a clearer sense of the prevalence of this metaphor in contemporary paratexts, I afford greater consideration to playwrights' use of the drama-as-food conceit to support rather than to oppose 'commercialism', a manifestation of the trope which Klawitter considers only briefly.⁸ I also engage with some of the 'dimension[s]' to the plays-as-food metaphor which Klawitter admits to have 'neglected' in his own study, particularly authors' use of the conceit to 'accentuate their views on the right balance of instruction and pleasure, matter and artifice, artistic authority and the power of recipients'.⁹ Perhaps as a result of these differences in approach, my conclusions diverge from Klawitter's. Whilst Klawitter suggests that the drama-as-food metaphor originates in and ultimately proliferates 'conservative social values', I contend instead that many early modern playwrights utilise it in more challenging and radical ways.¹⁰

⁶ Uwe Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet: Implications of a Metatheatrical Conceit in Jacobean-Caroline Drama', in *The Pleasures and Horrors of Eating: The Cultural History of Eating in Anglophone Literature*, ed. by Marion Gymnich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 125–41 (pp. 125 and 128).

⁷ Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet', p. 130.

⁸ Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet', pp. 135–36.

⁹ Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet', p. 138.

¹⁰ Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet', p. 139.

Paratexts

Before progressing to a close analysis of Renaissance dramatic paratexts, it is important to consider the theatrical function and significance of prologues, epilogues, and inductions themselves. Ephemeral, moveable, and often at least potentially non-authorial, dramatic paratexts such as these serve a range of complex and interrelated theatrical purposes.¹¹ In the introduction to his influential study of paratexts, Gérard Genette describes each of these works as a ‘*threshold* [...] that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back’ from the text it accompanies.¹² Alison Findlay concurs, describing prologues as the means by which audiences are ‘welcomed into the fictional world’ of early modern performances, whilst epilogues ‘function as an airlock to conduct them from the playworld back into their own social milieu (and through the doors of the theatre after a performance)’.¹³ However, recently some scholars have begun to take issue with Genette’s work. Helen Smith, for instance, extends Genette’s entryway metaphor to contend that early modern paratexts are ‘as likely to lead to a frustrating dead-end as to a carefully built pathway, or to deposit the reader back outside the building rather than to guide him or her into the text’.¹⁴ Indeed, although Genette and Findlay’s view of paratexts as cordoning off performances from the lived reality of audiences is not without merit, it is in some cases contradicted by evidence from early modern dramatic paratexts themselves, which rather than leading audiences into and out of fictional worlds instead often foreground the reality which exists around and beyond theatrical productions. Various outlining and soliciting approval for plays’ plots, commenting on the material reality of spectators’ presence in performance spaces, expressing authors’ and performers’ hopes for productions, and reflecting on the

¹¹ Tiffany Stern, “‘A Small-Beer Health to His Second Day’”, pp. 179–83.

¹² Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Levin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2. Italics in original.

¹³ Alison Findlay, ‘Epilogues and Last Words in Shakespeare: Exploring Patterns in a Small Corpus’, *Language and Literature*, 29.3 (2020), 327–46 (p. 328).

¹⁴ Helen Smith, ‘Introduction’, in *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. by Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1–14 (p. 6).

nature of drama more broadly, theatrical prologues and epilogues typically heighten spectators' interpretative distance from the dramatic material rather than immersing them within it. However, despite paratexts' evident preoccupation with interpretation, Genette's claim that their purpose is '*to get the book read and to get the book read properly*' – or, in theatrical terms, to get plays watched and heard and then interpreted correctly – constitutes an oversimplification, at least with respect to the prologues and epilogues attached to Renaissance plays.¹⁵ As this chapter will make clear, rather than attempting to guide viewers' responses to performances, early modern dramatic paratexts instead very often comment on the inherent difficulties of governing reception in this way.

Given the self-reflexive nature of dramatic paratexts, it is important for the purposes of this investigation to determine whether or not any correlation exists between keyword usage and the attachment of performed paratexts to early modern plays. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to identify the proportion of contemporary plays which are accompanied by prologues, epilogues, and inductions in each decade covered by this investigation. Whilst many scholars have made use of quantitative analysis when attempting to analyse the theatrical role and cultural status of Renaissance dramatic paratexts, many of these studies are considerably more limited in focus than my own. For instance, despite encompassing an impressively large selection of plays, the statistical analysis undertaken by Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann focuses exclusively on prologues, whilst for the purposes of my own investigation the inclusion rate of epilogues and other performed paratexts such as inductions is of equal value.¹⁶ Although Sonia Massai and Heidi Craig's research takes both prologues and epilogues into account, it also groups together all plays printed between 1512 and 1590, a time period encompassing the transition from medieval

¹⁵ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 197. Italics in original.

¹⁶ Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Catholic drama to Protestant moralities to professional performances in public theatres.¹⁷ This decision is especially significant given that Massai and Craig themselves single out the 1590s as an ‘extraordinary’ decade in terms of ‘the inclusion rate of prologues and epilogues’ in the first printed editions of plays, making it imperative to take into consideration – as my own investigation does – alterations in the frequency of paratexts in the decades leading up to 1590.¹⁸

To compile my own data, I once again used the 512 plays available on LION for the years 1560–1639 (as of September 2024) to compile a corpus of 376 performed paratexts, as defined above. Classifying epilogues for this purpose presented certain challenges, since in many cases – and particularly in the earlier decades covered by this investigation – these are not clearly demarcated from the main text of the plays themselves. In order to maintain consistency, I have included only those terminal addresses to audiences which are obviously paratextual in their entirety, excluding those which occupy the final lines of otherwise intra-textual speeches such as that which concludes *The Two Angry Women of Abington* (1598).¹⁹ I have also excluded choral reflections on the content of performances when these also conclude other Acts or Scenes, along with songs printed at the culmination of plays (the latter owing to the difficulty of determining whether they are intended to be sung after or during the performances they accompany). My investigation also takes into account later editions of the same play when these appear on the LION database, in order to account for performed paratexts which may have been added to or removed from later reprints and to ensure that this data is aligned with that from Chapter One. One consequence of this decision is the fact that it renders the data for the 1620s significantly skewed by the publication of the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays in 1623. Whilst this exerts a minimal impact on the data for culinary and

¹⁷ Sonia Massai and Heidi Craig, ‘Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues on Page and Stage’, in *Rethinking Theatrical Documents in Shakespeare’s England*, ed. by Tiffany Stern (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2020), pp. 91–110.

¹⁸ Massai and Craig, ‘Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues’, p. 92.

¹⁹ Henry Porter, *The Two Angry Women of Abington* (London: Edward Allde, 1599), sigs M2^r–M2^v.

medical keywords, it has a much more significant impact here, both because this data (unlike that from Chapter One) is based on raw numbers, rather than averages, and because – as several scholars have pointed out – dramatic paratexts appear unusually infrequently in the First Folio.²⁰ So, whilst only 43 performed paratexts are distributed across 83 plays in the 1620s – an average of 0.52 dramatic paratexts per play – when the thirty-six Folio plays are excluded, this increases to 32 paratexts across 47 plays, with an average of 0.68 per play. The average within the First Folio is 0.31 per play. As a result of this obvious skew, I have taken care not to rely on data for the 1620s to support my conclusions about the changing prevalence of dramatic paratexts throughout these decades.

Using the information available, I first of all plotted the amount of performed paratexts against the number of printed plays which appear across these eight decades (Fig. 4.1). Although the resulting data reveal a correlation between the prevalence of dramatic paratexts and the number of plays printed in any given decade (excepting, of course, the 1620s), they also expose a general decline in the ratio of paratexts to plays, a trend which is only broken to any significant extent in the 1600s and 1630s. As my data show, paratexts actually outnumber printed plays in the 1560s – the only decade in which this is the case, with an average of 1.37 dramatic paratexts per play. The proportion of performed paratexts to printed plays then decreases significantly between the 1570s and 1590s, from 0.93 to 0.37 per play. There is then a sharp increase in the 1600s, to 0.79 dramatic paratexts per play, though this does not continue into the 1610s, dropping again to just 0.63 per play. When the Shakespeare Folio is discounted, there is then a miniscule uptick in the 1620s to 0.68 dramatic paratexts per play, followed by a surge in the 1630s, where 139 plays are accompanied by 131 performed paratexts. This amounts to an average of 0.94 performed paratexts per printed play – a higher proportion than at any point since the 1560s. Plotting the

²⁰ Findlay, 'Epilogues and Last Words in Shakespeare', p. 330; Massai and Craig, 'Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues', p. 108 (Footnote 14).

amount of plays published against the amount containing at least one paratext produces an almost identical pattern, suggesting that these results are not skewed by contemporary trends for single plays containing multiple paratexts (Fig. 4.2).

Of course, it is important to recognise that data compiled from printed plays does not necessarily reflect theatrical practice precisely. Massai and Craig rightly caution that fluctuations such as those mentioned above may speak ‘not to a waning of popularity on the stage but to what types of prologues and epilogues were deemed to be popular with readers’.²¹ Even so, these data suggest that prologues, epilogues, and inductions increasingly come to be seen as separable from the performances they accompany throughout this period, evidently being viewed as less integral to recipients’ enjoyment and understanding of plays. Moreover, despite conflicting with the upward trend apparent in other scholars’ quantitative analyses, my findings do corroborate Massai and Craig’s account of paratexts’ markedly higher relative frequency between 1600 and 1609 and between 1630 and 1639 compared to the surrounding decades.²² Massai and Craig explain this trend as resulting from the fact that these are ‘time periods when theatre-making was at its most self-conscious’, with this naturally resulting in the greater prevalence of paratextual works allowing their authors to theorise ‘different modes of writing, staging, or responding to contemporary drama’.²³ This lends additional significance to the fact that, as demonstrated in Chapter One, the 1600s and 1630s are also the two decades in which we see the highest frequency of culinary keywords in contemporary drama. Moreover, these are the decades wherein we witness the highest frequency of the words ‘taste’, ‘smell’, ‘banquet’, and ‘physic’ in plays, these being keywords which demonstrate unusual frequency patterns in drama compared to other literary forms. Taken together, these details indicate a correlation between increased theatrical self-consciousness and increased use of culinary terminology.

²¹ Massai and Craig, ‘Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues’, p. 98.

²² Massai and Craig, ‘Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues’, p. 95.

²³ Massai and Craig, ‘Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues’, p. 95.

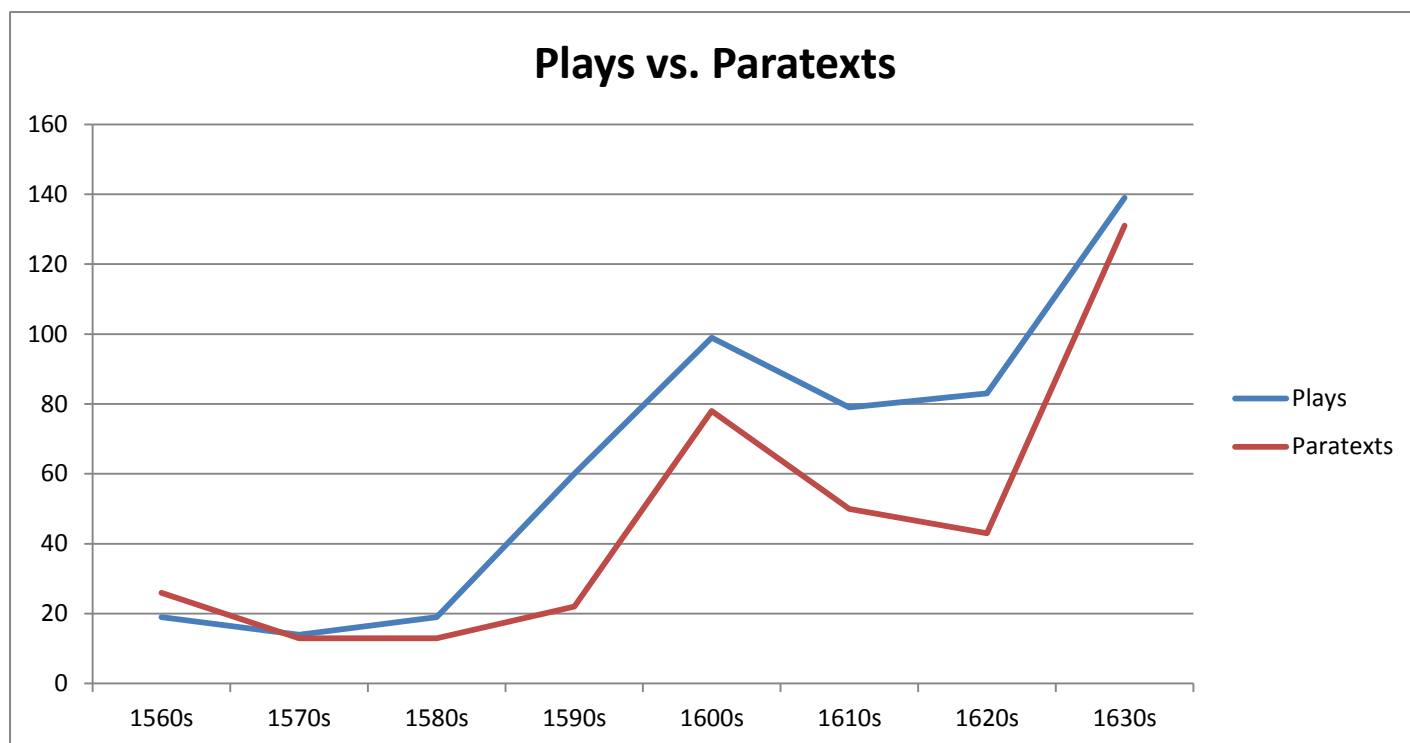


Fig. 4.1

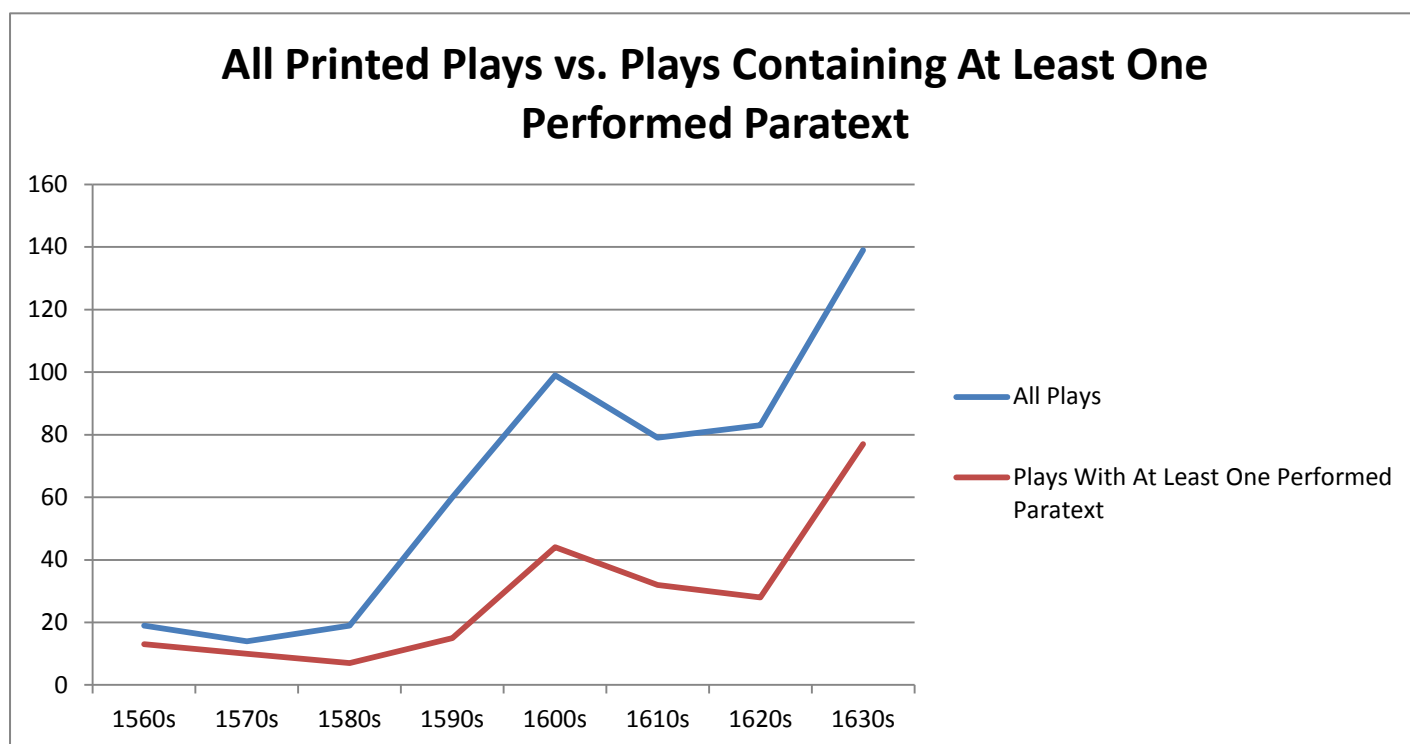


Fig. 4.2

The Failure of Moralising in Sixteenth-Century Dramatic Paratexts

Although Klawitter is right to note that ‘food and dinner metaphors [...] were scarcely employed in Elizabethan dramatic paratexts’, in order to fully understand their later prevalence it is nevertheless necessary to consider the view of drama which emerges in the prologues and epilogues to sixteenth-century plays.²⁴ According to Stern, ‘prologues and epilogues dating from before 1600 are generally more brief and vague in remit’ than their later counterparts, leading her to surmise that ‘the importance of prologues and epilogues seems to have grown over time’.²⁵ Although I would take issue with Stern’s devaluation of the ‘importance’ of sixteenth-century dramatic paratexts, it is true that throughout the early modern period the stylistic features of prologues and epilogues undergo marked alterations which are suggestive of simultaneous changes to their function. However, there is not, as Stern suggests, any clear division between pre- and post-1600 paratexts, and in fact their function begins to shift long before the turn of the seventeenth century.

To begin in the earliest stages of the period under consideration here, many dramatic paratexts from the mid-sixteenth century appear to be relatively unconcerned with the question of theatrical morality. Take, for instance, the prologue to Ingelend’s *The Disobedient Child*. Thought to have been first performed in around 1560, this play focuses on the downfall of a wealthy man’s son who marries ‘contrarye to his fathers wyll’.²⁶ However, instead of explicitly stating that audiences should learn from the titular character’s mistakes, the prologist describes the company as intending only to ‘shewe’ how ‘Throughout the whole world in every lande | Vice doth increase, and Vertue decayes’.²⁷ The prologue to Thomas Preston’s *Cambises* (pub. 1569) adopts a similar approach, with the speaker informing audiences only that the cast will ‘dilate’ Cambises’ cruelty, ‘Craving that this may suffice

²⁴ Klawitter, ‘The Play as Banquet’, p. 126.

²⁵ Stern, “‘A Small-Beer Health to His Second Day’”, p. 198.

²⁶ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923) III, p. 351; Thomas Ingelend, *The Disobedient Child* (London: Thomas Crolwell, 1570), sig. A2^r.

²⁷ Ingelend, *The Disobedient Child*, sig. A2^r.

now, your patience to win'.²⁸ Here again the prologist offers no explanation of the moral benefits of seeing Cambises' flaws exposed in this way, instead merely soliciting audiences' 'patience' or contentment with the performance. Of course, these prologues' lack of defence for the portrayal of vice onstage may speak as much to a complete lack of faith in the instructive capacity of performances as to an implicit belief in their didactic power. As we have already seen in Chapter Three above, since Calvinist doctrine held that performances could have no real impact on spectators' morality, prologues to plays inflected by Calvinism such as *Jacob and Esau* (c. 1550s) accordingly omit references to either the risks or the benefits of viewing theatrical productions. Nevertheless, whether resulting from absolute confidence in performances' edifying role or, alternatively, from a conviction in their inability to either instruct or corrupt spectators, early Elizabethan paratexts' lack of acknowledgement of drama's didactic function attests to their authors' view that staged performances pose no threat to audiences.

Nevertheless, evidence from other contemporary paratexts reveals an emergent awareness of a more fraught relationship between staged vice and its genuine counterpart, with drama increasingly being thought capable of promoting the very immorality it often professes to discourage. The prologue to William Wager's *Inough is as Good as a Feast* (pub. 1565) is notably more self-conscious than its aforementioned contemporaries regarding the moral complications attendant on dramatic depictions of vice. So much becomes apparent when the prologist states that the players intend 'Vertues to praise and to touch abuses, | Deviding [sic] either of them plain and directly'.²⁹ Whereas *The Disobedient Child's* prologist simply claims that vice and virtue will both be presented in the following performance, this speaker draws a much firmer distinction between the two, explicitly stating that the play will 'praise' virtue but merely 'touch' vice – 'touch' being a word suggestive of

²⁸ Thomas Preston, *Cambises King of Percia* (London: John Allde, 1570), sig. A2^r.

²⁹ William Wager, *Inough is as Good as a Feast* (London: John Allde, 1570), sig. A2^r.

probing or exposing whilst carrying simultaneous connotations of brief or superficial contact.³⁰ Here, the benefits of portraying immorality theatrically become explicitly, not implicitly, conditional upon its simultaneous denunciation, suggesting this prologue's belief in plays' potential to encourage as well as to deter immorality. Furthermore, the attendant assertion that vice and virtue are consciously divided in this performance betrays rather than alleviates anxieties regarding the potential ease with which they can be conflated. Still, despite these cautionary notes the prologist expresses hope that even though the cast will 'dally merily', 'it shall appeer bothe to moste and least | That our meaning is but honestie', implying that there is nothing inherently immoral about this form of entertainment. This point is reiterated when the speaker envisages spectators using the play 'them selves to recreate', a statement which at first seems to establish the play's function as that of entertainment alone, advanced through the prologist's wish that 'those which come for recreation | May not be void of their expectation'.³¹ However, embedded in the words 'recreate' and 'recreation' may also be the more literal idea of re-creation, a meaning with late sixteenth-century origins.³² If so, the prologists' statements here can be taken as foregrounding the proximity rather than the distance between entertainment and self-improvement, suggesting that entertainment not only does not conflict with but can in fact be conducive to instruction.

A comparable insinuation appears in the prologue to another of William Wager's works, *The Longer Thou Livest, the More Foole Thou Arte* (1559), which states that

Honest mirth shall com in, and appeare in place,
 Not to thadvancement [sic], but to the shame of vice,
 To extol Vertue without faile is our devise.³³

³⁰ William Wager, *Inough*, sig. A3^r.

³¹ William Wager, *Inough*, sig. A2^r.

³² *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "recreate (v.2), sense 1", September 2023
 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6331071204>> [last accessed 13 February 2024].

³³ William Wager, *The Longer Thou Livest the More Foole Thou Art* (London: Wylliam How, 1569), sig. A2^v.

These lines put forward the interesting argument that even comedic depictions of vice onstage can be used to denounce immorality, though the specification of ‘Honest mirth’ as the means of achieving this effect implies the existence of a less innocent, less virtuous counterpart. This distinction is rendered even more overt by the prologist of Nicholas Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1552). Despite claiming that the following performance offers ‘mirth with modestie’, the prologue’s speaker also declares that

all scurilitie we utterly refuse,
Avoiding such mirth wherein is abuse:
Knowing nothing more commendable for a mans recreation
Than Mirth which is used in an honest fashion.³⁴

Whilst clearly arguing that theatrical entertainment is not inherently immoral, the prologist’s obsessive reiteration of this claim actually draws spectators’ attention towards the fine line between ‘mirth’ and ‘scurilitie’, and so also to the ease with which performances may overstep this boundary. Although the authors of these prologues evidently see drama as a useful instructive tool, their defences of the practice contain the shadow of their own counterarguments, highlighting drama’s tenuous moral position in the very process of asserting the safety of these particular plays.

This idea becomes even more pronounced in the prologue to Lewis Wager’s *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (1558), whose speaker openly acknowledges that both the play’s author and its actors have ‘bene spitefully despised’ for their efforts.³⁵ However, although the prologist goes on to defend the play from the charges of these anonymous detractors, its counterarguments not only fail to dismiss, but indeed lend additional credence to these accusations. As the prologue progresses, it becomes abundantly clear that the prologist wishes to close down debates regarding the play’s morality. As well as insisting that

³⁴ Nicholas Udall, *Ralph Roister Doister* (London: H. Denham, 1566), sig. A2^r.

³⁵ Lewis Wager, *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (London: John Charlewood, 1566), sig. A2^r.

‘neither wise nor learned would [the play] dispraise’, the speaker insinuates that detractors themselves must be morally corrupt, compelling unsympathetic spectators to remain silent by arguing that ‘Faine wold they have their wickedness still concealed | Therefore maliciously against us they be set’.³⁶ Nevertheless, the prologue’s failure to assume control of the discourse surrounding the play becomes evident when the speaker asks

Doth not our facultie learnedly extoll vertue?

Doth it not teache, God to be praised above al thing?

What facultie doth vice more earnestly subdue?

Doth it not teache true obedience to the kyng?³⁷

By presenting these arguments as rhetorical questions rather than as direct argumentative statements, the prologist initially appears to establish the play’s promotion of virtue as so self-evident as to admit no alternative readings. However, this impression of absolute certainty is undermined by the defensive, confrontational tone created by this profusion of questions, which paradoxically exposes the speaker’s lack of certainty regarding their answers. This in turn partially undermines their rhetorical status, allowing them to invite genuine contemplation of the play’s fulfilment of these objectives and so opening it to further scrutiny rather than definitively attesting to its moral rectitude. Towards the end of the prologue the speaker adopts a different approach, countering criticism more directly with the assertion that

We desire no man in this poynt to be offended,

In that vertues with vice we shall here introduce,

For in men and women they have depended:

And therefore figuratively to speake, it is the use.³⁸

³⁶ Lewis Wager, *Repentaunce*, sig. A2^r.

³⁷ Lewis Wager, *Repentaunce*, sig. A2^v.

³⁸ Lewis Wager, *Repentaunce*, sig. A3^r.

This feeble defence spectacularly fails to assuage contemporary anxieties regarding theatrical depictions of vice, acknowledging their perceived ability to inspire immorality in viewers and yet offering precedent as the only justification of this practice. This prologist's unsuccessful attempts to defend the following play thereby evidence the difficulty of exculpating drama from the accusations of anti-theatricalists, with this speaker's protests proving not merely futile but actually counterproductive.

As noted in Chapter Three, the difficulty of controlling viewers' responses to performances was of particular concern in this era, and indeed many contemporary dramatic paratexts reveal their authors' awareness of, and simultaneous discomfort regarding, their limited control over spectators' interpretations of their plays. George E. Rowe, Jr perceptively speaks of a 'problematic and often antagonistic relation between audience expectations and perceptions, on one hand, and authorial intention, on the other', and indeed anxieties regarding the desire to constrain spectators' interpretations within narrowly prescribed limits abound in contemporary paratexts.³⁹ So much is apparent in the prologue to George Wapull's *The Tyde Taryeth No Man* (pub. 1576), whose speaker feels it necessary to clarify that although

here a Courtyer is named,

Yet thereby is not ment the Courtyer alone:

But all kindes of persons, who their suites have framed,

Or to any such greedy guttes, have made their mone.⁴⁰

This prologist's verbal elucidation of how the courtier is to be understood at once exposes the author's awareness that meaning is not directly or straightforwardly transferred from the stage to spectators' minds and constitutes an attempt to assume control over the play's didactic message. However, this attempt to retain authority over the meaning of the

³⁹ George E. Rowe, Jr, 'Ben Jonson's Quarrel with Audience and Its Renaissance Context', *Studies in Philology*, 81.4 (1984), 438–60 (p. 439).

⁴⁰ George Wapull, *The Tyde Taryeth No Man* (London: Hugh Jackson, 1576), sig. A2^r.

performance exists in tension with the author's concurrent desire that spectators engage actively with the material presented onstage. By asking viewers to recognise the Courtyer as representing 'all kindes of persons', the author acknowledges that the play's didactic success depends heavily on spectators' extrapolation from the staged material in a manner sanctioned by, but fundamentally beyond the control of, the playwright. By indicating the considerable extent to which the successful transmission of plays' moral messages depends on viewers' essentially uncontrollable and undetectable interpretations of their content, this prologue raises compelling questions regarding drama's viability as an instructive tool.

Whereas the prologue to *The Tyde Taryeth No Man* cautions viewers against taking the play too literally, a diametrically opposed concern emerges from the prologue to Richard Edwards's *Damon and Pithias* (pub. 1571), whose author claims to be troubled by the prospect of audiences reading too much into the following performance. So much is evidenced through the speaker's assertion that 'Wherein talkyng of Courtly toyes, wee doo protest this flat, | Wee talke of Dionisius [sic] Courte, wee meane no Court but that'.⁴¹ Evidently, the prologist favours clumsy exposition over the kind of ambiguity which permits seditious misinterpretations, attempting to keep spectators' understanding of the material set before them within the bounds of political orthodoxy. Intriguingly, however, this alleged solution itself ironically exacerbates the anticipated problem, with the prologist's insistence that 'wee meane no Court but that' inviting rather than preventing direct comparison between the Dionysian and Elizabethan courts – even amongst those who may not otherwise have made the connection. Although it seems likely that this effect is intentional on the author's part, with this overt disclaimer appeasing the play's censors whilst in practice actually heightening its subversive potential, it nevertheless reveals the writer's knowledge that

⁴¹ Richard Edwards, *Damon and Pithias* (London: Richard Jones, 1582), sig. A2^v.

simply telling audiences how to interpret performances does not necessarily produce the desired effect.

Genette considers the provision of interpretative guidance to be one of the primary functions of paratexts, claiming that ‘authorial practice [...] consists of forcing on the reader an indigenous theory defined by the author’s *intention*, which is presented as the most reliable interpretive key; and in this respect the preface clearly constitutes one of the instruments of authorial control’.⁴² Though many early modern dramatic paratexts do evidence an underlying assumption that authorial intention is the ‘most reliable interpretive key’ to the plays they accompany, their ability to function effectively as ‘instruments of authorial control’ is palpably in question in the prologues discussed here. Despite approaching the problem from different angles, the prologues to *The Tyde Taryeth No Man* and *Damon and Pithias* both reveal their authors’ awareness of the difficulties of controlling dramatic reception, with audiences’ active engagement with performances being paradoxically both essential and potentially detrimental to playwrights’ dissemination of their intended messages.

That to ‘take things as they be ment’ in the way commanded by *Damon and Pithias*’s prologist is less than straightforward for even the most obliging spectators is evidenced in the prologue to *New Custome* (pub. 1573). The prologist begins by challenging the reliability of sensory reception, declaring that ‘Al thinges be not soe as in sight they doe seeme, | What so ever they resemble, or what ever men deeme’.⁴³ Whilst the fallibility of the human senses was widely recognised in the early modern period, by explicitly highlighting this fact before the performance of a play the speaker provocatively draws attention to drama’s potential to deceive rather than enlighten its audiences.⁴⁴ The prologist goes on to

⁴² Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 222. Italics in original.

⁴³ Anonymous, *New Custome* (London: William How, 1573), sig. A2^r.

⁴⁴ Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 4.

argue that, as a result of these flawed perceptions, ‘judgemente shall but little availe’, with spectators’ inability to correctly interpret sensory information leading them to take ‘one thing for an other, whiche differ so farre | As good dothe from badde’.⁴⁵ Although superficially functioning only as a figure of speech, this final comparison disconcertingly implies that ‘good’ and ‘badde’ can themselves be mistaken for one another even though they ‘differ so farre’ in nature. Combined with the prologist’s earlier insistence upon the fallibility of the senses, this claim emphasises the difficulty of accurately taking the moral meaning from this or any other play, corroborating Richard A. Burt’s argument that ‘authorial intention never fully control[s] the reception of the drama’.⁴⁶ The author thereby not only presents performances as morally ambiguous, but also establishes this ambiguity as unchangeable, resulting not from plays’ theoretically amendable content but rather from spectators’ inalterable perceptual limitations. Indeed, after explaining what the action of the following play intends to show, the speaker acknowledges that ‘diverse may invent muche distant from this’, which inventions or interpretations ‘in no wise hee wil have prejudiciall to his, | Nor his unto theirs, what soever they bee’.⁴⁷ Unlike *Damon and Pithias*’s prologue, which similarly recognises spectators’ ability to locate ‘other meaning’ in plays and ostensibly attempts to prevent it, the prologue to *New Custome* takes conflicting, non-authorial interpretations in good humour, accepting rather than resisting drama’s intrinsic indeterminacy.⁴⁸ Therefore, although this prologue also requests that audiences go about ‘Interpreting [the play] no otherwise but as it was ment’, its earlier insistence on interpretative difficulties lends this appeal a certain degree of irony by simultaneously

⁴⁵ Anonymous, *New Custome*, sig. A2^r.

⁴⁶ Edwards, *Damon and Pithias*, sig. A2^r; Richard A. Burt, “‘Tis Writ By Me”: Massinger’s *The Roman Actor* and the Politics of Reception in the English Renaissance Theatre’, *Theatre Journal*, 40.3 (1988), 332–46 (p. 333).

⁴⁷ Anonymous, *New Custome*, sig. A2^v.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *Damon and Pithias*, sig. A2^v.

indicating its apparent impossibility.⁴⁹ Here, then, is an early instance of a prologue which presents the moral risks of performances as inherent rather than avoidable, attributing them not to the potentially flawed content of some plays but to the radical openness to interpretation common to all theatrical productions.

‘We Strive Not to Instruct’: The Shifting Function of Early Modern Performances

Evidently, then, in the later sixteenth century doubts regarding drama’s instructive capabilities increasingly begin to arise even within works attached to and performed alongside plays themselves. In response to this growing awareness of drama’s didactic limitations, dramatic paratexts begin to conceptualise the nature and function of performances very differently in the early seventeenth century. In particular, many dramatic paratexts in this era explicitly profess a greater interest in appealing to, as opposed to instructing, their audiences. As we have already seen in Chapters Two and Three, entertainment and instruction are interconnected rather than dichotomous within medieval and early modern English drama, with humour and slapstick facilitating rather than impeding plays’ ability to convey moral messages to their viewers. However, some Renaissance paratexts claim to eschew attempts at offering instruction altogether. The prologue to Edward Sharpham’s *Cupid’s Whirligig* (pub. 1607), for instance, claims that the dramatist ‘onely strives with mirth to please’ spectators, privileging audiences’ enjoyment of the performance above all other concerns.⁵⁰ A similar impression emerges in the prologue to Thomas Newman’s translation of Terence’s *The Andrian Woman* (pub. 1627), which claims that

Our Poet first setting his mind to write,

Deemd this the sole maine charge upon him laid,

⁴⁹ Edwards, *Damon and Pithias*, sig. A2^v.

⁵⁰ Edward Sharpham, *Cupids Whirligig* (London: T. Creede, 1611), Prologue [unnumbered page].

To please the people with the playes he made.⁵¹

By describing ‘pleas[ing]’ audiences not only as the primary but in fact as the ‘sole’ intention of the playwright, this prologist presents the following performance as entirely unconcerned with instructing its spectators. The prologue to *The Dutch Courtezan* (1605) is even more explicit about its intentions, with the speaker’s assertion that ‘We strive not to instruct, but to delight’ amounting to an overt denial that the play possesses any moralising purpose.⁵²

This raises the question of whom exactly these plays are attempting to ‘delight’, with many paratexts in this era presenting the plays they accompany as constructed with a particular audience in mind. Some contemporary paratexts – particularly those attached to sixteenth-century plays – identify moral virtue as a prominent characteristic of their target audiences. Such is the case in the prologue to *Clyomon and Clamydes*, a play first published in 1599 but thought to have been performed as early as the 1570s.⁵³ Like many of its contemporaries, this play’s prologue defends its moralistic function by pedantically distinguishing between vice and virtue, insisting that throughout the following play

as well as famous facts, ignomius placed are:

Wherein the just reward of both, is manifestly showne,

That vertue from the root of vice, might openly be knowne.⁵⁴

In light of this play’s obvious moralistic interests, it is significant that a few lines later the prologist uses gustatory imagery to offer a cutting criticism of the play’s detractors, claiming that to such ‘bablers’ the play is like ‘peereles taste to filthy Swine, which in the mire doth moile’.⁵⁵ By framing the play itself as ‘peereles’ food and its detractors as sub-human ‘Swine’ wallowing in ‘mire’ – a form of physical filth that here implicitly stands in for its

⁵¹ Terence, *The Andrian Woman*, in *The Two First Comedies of Terence*, trans. by Thomas Newman (London: G. Miller, 1627), sig. A8^r.

⁵² John Marston, *The Dutch Courtezan* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1605), sig. A2^r.

⁵³ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), IV, p. 6.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, *Clyomon and Clamydes* (London: Thomas Creede, 1599), sig. A2^r.

⁵⁵ Anonymous, *Clyomon and Clamydes*, sig. A2^r.

spiritual counterpart – the prologist suggests that only indiscriminating consumers with corrupt tastes will dislike the play, whilst implicitly presenting these tastes as inalterable. This prologue therefore contends that the playwright has no interest in either pleasing or instructing immoral spectators, implying that the aspects of the play which make it morally edifying will also render it enjoyable for respectable viewers.

Furthermore, that culinary terminology can serve not merely to reflect upon but also to cultivate the desired viewership is evidenced in the prologue to Gascoigne's *The Glasse of Governement* (pub. 1575), whose speaker declares that

What man hath minde to heare a merry Jest,
Or seekes to feede his eye with vayne delight:
That man is much unmeete to be a guest,
At such a feaste as I prepare this night.⁵⁶

Rather than presenting the performance as an egalitarian meal at which something may be found to please all consumers, the phrase 'such a feaste' implies that only one particular kind of fare will be on offer in the following performance. The prologist goes on to specify that those who desire 'wanton' entertainment 'may be gone', with only those interested in learning 'howe hygh the vertuous clyme' and 'Howe low they fall which lyve withouten feare | Of God or man' being invited to 'stay a whyle'.⁵⁷ Perhaps drawing on the simultaneously communal and exclusionary nature of feasting, these lines suggest that, whilst the play has little interest in educating immoral viewers (who are told dismissively that 'wyde open standes the porte' for them to leave), neither is it designed to appeal to them, instead being interested only in pleasing the virtuous. The prologue to *Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fooles* (pub. 1619) makes a similar point when, despite suggesting that plays can educate those who 'cannot or will not' learn from 'serious and more grave advisings [sic]', it

⁵⁶ George Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Governement* (London: Henry Middleton, 1575), sig. A3^r.

⁵⁷ Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Governement*, sig. A3^r.

concedes that those most in need of instruction will ‘most likely’ be ‘absent’ from moralising performances, which are designed primarily ‘to please the wel-disposed’.⁵⁸ As such, rather than negating the significance of the disparity between intention and reception – as does the prologue to *Clyomon and Clamydes* – the prologue to *The Glasse of Governement* instead works to diminish its impact by soliciting a sympathetic audience – one that is, presumably, less likely to misconstrue and misapply the play’s messages.

However, many later paratext authors profess a desire to please spectators on an intellectual and aesthetic as well as, or even instead of, on a moral level. This approach is evidenced in the highly meta-theatrical induction to Shackerly Marmion’s *A Fine Companion* (c. 1632–1633), which features a lengthy debate between a playwright and an anti-theatricalist. Towards the end of the induction, after soundly ignoring or dismissing many of the anti-theatricalists’ claims, the dramatised playwright asserts that the company need not ‘feare’ the ‘foule aspersions’ of corrupt attendees such as his interlocutor, but that their interest should only be in pleasing the ‘cleare eyes’ of ‘wise’ spectators, ‘Passing prophaner people’.⁵⁹ This assertion in many ways echoes that of the prologue to *Clyomon and Clamydes*, suggesting that the fictionalised playwright – likely a stand-in for Marmion himself – desires to glean the approval of only a select few with his work. However, the playwright’s use of the word ‘wise’ as a descriptor for those whose approval is desired also expands on the approach taken by the *Clyomon and Clamydes*’ prologue by establishing intelligence, in addition to morality, as a characteristic of this elite group. Whereas the prologist to *The Glasse of Governement* disentangles morality from either social or educational status, claiming that the desired audience of virtuous spectators can be comprised

⁵⁸ George Chapman, *Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fooles* (London: S. N., 1619), sig. A2^r.

⁵⁹ Shackerly Marmion, *A Fine Companion* (London: Aug. Matthews, 1633), sig. A3^v.

of ‘people greate and small’, *A Fine Companion*’s induction expresses a desire to cater to those whose tastes are deemed both morally and intellectually cultivated.⁶⁰

Indeed, some early modern paratexts go further still, doing away with the moral aspect entirely. Such is the case in the epilogue to Thomas Heywood’s *The Brazen Age* (pub. 1613), whose speaker declares that the actors ‘seeke to please’ not ‘sight’ but ‘The understanding eare’, claiming that

the learnd [sic] can onely censure right:

The rest we crave, whom we unlettered call,

Rather to attend then judge.⁶¹

The epilogist here demonstrates what Jennifer Waldron identifies as the common contemporary impression of ‘bodily vision’ as not only ‘inimical to spiritual vision’ but also as an ‘epistemologically untrustworthy’ and ‘idle’ sense, one which was ‘best suited to the vulgar tastes of the lower classes’.⁶² Whilst claiming that individuals of all capacities may ‘attend’ the performance, the speaker here invokes this sensory hierarchy to request that only educated auditors, as opposed to untrained viewers, cast judgement upon the play, evidencing the author’s desire to please these supposedly discerning customers rather than their ‘unlettered’ counterparts. In stark contrast to the prologue to *The Glasse of Governement*, which calls only for morality from the play’s spectators, the epilogue to *The Brazen Age* is exclusively interested in appealing to an intellectually capable, as distinct from a morally virtuous, audience.

This developing focus on spectators’ aesthetic appreciation of performances, like the earlier concern for their moral engagement with plays, is often expressed in gustatory terms

⁶⁰ Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Governement*, sig. A3^v.

⁶¹ Thomas Heywood, *The Brazen Age* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613), sig. L3^r.

⁶² Jennifer Waldron, ‘Gaping Upon Plays: Shakespeare, Gosson, and the Reformation of Vision’, *Critical Matrix*, 12.1–2 (2001), [no page span]. Of course, this view was not universal – as seen in the easy identification of sight with accurate judgement and understanding in the induction to *A Fine Companion*, above. The privileging of one over the other may simply reflect authorial preference, or derive from whether an author placed greater value on the spectacular or the linguistic elements of their work.

in contemporary paratexts.⁶³ Despite a pervasive belief to the contrary amongst many modern scholars, the use of gustatory imagery to conceptualise moral, aesthetic, and intellectual discernment is by no means a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century invention.⁶⁴ In Thomas Hoccleve's early fifteenth-century poem 'My Compleinte', for instance, after asserting that 'Bi taaste of fruit men may wel wite and knowe | What that it is', Hoccleve invites others to similarly 'Taaste and assay' his mental state when they encounter him.⁶⁵ Here, gustation is very explicitly used as a metaphor not for enjoyment but instead for analysis, reasoned judgement, and the acquisition of knowledge. Indeed, Simon Smith wisely cautions that 'bodily sensation' is not always 'the affective alternative to cerebral discernment' in Renaissance thought, with some intellectual traditions viewing 'affect as necessary – even beneficial – to censure, and sensation not as a hindrance to but the very archetype of judgement'.⁶⁶ This view of gustation is plainly evidenced in the prologue to Thomas Heywood's *The Silver Age* (pub. 1613), whose speaker acknowledges that 'so many eyes, | And severall judging wits must taste our stile'.⁶⁷ The implicit dichotomy between the multitude of passively absorbing 'eyes' and the smaller number of 'judging wits' in these lines speaks, like the epilogue to *The Brazen Age*, to its author's denigration of vision and concurrent promotion of audition as a superior experiential mode. It is therefore significant that the prologist invites both ignorant and discerning participants to 'taste' the dramatist's 'stile'. This signals the author's use of gustation not as a means by which to critically

⁶³ Although Dabney Townsend points out that the term 'aesthetics' does not come into being until the eighteenth century, she also demonstrates that the concepts it is now taken to represent have a much longer history, leading her to conclude that '[h]owever anachronistic, "aesthetics" is still the best term for the larger historical picture'. See Dabney Townsend, *The A to Z of Aesthetics* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2006), pp. xvii–xlii.

⁶⁴ Carolyn Korsmeyer, 'Taste', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. by Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes, 3rd edn (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 257–66 (p. 258). See also Swann, *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England*.

⁶⁵ Thomas Hoccleve, 'My Compleinte', in *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001; repr. 2008), pp. 115–27 (ll. 204–10).

⁶⁶ Simon Smith, 'Rethinking Early Modern Playgoing, Pleasure, and Judgement', in *Playing and Playgoing in Early Modern England: Actor, Audience and Performance*, ed. by Simon Smith and Emma Whipday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 122–41 (p. 126).

⁶⁷ Thomas Heywood, *The Silver Age* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613), sig. B1^r.

evaluate audiences' moral response or sensory reaction to the following performance (by, for instance, framing "tasting" the play as superior to "seeing" or "hearing" it), but instead as a neutral means of conceptualising their aesthetic judgements upon the play.

Contemporary dramatic paratexts also regularly use gustatory language to comment on the validity of spectators' responses to performances. We have already encountered an early example of this approach in the prologue to *Clyomon and Clamydes*, with the speaker's comparison of the play's detractors to 'Swine' tasting 'peereles' food framing the play as inherently laudable whilst condemning those who dislike it as incapable of recognising its worth. The author thereby draws a stark distinction between the objective value of a performance and auditors' subjective responses to it, presenting those who criticise the play as exposing only their own shortcomings, rather than those of the play itself. This notion of the value of performances as inherent rather than as determined by audiences' ability to receive or to appreciate their messages re-emerges in several later paratexts. In the prologue to *Cupid's Whirligig*, for instance, the speaker begins by informing audiences that, so as 'to flie the least cause of offence', the dramatist 'onely findes but words, you find the sence' – lines which offer the radical suggestion that the play has no intrinsic meaning and that spectators are free to interpret the performance however they wish.⁶⁸ However, the prologist then synaesthetically warns spectators that 'if ought unto your eare taste tart, | Thank but your selves, which good to ill convert', unequivocally identifying the matter of the performance as 'good' and insisting that those who disagree have only their own flawed tastes to blame.⁶⁹ By presenting *Cupids Whirligig* as holding intrinsic value but not intrinsic meaning, this paratext intriguingly disentangles these concepts, identifying skilled viewers not by how accurately they interpret the performance, but by how much they enjoy it. The prologue to Jonson's late and commercially unsuccessful play *The New Inn* makes a similar point. With a vehemence

⁶⁸ Sharpham, *Cupids Whirligig*, Prologue [unnumbered page].

⁶⁹ Sharpham, *Cupids Whirligig*, Prologue [unnumbered page].

reminiscent of that seen in the prologue to *Clyomon and Clamydes*, Jonson's prologist participates in what Levin describes as the 'practice of defending unsuccessful plays by attacking the audience's limitations', petulantly asserting that if any aspect of the performance

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.⁷⁰

By presenting the tastes of those incapable of appreciating the play not as subjectively valid but instead as objectively 'wrong', 'displac'd', or 'sick', the speaker uses the drama-as-food metaphor to establish the value of performances as existing independently of their reception, accusing those who dislike the performance of having unrefined tastes.

It is perhaps this notion of the value of performances as distinct from their reception which allows for the extreme approach seen in some later Renaissance paratexts, whose authors – in stark contrast to their mid-sixteenth-century counterparts – show no concern whatsoever for the division between viewers' interpretations and playwrights' intentions. Such is the case in the prologue to John Ford's *The Lovers Melancholy* (1628), whose speaker declines to turn 'Truth into Rules' by pronouncing

in what true sense

The Writer, Actors, or the audience

Should mold their Judgements.⁷¹

Despite the word 'Truth' implying that the play is inherently, objectively meritorious, the prologist's simultaneous refusal to force audiences to acknowledge as much implies the author's indifference towards gaining spectators' approval. A similar approach appears in the prologue to James Shirley's *The Example* (pub. 1637), a paratext which insistently casts

⁷⁰ Levin, 'The Two-Audience Theory of English Renaissance Drama', p. 266; Jonson, *The New Inn*, sig. A2^v.

⁷¹ John Ford, *The Lover's Melancholy* (London: H. Seile, 1629), sig. A4^v.

aspersions on spectators' judgemental capacities. As well as lamenting that it is not skilled writers but those who merely 'Talke loud, and high' who are held in esteem, the speaker points out that

hee that in the Parish never was
Thought fit to be o' the jury, has a place
Here, on the Bench for six pence, and dares sit
And boast himselfe commissioner of wit.⁷²

Nevertheless, the prologist also concedes that 'this must bee', insisting that it is not for performers 'to grudge | Any that by their place should bee a judge'.⁷³ These paratexts' far greater tolerance for misinterpretations than those of the preceding century clearly signals early modern drama's changing function, indicating its general shift away from being an instructive tool and towards operating purely as a source of entertainment from which audiences are welcome to 'find the sence' for themselves.

Commercialism in Early Modern Paratexts

Of course, claiming to cater only to select categories of attendees is a rhetorically effective strategy on the part of these paratext authors; after all, suggesting that those who dislike their plays are morally, intellectually, or aesthetically deficient is a sure way to solicit praise from spectators. Nevertheless, this notion of plays as carrying inherent value which only some spectators are able to pick up on is not universal amongst Renaissance paratexts, with many alternatively presenting the value of performances as entirely determined by their reception. This notion is conveyed clearly in the prologue to Joseph Rutter's *The Shepheards Holy-Day* (c. 1634), which claims that – despite what the playwright might personally 'wish' – it is spectators' 'taste', rather than the playwright's 'Art', which 'must praise the dish', presenting

⁷² James Shirley, *The Example* (London: John Norton, 1637), sig. A1^r.

⁷³ Shirley, *The Example*, sig. A1^r.

the commercial value of the play as entirely determined by the (potentially faulty) palates of consumers.⁷⁴ Indeed, some contemporary dramatic paratexts suggest that spectators' bad tastes should be accommodated rather than amended by playwrights, redefining a "good" play as one which is commercially successful rather than morally virtuous or aesthetically commendable. Such is the case in the first prologue to *Epicene* (1609–1610), a paratext which utilises parallels between the playwright-playgoer and cook-diner relationships to suggest that plays should be composed with commerce rather than artistry foremost in mind. The prologist begins by asserting that 'Truth says, of old the art of making plays | Was to content the people', but that 'in this age, a sect of writers are, | That only for particular likings care'.⁷⁵ This may constitute a response to the prologue to *The Dutch Courtezan*, a play composed by Jonson's literary rival John Marston, whose speaker informs audiences in no uncertain terms that the acting company intends to 'Present not what you would, but what we may'.⁷⁶ Whilst still maintaining that the performers aim 'not to offend' spectators, by insisting that they will cater to their own aesthetic tastes rather than those of audiences *The Dutch Courtezan*'s prologist implicitly positions the latter as inferior, essentially suggesting that most spectators are incapable of recognising a good play when they see one.⁷⁷

Epicene's prologist, however, flatly rejects this view, arguing that 'Our wishes, like to those make public feasts, | Are not to please the cooks' tastes, but the guests'.⁷⁸ Although Jonson's paratext is perhaps the more famous source of this quote, a strikingly similar claim appears in the epilogue to George Chapman's earlier play *Al Fooles* (c. 1604), whose speaker observes that

Sometimes feastes please the Cookes, and not the gwestes,

⁷⁴ Rutter, *The Shepheards Holy-Day* (London: Nicholas and John Okes, 1635), sig. A4^v.

⁷⁵ Ben Jonson, *Epicene*, in *'The Alchemist' and Other Plays*, ed. by Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 119–210 (Prologue I, ll. 1–5).

⁷⁶ Marston, *The Dutch Courtezan*, sig. A2^r.

⁷⁷ Marston, *The Dutch Courtezan*, sig. A2^r.

⁷⁸ Ben Jonson, *Epicene*, Prologue I, ll. 8–9.

Sometimes the guesstes, and curious Cookes contemne them,
Our dishes we intirely dedicate
To our kinde guesstes.⁷⁹

Whereas Marston's prologist advocates the presentation of aesthetically meritorious plays despite what spectators might desire to see, the paratexts accompanying *Epicene* and *Al Fooles* thereby issue the superficially very reasonable contention that dramatists should produce plays that audiences will actually enjoy. However, whilst indicating their authors' deference to playgoers' theatrical tastes, the implicit discrepancy between 'cooks' tastes' and those of their 'guesstes' in these paratexts nevertheless appears to corroborate the argument of Marston's prologue that the former are inherently superior to the latter. Whilst David M. Bergeron is right to speak of 'the interplay of commerce and artistry that characterises the theatre in this age', this 'interplay' might here more accurately be described as a conflict, with these paratexts foregrounding the potentially significant distinction between well-crafted and popular drama.⁸⁰

A compelling defence of the appeal to popular tastes comes from the epilogue to Barten Holyday's *Technogamia* (1618), which parodies the condemnation of commercial interests seen in many contemporary paratexts. Its speaker begins by claiming that 'Our Author now salutes' only

Judicious Hearers, you that apprehend
What taske it is to make the Artes descend
To Popular eares; you whose pure judgement knowes,
How to distinguish between Arte and Showes.⁸¹

⁷⁹ George Chapman, *Al Fooles* (London: George Eld, 1605), sig. K1^v.

⁸⁰ David M. Bergeron, 'Paratexts in Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*', *Studies in Philology*, 106.4 (2009), 456–67 (p. 459).

⁸¹ Barten Holyday, *Technogamia, or the Marriages of the Arts* (London: William Stansby, 1618), sig. O5^r.

The word ‘now’ creates a sense of transition, implying that whilst the play itself is intended for all viewers, this paratext is directed only at an elite minority – identified as those who recognise that not all theatrical ‘Showes’ are inherently classifiable as ‘Arte’. However, the tri-fold reiteration in these lines of who constitutes the epilogue’s intended audience, alongside the explicit separation of such viewers from ‘Popular eares’, carries a note of hyperbole. Furthermore, despite conceding that some matter has been included in the play simply ‘To raise an ignorant laugh’, the speaker defends this decision by claiming that it was the playwright’s

Art

That said, This will expresse Phantastes part;

And thus he Scorn’d and Us’d it.⁸²

The epilogist thereby frames the playwright’s inclusion of “low” material (such as the discourse and action of ‘Phantastes’, a servile figure of comic relief within the play) as a reluctant concession not to popular tastes themselves but rather to the artistic requirements of the performance, presenting it as aesthetically – rather than commercially – motivated. The defensive tone of this argument, combined with its melodramatic and manifestly ridiculous claim that the playwright ‘Scorn’d’ to include such material because ‘He did feare | Indeed, there was a People too, ev’n Here’ makes it difficult for audiences to take the epilogist’s claims seriously.⁸³ This impression is essentially confirmed a few lines later, when the speaker asks that ‘no man judge’ the play except ‘he that first can judge of All the Artes’ – essentially implying that no-one has the requisite knowledge to judge the play correctly.⁸⁴ By mocking those who neglect to please ‘Popular eares’ as misguided and hypocritical, *Technogamia*’s epilogue suggests that commerce is an inescapable aspect of early modern

⁸² Holyday, *Technogamia*, sig. O5^r.

⁸³ Holyday, *Technogamia*, sig. O5^r.

⁸⁴ Holyday, *Technogamia*, sig. O5^r.

theatrical productions, ridiculing those who continue to draw a false distinction between ‘Arte and Showes’.

However, even those paratext authors who claim to value commercial success over dramatic artistry often recognise that appealing only to the tastes of ‘guests’, rather than to ‘cooks’, is not entirely desirable. This idea is expressed in culinary terms in the prologue to Jonson’s *Volpone* (1606), wherein the speaker makes the curious assertion that the play’s ‘worth’ can be deduced from the fact that over its duration

no eggs are broken

Nor quaking custards with fierce teeth affrighted,

Wherewith your rout are so delighted.⁸⁵

Initially, this claim appears to hold some positive connotations for the following performance. For instance, the reference to ‘eggs’ here may recall early modern audiences’ occasional recourse to food as a vehicle for critical expression, a practice alluded to more directly in the prologue to *The Hogge Hath Lost His Pearle* (pub. 1614) through the speaker’s apprehension that ‘We may be pelted off for ought we know, | With apples, egges, or stones from thence belowe’.⁸⁶ Interpreted in this way, the assertion that ‘no eggs are broken’ on *Volpone*’s account simply assures spectators that previous attendees have found no reason to condemn the performance. This reading is supported by the accompanying claim that there are also no ‘quaking custards with fierce teeth affrighted’, a statement indicating that whilst food is not weaponised by *Volpone*’s early audiences, neither is any eaten by them over the course of the performance. As there is therefore no need to cook anything to provide for viewers – presumably because they are so enraptured by the play itself as not to be thinking of their stomachs – eggs will not be ‘broken’ for the purpose of making ‘custards’, either. Stern detects another example of food contesting with performances for spectators’ attention

⁸⁵ Jonson, *Volpone*, in *‘The Alchemist’ and Other Plays*, pp. 1–118 (Prologue, ll. 20–22).

⁸⁶ Robert Tailor, *The Hogge Hath Lost His Pearle* (London: John Beale, 1614), sig. A3^r.

in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (c. 1613), interpreting Shakespeare's reference to 'youths that thunder at a Playhouse, and fight for bitten Apples' as alluding to 'snacks sold in the theatre [...] that rival and upstage dramas'.⁸⁷ Whilst *Volpone*'s prologue similarly acknowledges food as a potential distraction from performances, it also suggests that this effect can be mitigated by the presentation of sufficiently entertaining plays. By presenting performances as competing with food for viewers' attention, *Volpone*'s prologue equates the culinary and the theatrical, with its claim that *Volpone* supplants 'custards' in the minds of the 'rout' praising the play for successfully satisfying, rather than simply for overcoming, spectators' carnal desires.

However, the negative implications of this assertion begin to emerge upon closer examination of references to 'custard' elsewhere in Jonson's dramatic corpus. 'Custards' appear, for instance, in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), wherein Justice Overdo praises the 'worthy worshipful man' who would 'take the gauge of [...] custards with a stick', confiscating and scrutinising them as though they were a dangerous substance or a weapon.⁸⁸ However, this inspector is then envisaged as going on to deliver these treats to his 'children', ironically foregrounding not only his own (and, by extension, Justice Overdo's) hypocrisy, but also the fundamental innocuousness of the 'custards' themselves.⁸⁹ A similar impression of 'custards' as patently harmless emerges in the 1640 edition of Jonson's masque *Neptune's Triumph* (1624), whose Cook attests to the nobility of his profession by likening it to a military art wherein he 'paints, he carves, he builds, he fortifies', and 'cuts fifty-angled custards'.⁹⁰ The lengthy and hyperbolic nature of this speech may discourage auditors from taking it seriously,

⁸⁷ William Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), I, pp. 415–50 (v. 3. 59–60); Tiffany Stern, "'Theatre" and "Play+House": Naming Spaces in the Time of Shakespeare', in *Playing and Playgoing in Early Modern England: Actor, Audience and Performance*, ed. by Simon Smith and Emma Whipday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 186–204 (p. 200).

⁸⁸ Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, in *'The Alchemist' and Other Plays*, pp. 327–433 (II. 1. 11–12).

⁸⁹ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 1. 22.

⁹⁰ Ben Jonson, *Neptunes Triumph*, in *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, 2 vols (London: Richard Meighen, 1640), II, sigs P1^r–Q3^r (sig. P2^r).

and indeed when it is presented on the public stage in *The Staple of News* (1625) the Cook is later mocked for his role in ‘carving, and assaulting the cold custard’, the pathetic nature of the foodstuff against which the Cook contests undermining his professions of valour.⁹¹

This seems to be the implication in *Volpone*’s prologue, too, with the natural quivering motion of thick custards being anthropomorphised as terrified ‘quaking’ before the ‘fierce teeth’ of their consumers. By depicting *Volpone* not only as actively competing with, but also as an adequate substitute for, these ignoble ‘custards’ which so appeal to the ‘rout’, the prologist implicitly aligns rather than opposes the two, subtly denigrating the play precisely because of its popular appeal. Establishing *Volpone* not as a gourmet meal that will be unappealing to the multitude but rather as a ‘custard’ intended for popular consumption, *Volpone*’s prologue utilises culinary terminology both to suggest that the play has been concocted with acclaim rather than artistry in mind, and to implicitly critique this privileging of commercial gain over aesthetic merit. This approach is consistent with what Klawitter describes as Jonson’s ‘deep ambivalence towards his audiences’, and coheres with the prologist’s tepid praise of *Volpone* as a play which will succeed ‘According to the palates of the season’.⁹² Again framing the play in culinary terms, the prologist here presents the performance not as ‘caviare to the general’ but rather as a kind of early modern fast food – one which endeavours to satisfy audiences’ mutable ‘palates’ even whilst insinuating that these bear little resemblance to objective standards of artistic merit.⁹³

‘The Better Way’: Drama as Buffet

Yet another approach is exemplified in the first prologue to *Epicene*, which uses the drama-as-food conceit to contend that performances should be composed with a view to pleasing rough and refined tastes simultaneously. This is particularly interesting in light of the fact that

⁹¹ Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*, in *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, II, sigs Aa^r–I6^v (sigs F2^v and H2^v).

⁹² Klawitter, ‘The Play as Banquet’, p. 130; Jonson, *Volpone*, Prologue, l. 3.

⁹³ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II. 2. 438–39.

some early modern paratexts use the same metaphor for the opposite purpose, likening performances to food in order to foreground their necessarily limited appeal. Thus, the prologue to Daubridgecourt Belchier's *Hans Beer-Pot* (1618) informs audiences that the playwright

writes not for gaine;

Nor with this dish, thinkes to fill all your tastes,

Onely, for the learned, and judicious sort.⁹⁴

As well as explicitly contrasting writing for commercial 'gaine' with producing objectively valuable drama which appeals to 'learned' and 'judicious' attendees, this prologist's claims are founded on the implicit belief that the theatrical material on show must necessarily meet with disapproval from some quarters. The prologue to Thomas Nabbes's *Totenham Court* (1633) renders this connection still more explicit. After stating that 'Cook'ry and Wit are like: the selfe same Meat | Delights one's tast, another cannot eat', the prologist goes on to confess that the following play's singular focus renders it 'doubtful' that it will receive widespread acclaim.⁹⁵ Similarly, the epilogist to Phineas Fletcher's *Sicelides* (c. 1615) asks 'What ever feast could every guest content, | When as t'each man each taste is different?' before contending that pleasing many different palates is even more difficult when the material on offer is 'a Scene, where nought but as 'tis newer, | Can please, where guests are more, and dishes fewer'.⁹⁶ The speaker therefore conceptualises drama as a meal in order to stress the impossibility of pleasing all spectators, an idea reiterated in the following insistence that the company desires to 'please the best, if not the many' – a statement which reinforces the notion of these aims as being mutually exclusive.

However, the first prologue to *Epicene* undermines this notion, claiming of the 'cates' about to be provided that there will be some

⁹⁴ Daubridgecourt Belchier, *Hans Beer-Pot* (London: Bernard Alsop, 1618), sig. B1^r.

⁹⁵ Thomas Nabbes, *Totenham Court* (London: R. Oulton, 1639), Prologue [unnumbered page].

⁹⁶ Phineas Fletcher, *Sicelides* (London: John Norton, 1631), sig. L4^v.

fit for ladies: some for lords, knights, squires,
Some for your waiting wench, and city-wires,
Some for your men, and daughters of Whitefriars.⁹⁷

The prologist then goes on to acknowledge that pleasing such a socially diverse range of viewers necessitates offering audiences a variety of different material within the same performance. Though recognising that such an approach means that each individual spectator will ‘relish not’ the entire production, the speaker nevertheless expresses hope that attendees will enjoy particular elements of the performance, and will understand that ‘Who wrote that piece, could so have wrote a play, | But that he knew this was the better way’.⁹⁸ Why this compartmentalised approach might be the ‘better way’ is elucidated in the prologue’s later insistence that it would be ‘coarse art’ if the performers were ‘to present all custard or all tart, | And have no other meats to bear a part’.⁹⁹ The author of this prologue thereby utilises the drama-as-food metaphor to suggest that a good play, like a good feast, should contain multiple different elements in order to accommodate the diverse tastes of its consumers. By presenting the following performance as a lavish banquet composed of many different products rather than as a singular ‘dish’, *Epicene*’s first prologist indicates its superiority to allegedly more homogenous performances such as those offered by Belchier, Nabbes, and Fletcher, which come to appear meagre and miserly by comparison.

This approach is exemplified perfectly in the prologue to *The Two Merry Milke-Maids* (pub. 1620). Like so many of its contemporaries, this prologue maintains that not all means of engaging with the play are equally commendable, enjoining

All that are hither come,
To expect no noyse of Guns, Trumpets, nor Drum,
Nor Sword and Targuet; but to heare Sence and Words,

⁹⁷ Jonson, *Epicene*, Prologue I, ll. 20–24.

⁹⁸ Jonson, *Epicene*, Prologue I, ll. 14–15.

⁹⁹ Jonson, *Epicene*, Prologue I, ll. 16–18.

Fitting the Matter that the Scene affords.¹⁰⁰

By claiming to eschew ‘noyse’ in favour of ‘Sence and Words’, the prologist lends additional nuance to the conventional privileging of auditory over visual engagement with performances by stratifying different forms of audition, establishing thoughtfully attending to eloquent speeches as superior to mindlessly absorbing theatrical sound effects. The militaristic imagery attached to these noises also associates them with what was by this time the outdated practice of representing battles onstage, thereby implicitly accusing those who enjoy hearing such sounds of possessing not only crude but also unfashionable tastes.¹⁰¹

However, despite seeming to promote a more cerebral experience, the prologue to *The Two Merry Milke-Maids* also claims to cater for those spectators who desire only meaningless sensory stimulation. Indeed, it explicitly reassures such attendees that their preferences will not impede their enjoyment of this particular play, as when the speaker expresses hope that

you in the Yard

Will lend your Eares, attentively to heare

Things that shall flow so smoothly to your eare;

That you returning home, t’your Friends shall say,

How ere you understand’t, ’Tis a fine Play.¹⁰²

By addressing these lines to those in the ‘Yard’, the least expensive viewing area in the playhouse, the prologist unsurprisingly assumes that poorer and perhaps less well-educated spectators will be less able to appreciate the finer points of the play’s artistry – an approach which covertly insults those who dislike or fail to understand the performance.¹⁰³ Even so,

¹⁰⁰ Anonymous, *The Two Merry Milke-Maids* (London: Bernard Alsop, 1620), Prologue [unnumbered page].

¹⁰¹ Allison K. Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 3–4 and 105.

¹⁰² Anonymous, *The Two Merry Milke-Maids*, Prologue [unnumbered page].

¹⁰³ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574–1642*, 4th edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 142.

these lines are reassuring rather than acerbic in tone, their insistence that the following play will sound pleasant enough to be enjoyed even in the absence of comprehension indicating the dramatist's interest in producing a widely popular play, rather than in pleasing only an elite, discriminating minority of viewers.

Nevertheless, some contemporary paratexts explicitly criticise attempts to please all spectators in this manner. The epilogue to Thomas Dekker and John Marston's *The Roaring Girle* (pub. 1611), for example, outlines the story of an artist who, after soliciting public opinion on a portrait, 'still as fault was found, did mend it, | In hope to please all', resulting in a painting

so vile,

So monstrous and so ugly all men did smile

At the poore Painters folly.¹⁰⁴

A few lines later, the speaker explicates the meta-theatrical significance of this point, protesting that if the writer and actors 'Should fashion Sceanes' according to 'every braine', then they '(with the Painter) shall | In striving to please all, please none at all'.¹⁰⁵ The epilogist thereby explicitly likens playwrights to portraitists in order to indicate the absurdity of attempting to produce a play with the aim of soliciting every viewer's approval, with the claim that this would result in laughable performances warning dramatists against sacrificing artistry at the shrine of popular esteem. That this is not a critique of the play-as-food metaphor itself but only of those plays which use this conceit to justify their commercial interests is evidenced clearly in the epilogue to Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke* (pub. 1612), in which the playwright-as-painter and playwright-as-cook metaphors are amalgamated to the end of condemning attempts to please all spectators. Claiming that this

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Dekker and John Marston, *The Roaring Girle* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1611), sig. M3^r.

¹⁰⁵ Dekker and Marston, *The Roaring Girle*, sig. M3^v.

play is designed to please only those ‘whose judgements fall | Beyond the common ranke’, the speaker asserts that

Who writes and thinkes to please the generall tast,
Where eyes and eares are fed, shal find he hath plast
His worke with the fond Painter, who did mend
So long, that striving to please others, gave no end
To his owne labours.¹⁰⁶

Whilst still accusing those playwrights who aim to please both ‘eyes and eares’ – representing ignorant and discerning spectators, respectively – of embarking on a fruitless task, the epilogist nevertheless uses gustatory imagery to conceptualise audiences’ reception of performances. The reference to ‘generall tast’ implies the concurrent existence of a more selective set of palates, suggesting that the drama-as-food metaphor is not inherently incompatible with an aesthetically (rather than a commercially) motivated approach to composing plays.

Moreover, some contemporary paratexts utilise culinary terminology to complicate the easy distinction between ‘cookes’ and ‘guestes’ itself. In the epilogue to *Volpone*, the speaker – the actor playing Volpone himself – begins by asserting that ‘The seasoning of a play is the applause’.¹⁰⁷ Here, instead of presenting spectators simply as consuming the theatrical feast set before them, the epilogist instead affords viewers a material role in the construction of the play, presenting their ‘applause’ not as secondary to but rather as partially constitutive of the performance. However, whilst this conception of audiences as co-creators of plays does blur the boundary between the providers and the consumers of performances, it is also true that ‘seasoning’ comprises a minor and perhaps even an optional step in the cooking process. As such, *Volpone*’s epilogue implicitly establishes the degree of influence

¹⁰⁶ Robert Daborne, *A Christian Turn’d Turke* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1612), sig. A4^r.

¹⁰⁷ Jonson, *Volpone*, v. 12. 152.

exerted by spectators upon performances as relatively minor – the cherry on the cake, as it were, capable of embellishing plays but not of doing them any significant harm.

However, other early modern paratexts afford viewers considerably more power, drawing explicit attention to their potentially detrimental impact upon performances. Such is the case in the epilogue to John Jones's *Adrasta* (pub. 1635), whose speaker claims that the playwright 'submits' to the 'censures' of 'Judging Spectators' whilst also hoping that the audience contains

no such eyes

As scout at Theatres, and come like flies

To taint the innocent's labours with their tongues.¹⁰⁸

In light of the contemporary privileging of auditory over visual engagement with drama, the reduction of 'envious' critics to mere 'eyes' covertly accuses them of consuming the performance on a superficial level only, thereby invalidating their conclusions as to its quality. Nevertheless, by likening such viewers to 'flies' who 'taint' plays with their 'tongues', the speaker utilises the drama-as-food metaphor to suggest that even fallacious criticisms are capable of exerting a profoundly negative influence on theatrical productions. Rather than suggesting merely that some spectators' poor tastes may impede their own enjoyment of the play, *Adrasta*'s epilogue instead presents spiteful critics as spoiling good performances just as flies spoil good food, rendering formerly desirable plays inedible for other consumers. In many ways, the appearance of this conceit in this particular paratext is ironically fortuitous, with the contemporary rejection of *Adrasta* as unsuitable for public staging lending strong support to its epilogist's claims about the material impact of criticism upon the fate of performances.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ John Jones, *Adrasta* (London: [no publisher], 1635), p. 80.

¹⁰⁹ William E. Engel, Rory Loughnane, and Grant Williams, eds., *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 346.

Conclusion

It is therefore clear that changing conceptions of the nature and function of theatrical performances in the early modern period are consistently explored in culinary terms in Renaissance dramatic paratexts. Following the movement away from the traditional conception of plays as instruments of moral instruction, a general trend emerges towards attempting to appeal to audiences' tastes rather than trying to fundamentally alter them. However, this raises profound questions about precisely whose tastes performances should cater to. Whilst some paratexts profess an interest only in appealing to morally virtuous or aesthetically refined spectators, others contend that plays should be designed to garner popular approval, or even that they should work on multiple levels to appeal to the broadest possible range of viewers. Rather than conceptualising just one of these competing approaches, the drama-as-food metaphor is variously used in support of them all, indicating the versatility of food as a meta-theatrical symbol in this period. Moreover, contrary to the claims of some modern scholars, this preoccupation with food neither emerges with nor is predominantly restricted to paratexts accompanying works by Ben Jonson.¹¹⁰ Instead, it appears in paratexts attached to a wide range of performances spanning the entirety of the period in question. Far from a quaint observation on the superficial similarities between plays and food in terms of how they are produced, consumed, and received, what we see in these paratexts amounts to the development of a dramatic theory. In these works, culinary and gustatory language constitutes the basis of a sophisticated debate within and between Renaissance paratexts regarding the ideal function of theatrical performances. As we will see in the next chapter, the drama-as-food conceit is not limited to theatrical paratexts in this era, but also emerges frequently within early modern plays themselves.

¹¹⁰ See Klawitter, 'The Play as Banquet', p. 128.

Playwrights and Food Providers in Early Modern Drama

Introduction

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, food is consistently employed as a conceptual parallel for performances in early modern dramatic paratexts, with the drama-as-food conceit appearing in the prologues, epilogues, and inductions to a broad range of plays over an extensive period of time. The persistence of the drama-as-food metaphor in these paratexts gives rise to the question of whether or not it is an equally significant feature of the dramatic works to which they are attached. In this chapter, I extend my discussion to consider how food's status as a prominent meta-theatrical symbol manifests in the main bodies of Renaissance plays, and what this can add to our understanding of contemporary playwrights' conceptions of their work. My analysis considers the treatment of food providers in early modern plays, and is divided into three sections which, in broad terms, focus respectively on the portrayal of cooks and other food-sellers, medics, and nurses in Renaissance drama. Although each of these categories of food provider holds a distinctive relationship to both the products they supply and to the recipients of those products, their separate roles were extensively interconnected throughout this period, a fact which my analysis reflects and embraces. While drawing on works by a wide range of playwrights, my primary focus throughout this chapter is on the plays of Jonson and Dekker, both of whom were highly prolific and influential early modern dramatists whose literary careers spanned multiple decades. This success implies that their treatment of both food providers and dramatists resonated with contemporary viewers, and did so across a significant period of time (rather than being popular only for a year or two, or even a single decade). Furthermore, it is significant in terms of this investigation that these playwrights occupied opposing sides in the early seventeenth-century *Poetomachia*, a debate between several of the period's leading playwrights over the ideal nature and purpose of drama which played out in their dramatic works. Attending closely to the plays of both

Jonson and Dekker thereby ensures that my conclusions are not skewed by focusing on an author or a group of authors holding one particular opinion regarding drama's ideal function. It also reveals the existence of trends in contemporary playwrights' depictions of theatrical performances which transcend the boundaries of Jonson and Dekker's quarrel over how drama is supposed to operate.

'A Spice of Idolatry': The Playwright as Cook

As we have already seen, playwrights are likened to cooks both implicitly and explicitly in early modern dramatic paratexts. This is, in many ways, a highly logical comparison to draw. Alongside the obvious mechanical parallels between the production and consumption of food and drama, both dramatists and cooks are charged with the task of maintaining and restoring the physical, mental, and moral health of their customers – and, by extension, the social health of the state. Clearly, then, their alignment holds the potential to depict playwrights in an explicitly positive light by foregrounding the social value of their role. However, since both food providers and dramatists have an intimate connection with their customers, into whose bodies and minds food and plays are absorbed and assimilated, their comparison can simultaneously indicate playwrights' power to harm as well as to heal spectators. Huey-Ling Lee has afforded considerable attention to the liminal social position of early modern cooks, pointing out their ability to 'abuse' the 'power' afforded by their role 'to become the agent[s] of pollution and destruction'.¹ Concerns regarding cooks' ability to harm their clients in this way are plainly manifest in widespread rumours attributing King John's death to poisoning at the hands of his cook, as well as in the contemporary popularity of the folk tale of Friar Rush, a demon who corrupts a fraternal order in the guise of a chef.² It is therefore unsurprising that

¹ Huey-Ling Lee, 'The Devil or the Physician: The Politics of Cooking and the Gendering of Cooks in Jonson and Massinger', *English Literary Renaissance*, 36.2 (2006), 250–77 (p. 251).

² Piotr Sadowski, "'Foul, Strange, and Unnatural': Poison as Murder Weapon in English Renaissance Drama", *Mosaic*, 53.3 (2020), 139–54 (pp. 147–48).

early modern anti-theatricalists, too, emphasise the connection between playwrights and food providers in their works, using this link to foreground the threat dramatic performances pose to spectators' health. In *The Schoole of Abuse*, for instance, Gosson explicitly likens 'Poets to Cookes', claiming that 'the pleasures of the one winnes the body from labor, & conquereth the sense; the allurement of the other drawes the mind from vertue, and confoundeth wit'.³ At first glance, the corporeal and sensory assault listed first here seems to denote that which is offered by cooks, whilst its mental and moral counterpart describes that presented by poets. However, Gosson's use of chiasmus here renders the definitive allocation of these accusations unclear, further deconstructing the division between poets and cooks by establishing their methods of operation as not merely similar, but entirely indistinguishable. Comparisons between playwrights and food providers in early modern plays are therefore capable of portraying dramatists and their work in a negative as well as a positive light.

George Gascoigne's mid-sixteenth-century play *Supposes* (1566), an English adaptation of Ludovico Ariosto's *I Suppositi*, focuses exclusively on the positive aspects of this connection, with Gascoigne drawing attention to the parallels between playwrights and food providers in order both to praise dramatists' creative role and to distinguish it from the implicitly inferior manual labour of performers. This idea finds somewhat unlikely expression in Gascoigne's depiction of the food-oriented servant Pasiphilo, whose consistent refusal to submit to the roles assigned to him by other characters aligns him with the play's author rather than with either its actors or spectators. Pasiphilo's refusal to occupy a performative role is evidenced when, upon being enlisted to negotiate a marriage between his master Cleander and Polynesta, he resolves to trick Cleander by taking on the same role for Erostrato, thereby becoming 'a broker on both sides' who will 'travell for none of them

³ Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), sig. A4^v.

bothe' and will instead manipulate the situation to his own advantage.⁴ Though both Cleander and Erostrato assume that Pasiphilo obediently follows their instructions, here he orchestrates the action for himself rather than fulfilling his designated role in the plots they construct.

Pasiphilo's compositional rather than merely performative role within *Supposes* does not initially appear to extend to the culinary sphere. Classified as a 'Parasite' in the play's list of *dramatis personae*, Pasiphilo is duly included in E. P. Vandiver's study of parasite figures in Elizabethan drama, these being stock comic characters who conventionally possess both voracious appetites and sycophantic tendencies.⁵ To be sure, Pasiphilo exemplifies both of these qualities throughout *Supposes*. He himself repeatedly presents his desire for food as the motivating force behind his actions, whilst Dulippo memorably describes Pasiphilo's unsuitability as a dining companion owing to the 'legion of ravening wolves within [him]'.⁶ However, Vandiver is perhaps overly credulous in his acceptance of the play's categorisation of Pasiphilo when he cites his 'delight in superintending the preparation of a meal' as evidencing the 'Gargantuan appetite' which typically characterises dramatic parasites.⁷ Pasiphilo's association with producing as well as with consuming food becomes apparent towards the end of the play when Erostrato instructs him to 'go [his] wayes into the kitchin' and to 'commaund the cooke to boyle and roast what liketh [him] best'.⁸ In response, the delighted Pasiphilo claims that Erostrato 'could not have appointed an office to please [him] better', assuring Erostrato that he will soon 'see what dishes [he] will devise'.⁹ The word 'devise' here foregrounds the creativity required of Pasiphilo in the execution of these new duties, evidencing a shift from his earlier role as a passive recipient of food to its active producer.

⁴ Gascoigne, *Supposes*, in '*Supposes*' and '*Jocasta*', ed. by John W. Cunliffe (Boston: Heath, 1906), pp. 3–106 (l. 3. 36–39).

⁵ E. P. Vandiver, Jr., 'The Elizabethan Dramatic Parasite', *Studies in Philology*, 32.3 (1935), 411–27 (p. 411).

⁶ Gascoigne, *Supposes*, l. 3. 7–13 and 52–53.

⁷ Vandiver, 'The Elizabethan Dramatic Parasite', pp. 411–12.

⁸ Gascoigne, *Supposes*, v. 3. 60–62.

⁹ Gascoigne, *Supposes*, v. 3. 65–67.

That Pasiphilo's culinary role is explicitly creative rather than merely manual is also evidenced through its categorical distinction from that of the play's other food producer, Dalio. Pasiphilo's authority over Dalio is suggested in Erostrato's assertion that Pasiphilo can 'commaund' the cook to make whatever he thinks best, a direction which imbues Pasiphilo with creative authority whilst relegating Dalio to a subordinate, mechanical role – a dynamic which very obviously parallels that between playwrights and performers in the early modern theatre. Pasiphilo's superiority to Dalio becomes even more obvious a few scenes later when he boasts of correcting Dalio's 'foul faulte' of placing 'the shoulder of mutton and the capon bothe to the fire at once', ensuring thereby that these items are not served 'burned', 'colde', or 'rawe'.¹⁰ Gascoigne's juxtaposition of Pasiphilo's dynamic involvement in 'devis[ing]' recipes and overseeing their preparation with Dalio's passive, mechanical, and manifestly incompetent actions further encourages spectators to view acts of creative composition – such as those undertaken by playwrights – in an explicitly positive light.

Whilst later playwrights continue to acknowledge the parallels between cooks and playwrights, this link is often imbued with negative connotations in their work. In *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), for instance, Jonson establishes a strong connection between language, performance, and food through his portrayal of the items available for purchase by the fairgoers. At the beginning of Act Two, the entrance of various '*Passengers*' to the fair prompts its traders to commence advertising their wares.¹¹ These merchants include an anonymous fruit-seller, Joan Trash the baker, and Nightingale the singer, who in quick succession offer the fair's attendants 'pears', 'gingerbread', and 'ballads', respectively.¹² Of course, these products can be interpreted as unrelated, with their close proximity here illustrating only the chaotic amalgamation of people and items in the disordered atmosphere

¹⁰ Gascoigne, *Supposes*, v. 4. 4–18.

¹¹ Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, in *'The Alchemist' and Other Plays*, ed. by Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 327–433 (p. 332).

¹² Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 2. 31, 32, and 40.

of the fair. However, the order in which these figures and their wares appear may be significant. Pears, as a naturally occurring foodstuff, require no creative input from their seller, and Jonson's pear-monger accordingly employs bland, uninventive language to advertise his product, repeating verbatim the line 'Buy any pears, pears, fine, very fine pears' on two separate occasions.¹³ By contrast, gingerbread requires production rather than merely collecting, with Trash's greater manual and imaginative involvement in creating her product being reflected in her far more dynamic use of language.¹⁴

According to the Galenic medical tradition, neither one of these foods is straightforwardly superior to the other. Though 'hote and dry' gingerbread may have been considered to carry the greater moral risk for its perceived ability to inflame the culinary and sexual appetites of its consumers, the sixteenth-century medical writer Thomas Elyot identifies 'colde and moyste' pears as posing the greater physical risk.¹⁵ Nevertheless, that this movement from natural to processed food constitutes a symbolic decline is evidenced through Leatherhead's claim – which Trash vehemently denies – that her gingerbread is composed of 'stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey'.¹⁶ Although all forms of food are susceptible to contamination, greater creative input from producers is here presented as more readily facilitating the intrusion of corrupt material into comestibles, thereby highlighting the risk posed by their consumption. By this reasoning, the subsequent movement from Trash's gingerbread to Nightingale's entirely man-made ballads – marked by a further ascent in linguistic vivacity – represents another step in the descent from nature to artifice. Indeed, whilst the fruit-seller is exonerated and Trash faces only the accusation of wrongdoing, Nightingale's status as a threat to his community becomes explicit both in his cheating of the innocent pear-monger and in his use of his musical talents to distract fairgoers

¹³ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 2. 31 and IV. ii. 27. Note also the repetition in IV. 2. 29–30 and IV. 2. 44.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 2. 12–25.

¹⁵ Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Helth* (London: Thomae Bertheleti, 1539), sigs 28^r and 22^r.

¹⁶ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 2. 8–9.

so they can be robbed by Edgeworth.¹⁷ Therefore, in *Bartholomew Fair* Jonson depicts food and language not as categorically distinct but instead as occupying different positions on a scale of productive involvement, implicitly attesting to the connection between dramatists and the producers and distributors of food just as Gascoigne does in *Supposes*. However, whereas Gascoigne utilises this link to reflect positively on playwrights' social role, Jonson casts artificial creations as potentially more dangerous than natural products, thereby implying that playwrights' creative involvement in performances may exert a contaminative rather than a refining effect.

This approach recurs elsewhere in Jonson's dramatic corpus, wherein playwrights and cooks are repeatedly aligned in a manner which reflects negatively on dramatists and their work. In *The Alchemist* (1610), for instance, many scholars recognise Subtle as more of a playwright-performer than an alchemist, noting the way in which he derives his profit from performative and linguistic prowess rather than from arcane alchemical knowledge.¹⁸ It is therefore significant that Subtle's craft is framed in culinary terms within the play, as when Surly, upon hearing Subtle's reference to 'the philosophers' vinegar', sardonically replies 'We shall have a salad'.¹⁹ Surly's facetious conflation of 'philosophers' vinegar' – defined by Gordon Campbell as 'mercury' – with its culinary equivalent indicates his perception of quotidian food production as being neither an admirable nor an intellectually rigorous profession.²⁰ Jonson's use of 'salad' specifically in this quip enhances its derogatory impact. Often viewed as a nutritionally suspect dish at the time, salad in some of its incarnations necessitates little more by way of preparation than the harvesting of raw ingredients.²¹ Surly's

¹⁷ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 4. 35–43.

¹⁸ Bhargav Rani, 'Self-Reflexivity through Self-Reflectivity: The Play of Metatheatre in Jonson's Comedies', *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 3.4 (2011), 495–506 (pp. 499–500); Ian McAdam, 'The Repudiation of the Marvelous: Jonson's *The Alchemist* and the Limits of Satire', *Quidditas*, 21.1 (2000), 59–77 (p. 60).

¹⁹ Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, in *'The Alchemist' and Other Plays*, pp. 211–326 (II. 3. 100–01).

²⁰ Campbell, note to *The Alchemist*, p. 491.

²¹ Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 165.

comment is therefore highly economical, simultaneously questioning the social value of Subtle's profession and challenging his claims that skill is required to practice it. Since Surly is one of the play's few characters not to be deceived by Subtle's performance, Jonson encourages audiences to approve of both his dim view of cookery and his perception of its equivalence to Subtle's art – this being not alchemy, but theatre.

Indeed, Subtle himself attempts to uphold a firm distinction between alchemy and more quotidian practices in his discourse with his clients. After pretending that his attempt to produce the philosopher's stone has failed, Subtle offers Epicure the feeble consolation that

There will be, perhaps,
Something, about the scraping of the shards,
Will cure the itch.²²

The comic impact of these lines for spectators – and the disappointment they entail for Epicure – results from the extreme disparity between what Subtle has promised and what he ultimately delivers. On one, level, then, the disappointing transition from a product which alleges to heal all sicknesses to one which claims merely to 'cure the itch' – a quotidian medical problem with plentiful early modern solutions – starkly foregrounds the perceived inferiority of pharmacology to alchemy.²³ However, audiences' knowledge of Subtle's status as an actor-playwright rather than an alchemist imbues this scene with troubling meta-theatrical resonances, rendering us aware that this essentially worthless remedy is the result not of a failed alchemical experiment, but of a successful performance. By presenting Subtle himself as profiting from his trade whilst his customer Epicure emphatically does not, Jonson

²² Jonson, *The Alchemist*, iv. 5. 101–03.

²³ Ruscelli Girolamo, *A Very Excellent and Profitable Booke*, trans. by Richard Androse (London: Henry Denham, 1569), pp. 2 and 11; Thomas Cartwright, *An Hospitall for the Diseased* (London: Edward White, 1579), p. 59.

offers the disturbing suggestion that playwrights themselves may be the only genuine beneficiaries of performances.

The notion of plays as profitable for playwrights but not necessarily for spectators is also expressed in culinary terms in *Old Fortunatus* (1599), wherein Dekker's portrayal of Shadow curiously likens the generation of language to the consumption, rather than merely the production, of food. Shadow's preoccupation with food is evident from his first appearance onstage, when he complains that he and Andelocia have 'tasted no meat since the clock told two dozen' and that every day is a 'Fasting day' for them.²⁴ Although the fact that clocks never chime 'two dozen' situates Shadow's claims here as hyperbolic, his self-portrait is partially corroborated by his name, with the word 'shadow' being used to connote physical insubstantiality elsewhere in contemporary drama, such as in Thomas Heywood's *How a Man May Chuse a Good Wife from a Bad* (1602).²⁵ Later in *Old Fortunatus*, in an attempt to distract them from their hunger, Andelocia instructs Shadow to create a linguistic 'feast' for them by composing 'a Paradox in commendations [sic] of hunger'.²⁶ Though Ampedo describes the weak witticisms Shadow dutifully vents as 'leane' fare, Andelocia claims that this language 'fats' him, imbuing the absorption of auditory information with the same satiating effect as the consumption of food.²⁷ Less straightforward, however, is the manner in which Andelocia invites Shadow to begin, instructing him to 'Fall to it then with a full mouth'.²⁸ The command to 'Fall too' is commonly associated with consuming rather than with preparing food, and – accompanied by Dekker's description of Shadow's mouth as already 'full' of the words he is about to disgorge – it here creates the impression that Shadow is quite literally eating his own words, his hunger mysteriously sated by the mere conception of his speech.

²⁴ Thomas Dekker, *Old Fortunatus* (London: S. Stafford, 1600), sig. B4^r.

²⁵ Thomas Heywood, *How a Man May Chuse a Good Wife from a Bad* (London: T. Creede, 1602), sig. E1^v.

²⁶ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sigs D3^v–D4^r.

²⁷ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. D4^r.

²⁸ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. D4^r.

The boundary between production and consumption, in terms of both food and language, is similarly contested in *Bartholomew Fair*, where Mooncalf's claim that insulting others makes the pork-seller Ursula 'fat' aligns the creative production of language with eating rather than with cooking.²⁹ The notion of dramatic works as physical entities which emerge from the bodies of their authors also manifests in other ways within the play, not all of which are pejorative. For instance, when the amateur dramatist Littlewit likens the creative process to the spinning of ideas 'like a silk-worm, out of [himself]' at the outset of the play, he insinuates that his imaginings are, like the excretions of the 'silk-worm', of use and value to their recipients.³⁰ However, the use of culinary imagery to express this idea in *Old Fortunatus* and elsewhere in *Bartholomew Fair* itself imbues it with considerably less favourable connotations, establishing a disconcerting connection between linguistic production and food regurgitation. Rather than presenting playwrights as the producers of delectable, nutritious feasts, this particular conceit instead depicts them as vomiting forth corrupt matter for their audiences to consume. It is telling that Shadow and Ursula appear to be the primary beneficiaries of this process, positioning playwrights not as magnanimous producers but instead as self-interested consumers whose plays translate directly into food on their own tables without necessarily being of value to spectators – whom, implicitly, they feed off rather than provide for.

Jonson pushes this notion further still in *The Alchemist*, calling the value of drama sharply into question by presenting Subtle's alchemical and theatrical practices as a perversion of the otherwise useful process of cookery. So much becomes apparent when Subtle, attempting to persuade Epicure of the wonders of alchemy, argues that

Art can beget bees, hornets, beetles, wasps,
Out of the carcasses and dung of creatures;

²⁹ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 3. 30–33.

³⁰ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 1. 2–3.

Yea, scorpions, of an herb, being rightly placed.³¹

Though Subtle's claim to be able to generate life alchemically is superficially impressive, it is tempered significantly by the fact that throughout the Renaissance it was widely believed that the kinds of creatures he lists here were generated spontaneously from corrupt matter (such as 'carcasses and dung') anyway.³² Jonson's own awareness of this association is demonstrated unequivocally later in the play, when Face advises Kastril to 'eat no cheese' on account of the fact that 'it breeds melancholy, | And that same melancholy breeds worms'.³³ As well as suggesting that alchemy produces undesirable effects, Subtle's claims therefore also insinuate that no particular skill is required to practice it. Although Subtle's references to 'carcasses' and a 'herb' here clearly hold culinary connotations, these lines depict him not as a skilled manipulator of delicate ingredients but rather as a kind of anti-cook who leaves substances to decay until they generate (or, in modern parlance, attract) insects. Indeed, the negative impression of alchemy which emerges from this suggestion is advanced through the nature of the creatures Subtle lists as the products of his endeavours, with the potentially distasteful connotations of 'hornets' and 'scorpions' casting further doubt upon the practical value of Subtle's 'Art'. On one level, then, Subtle's speech here ironically reveals the pointlessness of alchemy to audiences even as it beguiles the over-credulous Epicure into admiring it, encouraging us to mock the latter's gullibility. However, alchemy in this play is not only likened to drama but is itself shown to be nothing more than a performance, imbuing Subtle's claim with negative meta-theatrical implications – an impression facilitated by Subtle's description of his profession simply as an 'Art', a term applicable to drama as well as to alchemy. Taken in this way, Subtle's claim presents performances not as amending audiences' faults but rather as carrying out the entirely unremarkable feat of generating

³¹ Jonson, *The Alchemist*, II. 3. 172–74.

³² Horst Breuer, 'Theories of Generation in Shakespeare', *Journal of European Studies*, 20.1 (1990), 325–42 (p. 331).

³³ Jonson, *The Alchemist*, III. 4. 107–08.

distasteful qualities in spectators from their own prior corruption, just as alchemy promises to spawn ‘beetles’ from ‘carcasses and dung’.

The similarly corruptive potential of food and performances is also emphasised in *Old Fortunatus* through Andelocia and Shadow’s appearance before a group of courtiers whilst ‘Disguised as Irish coster-mongers’.³⁴ The culinary and theatrical significance of this scene becomes apparent upon consideration of the stereotypes regarding Ireland and its inhabitants circulating in contemporary England. Many scholars have picked up on the culinary dimension to the hostility experienced by foreign nationals living in England around the turn of the seventeenth century. As Joan Fitzpatrick explains, not only were successive famines in the decade preceding 1600 blamed on immigrants’ overconsumption of English produce, but such individuals were also regularly accused of spreading disease amongst the native population through the distribution of contaminated food.³⁵ The culinary habits of Irish citizens in particular are frequently condemned in contemporary English travel literature, with some accounts even going so far as to accuse Irish people of cannibalism.³⁶ As Fitzpatrick points out, when confined to distant lands such practices are approached with a mixture of horror and fascination by many early modern authors; however, rumours of cannibalism taking place in Ireland carry far more insidious undertones, with Ireland’s close geographical proximity enabling it to ‘effect English degeneration’ by erasing any clear distinction between civility and savagery.³⁷

In light of the culinary dimension to early modern anti-Irish prejudice, immediate suspicions are raised regarding the safety of the produce Shadow and Andelocia intend to supply to their customers while disguised in this way. Indeed, Dekker draws on this particular

³⁴ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. II^r.

³⁵ Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 37–44 and 81–99.

³⁶ Joan Fitzpatrick, ‘Foreign Appetites and Alterity: Is there an Irish Context for *Titus Andronicus*?’, *Connotations*, 11.2–3 (2001–02), 127–45 (pp. 130–02); Andrew Hadfield, ‘Rethinking Early-Modern Colonialism: The Anomalous State of Ireland’, *Irish Studies Review*, 7.1 (1999), 13–27 (pp. 15–16).

³⁷ Fitzpatrick, ‘Foreign Appetites and Alterity’, p. 131–32.

prejudice elsewhere in his plays, as when Lodovico in *The Honest Whore II* (1605) claims that ‘In England [...] all Costermongers are Irishmen’, a fact which Carolo attributes to their ‘comming from Eve, who was an Apple-wife’.³⁸ By linking Irish costermongers with Eve in this way, Dekker insinuates that the consumption of their respective wares risks producing equally detrimental results. However, in *Old Fortunatus* Dekker also establishes theatricality as a stereotypically Irish trait, an association rendered explicit through Agripyné’s observation that

These Irishmen,
Some say, are great dissemblers, and I fear
These two the badge of their own country wear.³⁹

As spectators are aware, Agripyné’s concerns here are ultimately vindicated, with Andelocia and Shadow using this disguise as a means by which to trick the courtiers into eating their magical apples, which have the effect of transforming their consumers into putatively sub-human creatures by endowing them with unsightly ‘hornes’.⁴⁰ Since the customers’ purchasing of these apples is predicated on their first “buying” or believing Shadow and Andelocia’s performance, this too is infused with the same negative connotations attached throughout this period to food produced and distributed by Irish merchants. Therefore, Dekker uses these characters’ choice of disguise to imply that disingenuous performers and unscrupulous food providers pose an equivalent risk to those who consume their products, raising questions regarding the fitness of plays for popular consumption.

The moral dimension to this risk is emphasised in Dekker’s *If It Be Not Good, the Diuel Is In It* (1611), wherein cookery is infused with demonic undertones even whilst retaining its close affiliation with drama. Dekker achieves this effect through his portrayal of Shackle-soule, a demon who disguises himself in ‘A Friers grave habit’ before proceeding to

³⁸ Thomas Dekker, *The Second Part of The Honest Whore* (London: Elizabeth Allde, 1630), sig. A2^v.

³⁹ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. I1^v.

⁴⁰ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. I3^f.

use food to corrupt the fraternal community – a plot which draws heavily on the folkloric tale of Friar Rush, after whom Shackle-soule names himself within the play.⁴¹ Although Dekker is not the only Renaissance dramatist to draw a parallel between cooks and demons, with the same concept also arising briefly in Jonson's *The Alchemist* through Ananias's description of Satan as a cook stationed 'Perpetually about the fire, and boiling | Brimstone and arsenic', he does afford this idea particularly extensive treatment.⁴² Once accepted into the community of friars, Shackle-soule uses his rhetorical skill to convince them that 'hee who eates not good meate is dambde', arguing that 'the soule followes the temperature of the body, hee that feedes well hath a good temperature of body, *Ergo*, he that feedes well hath a good soule'.⁴³ Even though this reasoning conflicts with contemporary medical and moral guidance, Shackle-soule's disputation here results in his promotion to 'maister-cooke' by the Prior, a role which affords him the power to corrupt those in his charge from the inside out.⁴⁴ However, through this sequence of events Dekker renders it unambiguous that it is not Shackle-soule's food alone but rather his rhetorical artistry and adoption of a compelling physical disguise – traits he shares with playwrights and performers – that enable him to corrupt the friars. Shackle-soule's association with theatricality is emphasised further when, in his attempt to lure the Subprior into lechery, he employs 'an *Italian Zany*' and some 'Curtizans' to entice him 'First t'act an old Lecher, then a divell on hells black Stage'.⁴⁵ By depicting Shackle-soule as employing not only food but also language, performance, 'Musick', and 'dance' to corrupt those around him, Dekker implicitly associates playwrights with demonic food providers specifically, thereby alerting audiences to dramatists' ability to spiritually corrupt the unwitting consumers of their plays.

⁴¹ Dekker, *If It Be Not Good, the Divil Is In It* (London: Thomas Creede, 1612), sig. B2^v. See Alan Soons, 'A Figure Out of Oral Tradition? Friar Rush and His Quality', *Cithara*, 30.1 (1990), 31–43 for an account of the Friar Rush myth.

⁴² Jonson, *The Alchemist*, III. 1. 26–27.

⁴³ Dekker, *If It Be Not Good*, sig. D1^r.

⁴⁴ Dekker, *If It Be Not Good*, sig. D1^v.

⁴⁵ Dekker, *If It Be Not Good*, sig. I3^v.

Food production and dramatic creativity are also linked in *Bartholomew Fair* through Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, whose hypocritical conduct in relation to food not only evidences his individual corruption but also reflects negatively on early modern anti-theatricalists. Many scholars have picked up on Busy's susceptibility to gustatory temptation, with both Jeanette Ferreira-Ross and John Scott Colley noting the way in which Busy's manifest gluttony conflicts with his alleged Puritanism, according to which he should reject such base bodily pleasures.⁴⁶ However, whilst Busy's culinary hedonism could constitute a satire of religious hypocrites specifically, his status as a stand-in for anti-theatricalists becomes apparent upon consideration of his former status as a producer rather than merely a consumer of food. This often overlooked detail, revealed when Littlewit informs Quarlous that Busy 'was a baker [...], but he does dream now, and see visions; he has given over his trade', lends greater intrigue to Busy's condemnation of Trash's gingerbread men shortly after his arrival at the fair.⁴⁷ Busy's status as an ex-baker now given to condemning baked goods as sinful recalls the fact that several contemporary anti-theatricalists – including such vitriolic opponents of drama as Stephen Gosson and Anthony Munday – themselves had previous theatrical experience.⁴⁸ This association is strengthened through Busy's description of Trash's wares as a 'basket of popery' and an 'idoltrous grove of images', phrases which imbue the gingerbread figures with the same power to entice their viewers and consumers into an immorally excessive valuation of materiality which early modern anti-theatricalists attributed to performances.⁴⁹ Indeed, the parallels between Trash's gingerbread and drama are stressed elsewhere in the play, particularly through their close conceptual proximity to Leatherhead's puppets, which similarly 'lie in a basket' and which – as Cokes's equal appreciation for both

⁴⁶ Jeanette Ferreira-Ross, 'Religion and the Law in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 18.2 (1994), 45–66 (pp. 55–6); John Scott Colley, 'Bartholomew Fair: Ben Jonson's "A Midsummer Night's Dream"', *Comparative Drama*, 11.1 (1977), 63–72 (p. 67).

⁴⁷ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 3. 108–09.

⁴⁸ Anonymous, note to Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1841), pp. ix–x.

⁴⁹ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, III. 6. 67–68 and 89.

products and as Leatherhead's rivalry with Trash imply – appeal to precisely the same set of customers.⁵⁰

Busy's relationship to food in *Bartholomew Fair* therefore very closely parallels anti-theatricalists' relationship to drama, with the result that its hypocritical dimension also reflects negatively on these critics. Of course, Busy's former profession as a baker alone does not necessarily establish his current attitude towards food as hypocritical, any more than Gosson's prior involvement with the stage undermines his condemnation of performances. However, although Littlewit claims that Busy has 'given over his trade', elsewhere in *Bartholomew Fair* Jonson presents Busy's current occupation as a continuation of, rather than a departure from, his former profession. Recognising that the moral value of food is 'subject to construction', Busy reasons early in the play that pig can be 'very exceeding well eaten, but in the Fair, and as a Bartholomew pig, it cannot be eaten; for the very calling it a Bartholomew pig, and to eat it so, is a spice of idolatry'.⁵¹ Busy's analysis here is, of course, anything but logical, and is more than a little reminiscent of Shackle-soule's attempt to rhetorically transform gluttony into a virtue for the friars under his control. However, both characters' awareness that the moral value of foodstuffs depends to some extent on the language in which they are presented also establishes their linguistic connivances as an extension of their role as cooks, an impression enhanced through Busy's explicit description of language as a 'spice' to the food it frames. Busy's continued role in preparing food for consumption reveals that he has not 'given over his trade' in any straightforward way, implicating him in the very process which he condemns. Given both Busy's theological alignment with many contemporary anti-theatricalists and the parallels established between food and drama throughout *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson's portrayal of Busy as an enthusiastic

⁵⁰ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, v. 3. 65, II. 2. 1–25, and III. 4. 88–92.

⁵¹ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 6. 47–49.

producer, consumer, and critic of food implicitly accuses anti-theatricalists of engaging in similarly hypocritical conduct.

Interestingly, however, whilst Jonson uses culinary imagery to accuse Busy – and, through him, Renaissance anti-theatricalists – of hypocrisy, he does not explicitly state that his views of food and drama are wrong, and indeed elsewhere in the play Busy is ridiculed not for adhering to but instead for recanting his anti-theatrical views. Of course, the extreme terms in which Busy frames Trash's superficially innocent gingerbread suggests that audiences are not supposed to take his accusations against it seriously – an impression aided by the way in which Busy '*Overthrows the gingerbread*' in a melodramatic parody of the Biblical account of Jesus's overturning of moneylenders' tables in the Temple.⁵² It is therefore significant that Busy uses almost identical language to condemn theatricality during a discussion with Leatherhead later in the play, describing the puppet-Dionysius as a 'heathenish idol'.⁵³ Jonson's employment of this linguistic parallel frames Busy's critique of the puppet-players and his condemnation of Trash's gingerbread on moral grounds as equally nonsensical, thereby casting scorn upon the claims of contemporary anti-theatricalists.

Nevertheless, neither does Jonson exonerate drama entirely from anti-theatrical accusations in *Bartholomew Fair*, as evidenced by the fact that Busy remains an object of ridicule after – and indeed largely because of – his renunciation of his anti-theatrical convictions. When the puppet-Dionysius facetiously '*takes up his garment*' to disprove Busy's claim that 'the male, among you, putteth on the apparel of the female', Busy confesses himself 'confuted', announcing that he is 'changed, and will become a beholder' with the rest of the audience.⁵⁴ Busy is in many ways debased rather than redeemed by this change of heart, not only as a result of the manifest humiliation of losing an argument to a puppet, but also through its exposure of his excessive credulity towards the figure's faulty

⁵² Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, p. 387; Matthew 21. 12.

⁵³ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, v. 5. 4–5.

⁵⁴ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, v. 5. 86–105.

reasoning. As is blatantly obvious to audiences, Leatherhead's inanimate puppets are not a viable stand-in for the flesh-and-blood performers at whom most anti-theatrical arguments are levelled, who can be guilty of cross-dressing in a way that puppets cannot. Even the puppet-Dionysius's exclamation that this is an '*old stale argument against the players, but it will not hold against the puppets*' speaks to the distinction between these two categories of performer, and remains conspicuously silent regarding its viability when directed at living actors.⁵⁵ This impression is advanced by the fact that, as noted by Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington, one contemporary definition of the word 'puppet' was 'an idolatrous object or image', with this close conceptual link between Leatherhead's puppet theatre and religious impiety lending some degree of support to Busy's initial qualms.⁵⁶ Jonas Barish, too, seems to favour this interpretation, with his claim that at the moment of his conversion Busy is 'brought down to the level of the vulgar humanity' which he has formerly 'pretended to judge' suggesting that Busy himself is corrupted by his acceptance of puppet-Dionysius's argument.⁵⁷ Whilst it is conventional to interpret Busy's attacks against the puppet-performers as satirising anti-theatricalists' conflation of genuine with imagined dangers, closer analysis therefore presents those who are similarly taken in by the puppet's argument – who rest too assuredly on the belief that drama does no harm – as equal targets of Jonson's satire.

'Call Hether a Phisician': The Playwright as Medic

Alongside cooks and market-traders, medical practitioners were also closely associated with food in early modern England, particularly through their roles in both supplying ingestible remedies to patients and in advising individual patients and society more broadly as to how

⁵⁵ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, v. 5. 91–92.

⁵⁶ Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington, 'Introduction', in *Medieval Theatre Performance: Actors, Dancers, Automata, and their Audiences*, ed. by Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 1–10 (p. 4).

⁵⁷ Jonas Barish, 'Bartholomew Fair and Its Puppets', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 20.1 (1959), 3–17.

food consumption could influence humoral balance. As Fitzpatrick points out, throughout the early modern period food was imbued with considerable medical significance, then as now constituting both an ‘ally’ and a ‘potential enemy’ in the ‘battle against disease and ill-health’.⁵⁸ That is not to say that food itself was considered to be medicinal, with the sixteenth-century physician Timothie Bright informing his readers that ‘no more is *Lettis*, *Poppie*, *Rhewbarb*, or *Scammonie* a medicine, then an Oake a Table or Ship, or a quarrie of stones, an house’.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, dietary regulation was considered to be crucial to the maintenance of good health in this era, with contemporary dietary manuals professing to instruct readers as to how the type, amount, and combination of foodstuffs eaten, in addition to the order of courses and the timing of meals, could be used to maintain or to re-establish diners’ humoral balance.⁶⁰ Such advice occasionally put medics in conflict with cooks, whose concerns extended to a far greater extent to the accessibility, cost, and flavour of foodstuffs, as well as to the degree of effort involved in preparing them. Broadly speaking, however, the two roles were considered to be interlinked; household cooks were expected to be aware of humoral theory and to provide foods which would facilitate consumers’ health, and medics often demonstrate sensitivity to the practicalities of accessing different foods and ingredients. Whilst early modern physicians’ role in providing consumable medicine and dietary advice to their patients makes plain their relevance to a discussion of the symbolic function of food providers in Renaissance drama, their unique relationship to food production and consumption simultaneously renders it necessary to treat them separately to cooks and commercial food providers. Throughout the following section, I consider how Jonson, Dekker, and their contemporaries conceive of the relationship between dramatists and

⁵⁸ Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (Aldershot: Aldgate, 2013), p. 4.

⁵⁹ Timothie Bright, *A Treatise, wherein is declared the Sufficiencie of English Medicines* (London: Henrie Middleton, 1580), p. 8.

⁶⁰ See Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, pp. 78–114, and David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine and Society, 1450–1800* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 18–22.

medical practitioners, and what this reveals about these playwrights' attitudes towards theatrical performances more broadly.

The idea of performances as medicinal aids capable of exerting a remedial influence on their viewers existed long before the early modern period. Aristotle in the *Poetics* imbues tragic drama in particular with medicinal properties owing to its ability to bring about *catharsis*, the purging of unwanted emotions through their induction and subsequent dispersal over the course of a performance.⁶¹ The notion of purgation informing this idea occupied a prominent position in the theory of Galenic medicine which prevailed in Renaissance England, which advocated the regular use of emetic drugs and phlebotomy in order to restore and thereafter to maintain patients' humoral balance. Despite their contemporary prevalence, however, the potential risks of purgative remedies are proverbial throughout this era, with the well-recognised capacity of harsh or injudiciously administered purgatives to cause sickness or death manifesting in ongoing attempts to discover natural, gentle alternatives.⁶² Many early modern medical writers view emotional purgation with similar ambivalence. The sixteenth-century dietician Andrew Boorde starkly outlines the corporeal threat posed by heightened passions, with his claim that 'thorow anger or feare dyvers tymes the Palsye do come to a man' establishing emotional distemper as a potential cause of physical illness.⁶³ Boorde's contemporary Elyot concurs, arguing that 'immoderate' passions of all kinds can not only 'anoye the body, & shorten the lyfe', but also 'bringe a man from the use of reason', and even provoke divine displeasure.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Elyot also attests to the potential medical benefits of both pleasant and unpleasant emotional experiences, arguing that activities which 'induceth sondry affections of the mynde, somtyme feare, somtyme hope,

⁶¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. by D. A. Russell and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 51–90 (p. 57). For further discussion of Classical and early modern conceptions of *catharsis*, see Thomas Clayton, 'Catharsis in Aristotle, the Renaissance, and Elsewhere', *Quidditas*, 2.1 (1981), 87–95.

⁶² Clifford M. Foust, *Rhubarb: The Wondrous Drug* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 14.

⁶³ Andrew Boorde, *Dyetary of Helth* (London: Robert Wyer, 1542), sig. M4^v.

⁶⁴ Elyot, *The Castel of Helth*, sig. Q4^v.

nowe coward harte, nowe hardinesse, one whyle pleasure, an nother [sic] whyle dyspleasure' can, in certain circumstances, 'put out of the body, all long durynge syckenesses'.⁶⁵ Although Elyot insists that such practices, like medicinal purgatives, must 'be wel tempred' to achieve the desired effect, his claims here lend support to the Aristotelian notion of drama as capable of advancing viewers' physical and mental health by ridding them of unwanted, potentially harmful emotions.

Whilst early modern medical writers therefore warn that emotional *catharsis*, like bodily purgation, must be undertaken cautiously, the long-established association between theatre and medicine and the contemporary popularity of purgative remedies affords contemporary dramatists the ideal opportunity to present themselves as good physicians who play an important role in promoting audiences' health. However, this is emphatically not what we see. As is the case with cooks, some sixteenth-century dramatists actively distance their own work from that of physicians, drawing a stark distinction between the moral healing facilitated by plays and the physical healing brought about by medicine. Such is the case in William Wager's *Inough is as Good as a Feast* (pub. 1565), a morality play closer in style to early sixteenth- than to seventeenth-century drama which follows the moral degeneration of Worldly Man at the hands of the Vice Covetouse and his entourage. Towards the end of the play, Worldly Man is overcome by a sudden illness, at which point he is approached by a physician, who during his brief time onstage is clearly afforded some degree of respect by Wager. The physician's opening words, for example, cut sharply through the jeers of Ignorance and Covetouse, the sombre reproach 'By your leave my maisters, me thinks it is no time to jest' admonishing them for their facetiousness.⁶⁶ Moreover, by delegating to Covetouse a series of childish taunts at the doctor's expense – including the mock-request 'M. Phisicion, I pray you look in his bum' – Wager manifestly discourages his viewers from

⁶⁵ Elyot, *The Castel of Helth*, sigs N4^r–N4^v.

⁶⁶ William Wager, *Inough is as Good as a Feast* (London: John Allde, 1570), sig. F3^v.

either condoning or emulating such ridicule, suggesting instead that the work undertaken by physicians should be taken seriously.⁶⁷

However, Wager's generally favourable portrayal of his play's physician is not unqualified. For one, the unsettling doubling of the physician's actor in the role of Plagues creates a conceptual connection between the two, associating the physician with the transmission as well as with the cure of disease and so indicating the narrowness of the boundary between sickness and health.⁶⁸ Wager also explicitly shows that the doctor is present at the request of Ignorance, whose suggestion that they 'call hether a Phisician' – a proposal commended by the ailing Worldly Man – encourages spectators to view this decision as imprudent.⁶⁹ An explanation for why this might be is offered by the physician himself, who informs Worldly Man that he is 'past help in this world in mans judgement', attesting to his own inability to supply the spiritual healing of which Worldly Man is most in need.⁷⁰ Therefore, rather than presenting physicians and their work as intrinsically problematic, in *Inough* Wager instead suggests that they are limited to the realm of physical healing, which is depicted as less important than its spiritual counterpart. That Wager's illustration of this fact itself constitutes an effort to facilitate viewers' spiritual advancement rather than their bodily wellbeing implicitly presents the social role of playwrights as surpassing, rather than paralleling, that of physicians.

One possible explanation for Wager's approach here may be found in the decidedly ambivalent status of medics in early modern England. As with cooks, a disparity exists between the ideal and the actual where Renaissance medical practitioners are concerned, with untrained, immoral tricksters operating alongside skilled, beneficent professionals.⁷¹ By

⁶⁷ Wager, *Inough is as Good as a Feast*, sig. F3^v.

⁶⁸ Wager, *Inough is as Good as a Feast*, [unnumbered page].

⁶⁹ Wager, *Inough is as Good as a Feast*, sig. F3^r.

⁷⁰ Wager, *Inough is as Good as a Feast*, sig. F4^r.

⁷¹ Harold J. Cook, 'Good Advice and Little Medicine: The Professional Authority of Early Modern English Physicians', *Journal of British Studies*, 33.1 (1994), 1–31 (pp. 5 and 18–20).

bringing these potentially corrupt or ignorant practitioners into intimate contact with vulnerable patients and affording them control over the inner workings of these patients' bodies, the task of healing the sick afforded contemporary medics the power to cause significant harm. It is therefore unsurprising that medical professionals were regarded with a considerable degree of distrust throughout the entire early modern period. Though Elyot himself declares such suspicions to be unmerited, in his concluding remarks to *The Castel of Health* (1539) he is already able to speak of the 'sclaunder' which physicians 'have of long tyme susteyned'.⁷² Indeed, we have already witnessed a medieval example of such satire, with the portrayal of Brundyche in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* as someone who 'spekyt never good matere nor purpoose', alongside Colle's description of how 'Thowh a man were right heyle, he coud soone make hym sek', clearly speaking to medieval anxieties surrounding healing figures.⁷³

Comparable depictions of medics continue to appear throughout the early modern period, such as in Thomas Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe* (1599), wherein Nashe denounces physicians' 'mithridates of fortie severall poysons compacted, their bitter *Rubarbe*, and torturing *Stibium*' – phrasing which accuses doctors of hurting rather than healing patients with their remedies.⁷⁴ Two decades later, John Melton in *Astrologaster* (1620) professes that it is a 'common saying' that 'it is impossible for any Physition to be skilfull, except hee hath killed his thirtie men'.⁷⁵ Though these comments come across as somewhat flippant, the concerns they voice are serious, as evidenced in John Sadler's *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (1636). Even whilst offering medical advice himself, Sadler here warns his readers of the threat inept physicians pose to pregnant women when, 'perceiving not the cause of their grieve (seeing that no certaine judgement can bee given by the urine)', they

⁷² Elyot, *The Castel of Helth*, sig. Y6^v.

⁷³ Anonymous, *The Play of the Sacrament*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 213–33 (ll. 491 and 539).

⁷⁴ Thomas Nashe, *Nashes Lenten Stuffe* (London: Thomas Judson and Valentine Simmes, 1599), p. 24.

⁷⁵ John Melton, *Astrologaster* (London: Barnard Alsop, 1620), pp. 17–18.

prescribe ‘some strong diureticall, or cathartical potion whereby the conception is destroyed’.⁷⁶ Perhaps as a result of these negative associations, comparisons between playwrights and physicians appear in contemporary anti-theatrical tracts, with Gosson likening playwrights to ‘deceitfull Phisition[s]’ who ‘giveth sweete Syrropes to make [their] poyson goe downe the smoother’ and thereby accusing dramatists of abusing their position of trust by poisoning those they promise to cure.⁷⁷ Of course, Philip Sidney later subverts this argument in *The Defense of Poesy* (1580), predictably framing such deceptions in a more positive light than does Gosson when he compares playwrights to honest medics who encourage their customers ‘to take most wholesome things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste’.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Gosson’s apparent unconsciousness of what Swann has described as the ‘interestingly ambivalent’ playwright-as-medic trope – which ultimately likens dramatists to figures with ‘the potential, at least, to cure’ – indicates the depth of the proverbial belief in medics’ untrustworthiness in contemporary England.⁷⁹ This renders it unsurprising that some dramatists, such as Wager, wish to sever this connection, emphasising their role as moralists as opposed to medics in order to avoid conferring these negative associations upon themselves.

It is therefore noteworthy that, even whilst rejecting Wager’s approach and instead foregrounding the parallels between playwrights and medics, many Renaissance dramatists do not shy away from the very ‘depictions of dangerous doctors and medics’ which Tanya Pollard describes as inevitably ‘raising questions about the risks of staging and watching

⁷⁶ John Sadler, *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (London: Ph. Stephens and Ch. Meredith, 1636), p. 143.

⁷⁷ Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse*, sig. A2^r.

⁷⁸ Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, in *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 212–50 (ll. 612–13).

⁷⁹ Elizabeth L. Swann, *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 55. See also her wider discussion on Gosson and Sidney’s uses of the playwright-as-medic trope on pp. 55–57.

plays'.⁸⁰ Such is the case in *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll* (c. 1599), a comedy likely first performed by the Children of Paul's in 1600 and which follows the entangled romantic exploits of a group of German courtiers.⁸¹ Over the course of the play, the titular Doctor Dodypoll's medical competence is repeatedly called into question, as when he reasons aloud to the nobleman Lassinburgh that 'you no point eate a de meate to daie, you be de empty, be gar you be emptie, you be no point vel, you no point vel, be garr you be vere sicke'.⁸² Of course, Dodypoll's claim here that refusing food can have a detrimental impact on individuals' physical and mental health accords with Galenic medical doctrine. However, his failure to pinpoint the mechanism which connects being 'emptie' with being 'sicke', especially when combined with his recurrent pauses and repetitions throughout these lines, implies that he does not understand this himself, exposing his tenuous grasp on even the most basic tenets of early modern medicine.

Moreover, in keeping with the pervasive xenophobia of early modern England, Dodypoll's medical incompetence is also explicitly connected to his foreignness. Although the play's action takes place in Germany, Dodypoll himself is set apart by his heavily emphasised French accent, which stands in stark contrast to the perfect English of the play's other characters and which forcefully proclaims his cultural otherness from English spectators. Dodypoll's accent comes in for explicit mockery in this play, as when after feigning incomprehension at Dodypoll's claim to be 'right glad for to see [him] veale [i.e. well]', the servant Haunce retorts with the question 'What do you make a Calfe of me, M. Doctor?'.⁸³ Haunce here openly calls attention to the way in which Dodypoll's different manner of speaking alters not only the superficial sound but also the intrinsic sense of his

⁸⁰ Tanya Pollard, "'No Faith in Physic": Masquerades of Medicine Onstage and Off", in *Disease, Diagnosis and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. by Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 29–41 (pp. 30 and 33).

⁸¹ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), II, pp. 19–20 and IV, p. 54.

⁸² Anonymous, *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll* (London: Thomas Creede, 1600), sig. D3^r.

⁸³ Anonymous, *Dodypoll*, sig. C3^r.

comments. The culinary inflection of Haunce's pun highlights the significance of this fact for Dodypoll's patients, implying that his use of non-standard English may impact the clarity of his dietary and medical instructions, with Dodypoll's accent thereby not only signalling but potentially contributing to the threat he poses to his patients.

That Dodypoll may be intended to serve as a satirical representation not simply of early modern medics but also of contemporary playwrights is suggested by the way in which the play calls not only his medical aptitude but also his personal integrity into question, with Dodypoll's moral failings directly contributing to his threatening potential. This impression is created, for one, by Dodypoll's ironic habit of issuing pathologically coded curses, with his repeated invocations of 'pox', 'plage' [sic], and 'pestilence' against unfavourable people and situations associating him with the promulgation rather than the prevention of illness.⁸⁴ As well as indicating Dodypoll's unscrupulousness as a medical practitioner, the reference to 'plage' here holds considerable meta-theatrical significance, linking Dodypoll's physic to drama by playing on the contemporary awareness of playhouses as prominent vectors for plague transmission – a fact which anti-theatricalists such as William Prynne utilise to their advantage.⁸⁵ The idea of Dodypoll as a threat to his customers is afforded more extensive treatment in the playwright's depiction of the 'poudra' which Dodypoll supplies to Flores, and which is ostensibly intended to act as a love potion.⁸⁶ Dodypoll praises this drug as possessing 'grand force for enflama de bloud', describing its 'vertue' as being that its recipient, whom he assumes to be female, will 'no sooner drinke but shee hang your neck about; she stroake your beard; she nippe your sheeke, she busse your lippe'.⁸⁷ That Dodypoll produces a medicine designed specifically to unbalance its recipients' emotions in this way –

⁸⁴ Anonymous, *Dodypoll*, sigs D2^v, D3^r, and E1^r.

⁸⁵ Leah S. Marcus, 'Antitheatricality: The Theatre as Scourge', in *A New Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Arthur F. Kinney and Thomas Warren Hopper (Oxford: Wiley, 2017), pp. 182–92 (p. 183); William Prynne, *Histrion-mastix* (London: Edward Allde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes, and William Jones, 1633), sigs Hhh*4^v–Iii*1^r.

⁸⁶ Anonymous, *Dodypoll*, sig. E1^v.

⁸⁷ Anonymous, *Dodypoll*, sigs E1^v and B1^v–B2^r.

thereby provoking not love but madness in its unlucky consumer Alberdure – indicates his manifest disinterest in the wellbeing of his patients. Furthermore, the invasive physicality suggested by the language of culinary and sexual insatiability in these lines implies that this drug is designed to generate not honest affection but intemperate lust in its consumers. Dodypoll himself – ‘surnam’d the Amorous’, according to the Merchant – is himself presented as licentious over the course of the play, particularly through his persistent attempts to win Cornelia’s affections, with this detail placing him in the same dramatic tradition as other lecherous physicians such as Brundyche.⁸⁸

The adverse effects of Dodypoll’s ‘poudra’ are therefore implied to result not only from his limited medical knowledge, but also from his personal shortcomings – something at least as likely to exert a detrimental impact on the work of dramatists, which is far more intimately tied to its creators’ morals than is the case for medicine. Indeed, that other contemporary playwrights seem to have recognised Dodypoll’s meta-theatrical status is evidenced through Dekker and Marston’s depiction of the playwright-character Horace in *Satiro-Mastix* (1601). Widely identified as an unfavourable caricature of Jonson, Horace is described in this play as one who ‘pennes and purges Humours and diseases’.⁸⁹ Though superficially drawing on the notion of theatrical *catharsis* to establish Horace’s work as serving a remedial function, this line’s ambiguous syntax ironically situates him as the author of the very ‘Humours and diseases’ he goes on to purge, calling the value of his dramatic contributions sharply into question. It is therefore significant that Tucca, having caught Horace in what he believes to be a lie, refers to him as ‘Doctor Doddipol’.⁹⁰ Though other plays occasionally use variants of Dodypoll’s name to denote unscrupulous medics, its

⁸⁸ Anonymous, *Dodypoll*, sig. F2^r.

⁸⁹ Thomas Dekker and John Marston, *Satiro-Mastix*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 4 vols (London: Pearson, 1873), I, pp. 177–266 (p. 262).

⁹⁰ Dekker and Marston, *Satiro-Mastix*, p. 262.

specific application here to an ignominious playwright indicates a contemporary awareness amongst Renaissance dramatists of the close affiliation between their roles.

Additional evidence for this reading emerges in the fact that Dodypoll's 'poudra' is presented not only as driving Alberdure mad, but also as turning him into an actor – a transformation which is infused with negative connotations. So much is exemplified when Alberdure, after extracting himself from a river into which his medically induced madness has caused him to fall, asks a passing peasant to exchange clothes with him so that he may return to the court in disguise. Noticing the dampness of Alberdure's clothes following their stint in the river, however, the peasant expresses his concern that Alberdure might have 'sweat all this', before anxiously inquiring 'You have not the disease I hope?'.⁹¹ The peasant's euphemistic language here suggests that the 'disease' to which he refers could be syphilis, a condition which was rapidly gaining prevalence in early modern Europe and which was believed at the time to spread through various forms of 'Social and moral disorder'.⁹² Although undoubtedly used for comic effect, it is therefore telling that the playwright deploys this reference to contagion at such a potently meta-theatrical moment, with Alberdure in the process of transforming not only into a peasant but also, crucially, into an actor. By imbuing Alberdure and the peasant's exchange of clothes with sexually suggestive undertones, *Dodypoll*'s author indicates the ability of performances to contaminate both the minds and the morals of their audiences. Moreover, that Dodypoll himself is responsible for putting Alberdure in this scenario through his improperly administered 'poudra' further signifies his alignment with playwrights, whose composition of plays similarly exposes actors to the perceived dangers of performances. Far from presenting dramatists as benevolent healers, the parallels established between playwrights and physicians in *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll*

⁹¹ Anonymous, *Dodypoll*, sig. F2^r.

⁹² Winfried Schleiner, 'Moral Attitudes toward Syphilis and its Prevention in the Renaissance', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 68.3 (1994), 389–410 (p. 395).

therefore indicate the physical and spiritual risks to which both actors and spectators are subjected during the production of a play.

Moreover, some early modern playwrights draw attention to lower-class medics' ability to cross social barriers – a capacity which endows them with politically subversive potential. Jonson suggests as much in *Volpone* (1606), when Sir Politic Would-Be praises mountebanks as

professed favourites,

And cabinet counsellors to the greatest princes!

The only languaged men of all the world!⁹³

The use of the word 'counsellors' here is particularly significant, with its political resonances allowing it to imply the extension of medics' influence beyond the private space of the 'cabinet' and into public affairs of state. Though Sir Politic celebrates the elevation of physicians to such roles, the fact that his comments are focused on unlicensed mountebanks specifically rather than on officially sanctioned medical professionals indicates that Jonson does not intend for viewers to approve of this encomium. As Nancy G. Siraisi points out, the later medieval period gave rise to an approximate 'hierarchy' of medical professionals, with 'university graduates in medicine' and those in possession of 'Latin literacy' held in much higher regard than uneducated 'empirics' such as mountebanks.⁹⁴ Sir Politic's suggestion that these itinerant medics could gain political influence as the 'professed favourites' of royal courts is therefore highly disquieting, an impression which is emphasised further when Peregrine contradicts Sir Politic by describing mountebanks as

most lewd impostors;

Made all of terms and shreds; no less beliers

⁹³ Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, in *'The Alchemist' and Other Plays*, pp. 1–117 (II. 2. 10–13).

⁹⁴ Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 20.

Of great men's favourites than their own vile medicines.⁹⁵

In this account, Peregrine associates mountebanks not with sound advice but with unreliable counsel in the form of sycophantic insinuation and flattery, suggesting that their political advice is no more dependable than their proverbially unreliable cures.

Jonson returns to this idea in *The Alchemist*, wherein Subtle explains how the religious nonconformist Ananias might exploit the medicinal properties of the hoped-for philosopher's stone to gain political power. Subtle outlines how Ananias might win the friendship of a 'great man in state' by curing his 'gout', before rhetorically inviting Ananias to consider what he could

not do,

Against lords spiritual or temporal,

That shall oppone [sic] [him].⁹⁶

Jonson's use of a religious dissenter in this illustration of how medical skill can function as a social lubricant emphasises the politically threatening nature of this form of social advancement, highlighting its ability to afford power to those who might imperil the country's spiritual trajectory. A similar idea emerges in Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well* (1601–1605), wherein the ailing King of France vows to give Helen whatever she may 'demand' if she can cure him.⁹⁷ Though Helen asks for a 'husband' of her choosing, she is quick to clarify that she does not intend 'To choose from forth the royal blood', but that she intends to ask for one who 'Is free for [her] to ask, [him] to bestow'.⁹⁸ Though Helen thereby instantly neutralises the social and political threat she poses, her anxious clarification of this fact nevertheless highlights the ease with which medical skill could be deployed for personal gain by a less scrupulous practitioner.

⁹⁵ Jonson, *Volpone*, II. 2. 14–16.

⁹⁶ Jonson, *The Alchemist*, III. 1. 27 and 49–51.

⁹⁷ William Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), II, pp. 819–50 (II. 1. 191).

⁹⁸ Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, II. 1. 194–200.

Significantly, however, both Dekker and Jonson elsewhere suggest that it is not only medical but also performative expertise which enables potentially malicious individuals to gain access to these private spaces. Such is the impression created in *Old Fortunatus*, wherein Andelocia, after beguiling the courtiers with his Irish costermonger disguise as outlined above, returns to his victims costumed ‘like a French Doctor’ to enact the second part of his deception.⁹⁹ As well as adopting a prominent accent, Andelocia assumes a brusque and excessively informal demeanour as he addresses the courtiers, mocking their condition before handing Agripyne a remedy with the instruction to ‘trust dis downe into your little belly’.¹⁰⁰ Andelocia’s impertinence here contrasts starkly with the deference of Helen in *All’s Well*, who offers her services to the King in respectful language and ‘With all bound humbleness’; whereas Helen retains an awareness of her social subordination to her royal patients, Andelocia instead aspires to an improper degree of familiarity with them.¹⁰¹ The implicit threat presented by Andelocia’s class-unconscious intimacy is indicated when King Athelstane promises Andelocia that if he can cure Agripyne then ‘Englands treasorie’ will be ‘free for [him] to use’, suggesting the ease with which foreign medics could abuse their position to gain access to – and potentially deplete – England’s wealth.¹⁰² Indeed, rather than reversing the effects of the magical apples Andelocia earlier supplied, the drug he dispenses in the guise of a French doctor enables him to abduct Agripyne through a supernatural act of teleportation.¹⁰³ This scene therefore speaks to contemporary anxieties regarding both the political and the sexual ramifications of medics’ uniquely intimate connection to their patients’ bodies. Whilst Andelocia’s costermonger persona enables him to injure the courtiers by infiltrating their bodies, his secondary disguise renders him ideally placed to injure the state by infiltrating the court circle and, potentially, even the royal lineage. By demonstrating

⁹⁹ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. I4^r.

¹⁰⁰ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. I4^v.

¹⁰¹ Shakespeare, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, II. 1. 113.

¹⁰² Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. I4^r.

¹⁰³ Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, sig. K1^r.

the socially subversive power of performative artistry in this way, Dekker indicates the politically, as well as physically and morally, threatening status of playwrights and performers.

The moral risks of performers' and physicians' comparable ability to gain unlicensed access to private spaces are also emphasised in *Volpone*, wherein Volpone adopts the guise of a mountebank in order to catch a glimpse of Corvino's wife Celia. From the outset of his performance, Volpone opposes himself to 'these ground *ciarlatani*, that spread their cloaks on the pavement, as if they meant to do feats of activity, and come in lamely, with their mouldy tales of Boccaccio'.¹⁰⁴ That Volpone condemns these '*ciarlatani*' here is in itself unsurprising; even amongst medics, itinerant mountebanks – figures with little or no medical training who created their own "remedies" and then hawked them on the streets – were widely reputed for their dishonesty, their medicines being generally acknowledged as at best ineffective, and at worst potentially lethal.¹⁰⁵ They were also, significantly, very strongly associated with 'theatricality', which according to M. A. Katritzky they used 'in its widest possible sense', with the 'defining characteristic of the genuine mountebank' being 'the marketing of medicine through some kind of entertainment element targeted at a live audience'.¹⁰⁶ It is therefore telling that, rather than identifying the theatrical conduct of other mountebanks as evidence of their false dealing and taking a more sober approach in order to indicate his own honesty, Volpone instead adopts the surprising tactic of presenting his own performance as more entertaining than theirs. Implicitly contrasting his competitors' position on the 'pavement' with his own placement on '*a stage*', Volpone mocks other mountebanks'

¹⁰⁴ Jonson, *Volpone*, II. 2. 48–51.

¹⁰⁵ David Gentilcore, "'Charlatans, Mountebanks, and Other Similar People': The Regulation and Role of Itinerant Practitioners in Early Modern Italy", *Social History*, 20.3 (1995), 297–314; M. A. Katritzky, 'Marketing Medicine: The Image of the Early Modern Mountebank', *Renaissance Studies*, 15.2 (2007), 121–53.

¹⁰⁶ Katritzky, 'Marketing Medicine', pp. 121 and 124.

recourse to (literary) ‘tales of Boccaccio’, condemning their failure to supply the (theatrical) ‘feats of activity’ they promise to provide.¹⁰⁷

Of particular interest here is the fact that, in order to discredit his competition, Volpone attacks not their medicines per se but rather the manner in which these are framed, collapsing the distinction between drugs and language. This impression is advanced through Volpone’s description of his rivals’ performative offerings as ‘mouldy’. Whilst metaphorically denoting these charlatans’ language as outdated and uninteresting, the literal connotations of food spoilage it carries simultaneously enable it to reflect negatively on their medicinal wares, again suggesting an intrinsic link between the quality of their language and the quality of the products which it frames. Pollard also picks up on this conflation of medicine with language, recognising that Volpone’s ‘elaborately arranged words are, in fact, the very drugs he is marketing: they are his tools for seducing his audience’.¹⁰⁸ Volpone’s actions in this scene are therefore conflated entirely with those of the actor portraying him, with the implication that the promised remedial effects of performances may be as fictitious as those of Volpone’s ‘powder’.¹⁰⁹ However, that Volpone’s display still serves its intended purpose of drawing Celia to her ‘window’ suggests that it is his performance itself, rather than the nonexistent elixir he claims to possess, which constitutes a threat to his audience, with this alignment between performers and deceitful, insinuating quacksalvers reflecting negatively on drama more broadly.¹¹⁰

Some early modern dramatists also raise serious doubts about the authenticity of their professed desire to correct spectators’ moral failings by highlighting the shared commercial goals of playwrights and medics. In his anti-theatrical treatise *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), Gosson condemns as ungrateful the patient who ‘feeds his Phisition with gold in time of

¹⁰⁷ Jonson, *Volpone*, p. 36; II. 2. 49–51.

¹⁰⁸ Pollard, “‘No Faith in Physic’”, p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ Jonson, *Volpone*, II. 3. 216.

¹¹⁰ Jonson, *Volpone*, p. 40.

sicknesse, and when he is wel, scarcely affoordes him a cup of water'.¹¹¹ Whilst Gosson uses this image merely to suggest that people should always take care of those from whom they benefit in times of need, it nevertheless hints at the fact that medics generally stand to gain more from the sickness than from the health of their patients. Many contemporary dramatists take this idea much further in their depictions of medics, as when in *Volpone* Mosca relates his master's belief that 'Most of your doctors are the greater danger, | And worse disease t'escape', claiming that the extortionate prices they charge for their services mean that 'they flay a man, | Before they kill him'.¹¹² The same concept appears in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1613), wherein the Duchess voices her concern that bribes will not procure her servants' loyalty as

physicians thus,
With their hands full of money, use to give o'er
Their patients.¹¹³

Both Jonson and Webster here call attention to the ironic fact that medics have more to gain, in a material sense at least, from their patients' illnesses than from their continued good health, such that it is potentially in their interests to extend rather than to fully alleviate their symptoms.

This fact gains considerable meta-theatrical significance in light of some of the claims made by contemporary dramatic paratexts, discussed in Chapter Four. As we have already seen, paratexts such as the prologues to *Clyomon and Clamydes* (c. 1570s), *The Glasse of Governement* (pub. 1575), and *Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fooles* (pub. 1619) explicitly suggest that moral drama only appeals to moral spectators. However, many later paratexts abandon this premise, explicitly expressing their authors' intentions to appeal to as many

¹¹¹ Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse*, sigs D7^v–D8^r.

¹¹² Jonson, *Volpone*, I. 4. 20–28.

¹¹³ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, in *'The Duchess of Malfi' and Other Works*, ed. by René Weis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 103–200 (III. 5. 7–9).

people as possible – amounting, essentially, to a desire for commercial, and therefore financial, success. Even *The Glasse of Governement*'s prologue acknowledges the potential opposition between moral and commercial interests, insisting that for any who would 'lay out some pence' for something less moral 'Bellsavage fayre were fittest for his purse', following this with the declaration 'I lyst not so to misbestowe mine arte'.¹¹⁴ The author of this prologue here demonstrates a willingness to lose custom – and, with it, financial gain – in order to produce a virtuous play, claiming that for those with 'best wares' there is no need to 'shewe woorse'.¹¹⁵ Despite insisting that Gascoigne has chosen the moral path, this prologue therefore implicitly suggests that it is in playwrights' financial interests to feed immoral spectators' tastes rather than to either forgo their custom or attempt to alter their palates, just as it is in physicians' financial interests to prolong rather than to curtail their patients' physical illnesses. Of course, early modern dramatists do not explicitly claim that all playwrights do this, just as not all physicians adopt such a callous, cynical approach to their work. Nevertheless, in light of playwrights' quasi-medical role as healers of the minds and morals of their audiences, contemporary playwrights' portrayal of physicians as motivated by commerce rather than altruism raises pronounced questions regarding the nobility of their own intentions.

Examples of playwright stand-ins and performative characters benefiting from their audiences' moral flaws abound in early modern drama. Jonson's protagonists Volpone and Subtle, for instance, both utilise theatrical deceptions to exploit the selfishness, greed, and gullibility of their victims, capitulating to rather than amending these flaws. However, an often overlooked example of this theme appears in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), through Shakespeare's depiction of the Mantuan apothecary from whom Romeo procures the poison with which he later commits suicide. When describing this apothecary's place of business,

¹¹⁴ George Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Governement* (London: Henry Middleton, 1575), sig. A3^r.

¹¹⁵ Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Governement*, sig. A3^r.

Romeo recounts how ‘in his needy shop a tortoise hung’, along with ‘An alligator stuffed, and other skins | Of ill-shaped fishes’ and various other items which are ‘thinly scattered up to make a show’.¹¹⁶ Patrick Wallis convincingly argues that flamboyant displays of this kind may have been commonplace in early modern apothecaries’ shops, being intended to ‘convey messages about the value, quality, origins, and cost of the products, the status, reliability, credit, and aspirations of the vendor, and the types of customers which they seek’.¹¹⁷ However, the theatrical resonances of the word ‘show’ also alert audiences to the potential meta-theatrical significance of this description, with this eclectic assortment of items being intended to gain custom by capturing viewers’ attention in much the same way as the sensory displays of theatrical performances.

On a superficial level, this exhibition of unusual creatures obviously attempts to utilise its observers’ faith in the efficacy of exotic medicines in order to generate business. As Siraisi points out, throughout the Renaissance exotic medicines may have ‘inspired greater confidence or hope’ in patients than more easily obtainable remedies, largely owing to the populace’s ‘fairly realistic idea of the results to be expected from simple forms of medication’ made with ‘local products’.¹¹⁸ This view was nevertheless discouraged by some contemporary medical professionals. Bright in particular makes a point of advocating for more homely remedies, arguing that although ‘the use and custome hath long bene to place greatest value in straunge medicines’, these could potentially cause ‘great inconveniences and daungers’ for their consumers.¹¹⁹ As a result of these divided opinions, the Mantuan apothecary’s display would not have presented the proprietor’s wares in an unambiguously positive light for Shakespeare’s original audiences. Significantly, however, Romeo is explicitly shown to be attracted by this display not because he equates medical exoticism with

¹¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, III, pp.1053–88 (v. 1. 45–51).

¹¹⁷ Patrick Wallis, ‘Consumption, Retailing, and Medicine in Early-Modern London’, *Economic History Review*, 61.1 (2008), 26–53 (p. 30).

¹¹⁸ Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 147.

¹¹⁹ Bright, *Sufficiencie*, pp. 7 and 28.

effectiveness, but instead because he sees through this façade. Deducing from the ‘thinly scattered’ display the unsuccessful nature of the business and, consequently, the resulting penury and moral pliancy of its owner, Romeo reasons that

if a man did need a poison now,
Whose sale is present death in Mantua,
Here lives a caitiff wretch would sell it him.¹²⁰

Shakespeare’s portrayal of this apothecary not only as benefiting from Romeo’s desire to illicitly purchase poison, but also as soliciting his custom by unwittingly offering a ‘show’ of his willingness to provide it, illustrates how performers and playwrights may, like this particular medic, profit from the moral shortcomings of their customers. By demonstrating how effectively shows of immorality – intentional or otherwise – generate custom for those who offer them, Shakespeare undermines the argument often proffered by early modern proponents of drama that playwrights can safely depict vice onstage in order to discourage its emulation.¹²¹ Instead, he implicitly lends support to the anti-theatrical contention that people ‘chiefly run flocking to the Play-house, that they might make mirth of such folly and laugh at it’, ‘licentiousness [...] being the thing which most pleaseth the multitude’, as well as raising the troubling suggestion that playwrights could potentially exploit spectators’ immoral tendencies for their own gain.¹²²

‘Suckt from the Devilles Teate’: The Playwright as Nurse

As this chapter’s preceding sections have made clear, cooks and medics are recognised in this era as close conceptual parallels for Renaissance dramatists, who are similarly responsible for nourishing and healing spectators whilst occupying a role that renders them ideally placed to

¹²⁰ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, v. 1. 53–55.

¹²¹ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1612), sig. C3^r; Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse*, p. 24.

¹²² Anonymous, *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors* (London: W. White, 1615), p. 27.

cause them harm. In many ways, the distinct social function of nurses in early modern England resembles that of playwrights even more closely. To a much greater degree than either cooks or medics, Renaissance nurses were held responsible not only for the physical but also for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of those in their care, paralleling playwrights' responsibility for instructing playgoers rather than simply for nourishing or healing them. Rather than constituting distinct aspects of nurses' role, the provision of physical sustenance and moral instruction were at the time believed to be one and the same process, with nurses' milk being believed to transmit moral and spiritual values as well as physical attributes to its consumers.¹²³ John Jones articulates this view in *The Arte and Science of Preserving Bodie and Soule in Healthe* (1579), wherein he cautions readers that any wet nurse who should 'happen to fall sicke, or to take any infection, or to be given to drinke, or anye other intolerable vice, must be forthwith avoided [...], least the childe sucke uppe sicknesse and wickednesse with the milke'.¹²⁴ By imbuing breast milk with the power to transmit not only 'infection' but also 'vice', Jones attests to its influence over the moral as well as the physical health of its consumers. This may explain why breast milk was regularly utilised as a metaphor for sound religious instruction throughout this period. As Rachel Trubowitz explains, 'ministers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritan churches conventionally depicted themselves as lactating mothers who could provide spiritual milk, in the form of scriptural truth, to their congregation'.¹²⁵ Jutta Sperling corroborates this claim, remarking

¹²³ Although Wendy Wall also notes the early modern perception of nurses as capable of exerting a profoundly negative influence over the infants they feed, her focus is primarily on their perceived ability to pollute children's national and class identity, rather than on their morally and spiritually corruptive influence. See Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 136–38.

¹²⁴ John Jones, *The Arte and Science of Preserving Bodie and Soule in Healthe* (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1579), p. 8.

¹²⁵ Rachel Trubowitz, "'But Blood Whiten'd': Nursing Mothers and Others in Early Modern Britain", in *Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 82–101 (p. 97).

that ‘seventeenth-century Protestants envisioned Christ’s promise of redemption to be imbibed like [mothers’] milk’.¹²⁶

Breast milk’s established status as a direct source of moral instruction, rather than as simply a symbolic counterpart to it, further indicates its resemblance to dramatic productions. However, as Jones’s expression of this fact in explicitly negative terms suggests, as with cooks and medics there also existed a widespread recognition of the power nurses’ role afforded them to destroy as well as to maintain the physical and moral wellbeing of the infants in their care. Tellingly, breastfeeding imagery appears as a conceptual parallel for drama in the work of both proponents and detractors of theatrical performances throughout this era. Sidney, for instance, insists that for many people fictional literature constitutes ‘the first light giver to ignorance, and first nurse whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges’, presenting performances and breast milk as fulfilling the same positive role of nurturing the budding spirituality of their consumers.¹²⁷ At the same time, however, Gosson issues the striking proclamation that ‘Stageplaise [...] were suckt from the Devilles teate, to Nurce up Idolatrie’, using the same lactic imagery to present performances in an unambiguously negative light.¹²⁸ Given the use of breast milk as a parallel for performances in early modern discourses surrounding theatrical morality, examining the ways in which this substance and its providers are depicted in contemporary plays can provide compelling insight into Renaissance playwrights’ attitudes towards their own work.

It is therefore significant that, as with their portrayal of cooks and medics, many Renaissance playwrights present nurses and their milk pejoratively, stressing their capacity to foster illness, vice, and heresy – rather than health, virtue, and orthodox piety – in those for

¹²⁶ Jutta Gisela Sperling, ‘Introduction’, in *Medieval and Renaissance Lactations: Images, Rhetorics, Practices*, ed. by Jutta Gisela Sperling (London: Ashgate, 2013; repr. London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1–20 (p. 7).

¹²⁷ Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, ll. 39–41.

¹²⁸ Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), sig. B8^r.

whom they care. Contemporary playwrights' awareness of the link between the medical and moral safety of breast milk and the physical health and spiritual virtue of its providers is evidenced in *Patient Grissil* (c. 1599), a collaborative work by Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, and William Haughton which retells the popular myth of Griselda and her husband's testing of her loyalty. Whilst attempting to convince her husband's servant Furio to return her children to her, Griselda asserts that although her milk is currently 'sweet', if her children are taken from her then

[Her] angrie breasts will swell, and as [her] eyes

Lets [sic] fall salt drops, with these white Necter teares,

They will be mix't: this sweet will then be brine.¹²⁹

Through the intensely visceral image of Griselda's tears combining with her milk to make it salty, the playwrights here literalise the mechanism whereby nursing women's emotions influence both the flavour and the safety of the milk they produce. As we have seen, this process was considered to be medically and morally neutral in and of itself, and so it is telling that these playwrights focus on its negative aspects, highlighting Griselda's role not as a cultivator of sweet, nourishing milk, but rather her potential – and, by extension, that of other nurses – to become its contaminant.

Jonson similarly foregrounds the threatening potential of breast milk by denaturalising women's bodily involvement in its production, particularly through his depiction of the pork-seller Ursula in *Bartholomew Fair*. As Lee points out, over the course of the play Ursula is repeatedly 'confused with her food', an argument supported by Jonson's zoomorphic description of her as an 'oily pig woman' in the play's induction.¹³⁰ However, that Ursula is not just likened to her food but is physically implicated in its production becomes apparent when, upon her first entrance into the play, Ursula laments that she did not choose a 'cooler

¹²⁹ Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, and William Haughton, *Patient Grissil* (London: Henry Rocket, 1603; repr. London: The Shakespeare Society, 1841), p. 54.

¹³⁰ Lee, 'The Devil or the Physician', p. 268; Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Induction, l. 109.

vocation', before evocatively professing that she 'water[s] the ground in knots [...] like a great garden pot'.¹³¹ Lee speaks of this scene in metaphorical terms, claiming that Ursula 'seems to go through the process of physical disintegration every time she cooks', with her body undergoing a change which parallels that of her 'roasted meat whose fat is burned away'.¹³² Nevertheless, a more literal reading readily presents itself, with Ursula's sweat presumably also amalgamating with the food she cooks such that her patrons are in a very literal sense consuming food contaminated by her body. Moreover, as in the example of *Patient Grissil* this contamination is presented as the result of Ursula's own humoral imbalance. According to Galenic humoralism, healthy women were believed to possess 'cold constitutions', with Sadler linking this directly to their role as food providers by claiming that otherwise there can be no 'superplus of nourishment' in their bodies from which they can draw in order to safely feed their children.¹³³ That Ursula's internal 'heat' leads to the contamination of her food establishes this process as paralleling the detrimental influence of nurses' unbalanced humours upon their breast milk. Jonson's depiction of Ursula's food as being literally contaminated by her sweat thereby defamiliarises women's bodily and psychological entanglement with their milk, emphasising both the distasteful implications of this connection and its threatening potential.

The meta-theatrical significance of breast milk's dangers become clear in Jonson's *The Alchemist*, wherein Subtle informs Epicure that one of the substances he claims to be producing 'shows *lac virginis*' (virgin's milk), a phrase which carries alarming theological resonances.¹³⁴ As Sperling explains, devout Catholics had for centuries described themselves as being sustained both metaphorically and literally 'with blood from Christ's wound, milk from Mary's breasts, and similar bodily effluvia by fellow saints', with images of the

¹³¹ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, II. 2. 42 and 50–51.

¹³² Lee, 'The Devil or the Physician', p. 265.

¹³³ Sadler, *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse*, p. 13.

¹³⁴ Jonson, *The Alchemist*, II. 3. 62.

Madonna Lactans even constituting a prominent counter-Reformation trope in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European art.¹³⁵ As such, although Campbell merely glosses ‘*lac virginis*’ as a contemporary term for ‘mercury’, Jonson’s use of this religiously inflected name also serves the purpose of associating alchemy with the Catholic practice of relic worship.¹³⁶ In doing so, Jonson utilises the predominant religious feeling of post-Reformation England to equate alchemy and Catholicism as comparably false, superstitious practices, thereby encouraging audiences to mock Epicure for his belief in the former’s veracity.

However, audiences’ awareness that Subtle does not in fact have a vial of mercury also allows these connotations to infuse that which he does produce; namely, the performance itself. Indeed, since Subtle invokes this substance to facilitate his deception of Epicure, ‘*lac virginis*’ can be interpreted as genuinely involved in Subtle’s theatrical pretence despite its manifest absence from his falsified production of the philosopher’s stone. By presenting Subtle as employing a product coded as a Catholic relic in his performance, Jonson here emphasises rather than undermines the connection many anti-theatricalists identify between theatrical performances and Catholic devotional practices.¹³⁷ This reading is corroborated by Epicure’s earlier claim that the philosopher’s stone is capable of transforming ‘old men’ into ‘stout Marses’ if they take ‘once a week, on a knife’s point, | The quantity of a grain of mustard of it’.¹³⁸ Epicure’s use of the phrase ‘a grain of mustard’ to denote a small quantity of matter here unmistakably echoes Matthew 17. 20, wherein a ‘grain of mustard seed’ is used to represent a miniscule amount of ‘faith’.¹³⁹ Through this allusion, Jonson suggests that Subtle’s performance has literally displaced Epicure’s ‘faith’ from religion onto the manifestly fictitious philosopher’s stone. This substitution of physical for spiritual, material

¹³⁵ Sperling, ‘Introduction’, p. 5; Sperling, ‘Milk and Miracles: Heteroglossia and Dissent in Venetian Religious Art after the Council of Trent’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 51.2 (2021), 285–319 (p. 312).

¹³⁶ Campbell, note to *The Alchemist*, p. 491; Jonson, *The Alchemist*, II. 3. 62.

¹³⁷ John Rainolds, *Th’ Overthrow of Stage-Playes* (Middleburgh: Richard Schilders, 1599), p. 161; Alexander Leighton, *A Short Treatise Against Stage-Playes* (London: Giles Thorp, 1625), p. 10.

¹³⁸ Jonson, *The Alchemist*, II. 1. 59–61.

¹³⁹ Matthew 17. 20.

for immaterial salvation clearly evokes contemporary Reformers' condemnation of what they viewed as the idolatrous materialising of the spiritual inherent in both Catholic worship and theatrical performances.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, rather than refuting the accusations of idolatry levelled at drama by contemporary anti-theatricalists, Jonson's association of performances with theologically charged '*lac virginis*' explicitly accentuates the potential spiritual threat plays pose to their consumers.

Taking a slightly different approach, John Ford also foregrounds both the threatening potential of nurses and their close proximity to playwrights through his portrayal of Putana in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1632). Despite being identified as a 'Tutoress' in the play's list of *dramatis personae*, Putana – whose name translates as 'whore' – is regularly classified as a nurse in current scholarship.¹⁴¹ Indeed, although the term 'Tutoress' seems to denote her function as purely instructive, in a very real sense Putana is presented as a provider of both food and medicine throughout the play, with her advice to Annabella continually being presented in culinary and medical terms. Intriguingly, the veracity of Putana's medical knowledge does not come into question throughout the play. For instance, her understanding of women's reproductive health is demonstrated very clearly when, upon being questioned by Giovanni regarding how she knows Annabella to be pregnant, she confidently cites Annabella's 'qualms and water-pangs', 'changing of colours, queasiness of stomachs', and 'pukings' as evidence.¹⁴² However, throughout the Renaissance certain forms of medical knowledge were believed to pose a moral threat in the hands of women – particularly information relating to reproductive health. So much is evidenced in Sadler's *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse*, wherein sexually immodest remedies are occasionally offered in Latin rather than in English, rendering them strategically inaccessible to the vast

¹⁴⁰ Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions*, sig. C5^v; Anonymous, *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors*, pp. 9 and 28; Leighton, *A Shorte Treatise Against Stage-Playes*, p. 24.

¹⁴¹ John Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore' and Other Plays*, ed. by Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 165–239 (p. 168).

¹⁴² Ford, *'Tis Pity*, III. 3. 11–12.

majority of early modern women.¹⁴³ Indeed, Ford's portrayal of Putana seems to corroborate Sadler's fears, as several times throughout the play she is presented as putting her medical knowledge to immoral use. Such is the case when, after professing her certainty of Annabella's pregnancy, Putana informs Giovanni that if they 'let a Physician see her water' they will be 'undone', with her knowledge enabling her to predict this eventuality and so to take steps to conceal the pregnancy – and, with it, Annabella's incestuous relationship with her brother Giovanni.¹⁴⁴

That Putana's advice is itself both moral and medical in nature becomes apparent when, after analysing Grimaldi's merits as a suitor, Putana advises Annabella not to select him as a husband, bawdily punning that 'not one amongst twenty of your skirmishing Captains, but have some privy maim or other, that mars their standing upright'.¹⁴⁵ Although Putana's diagnosis of these men's 'privy' ailments initially appears to parody genuine medical advice, it can also be interpreted as an attempt to protect Annabella from greensickness, a disease which was believed at the time to afflict sexually inactive young women.¹⁴⁶ Annabella's susceptibility to greensickness is reiterated several times over the course of the play, as when Vasques, upon seeing Annabella fall ill, comforts her father Florio by suggesting that her ailment could simply be 'the maid's sickness', and that if this is the case 'there is no such present remedy, as present Marriage'.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, whilst posing as a physician Richardetto attributes Annabella's illness to 'a fullness in her blood', with Florio's following promise to arrange a marriage for her marking this as another reference to greensickness.¹⁴⁸ However, whilst sex within marriage was viewed as a socially acceptable

¹⁴³ See, for instance, Sadler, *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse*, p. 119.

¹⁴⁴ Ford, *'Tis Pity*, III. 3. 15.

¹⁴⁵ Ford, *'Tis Pity*, I. 2. 76–78.

¹⁴⁶ Bonnie Lander Johnson, 'Blood, Milk, Poison: *Romeo and Juliet*'s Tragedy of "Green" Desire and Corrupted Blood', in *Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400-1700*, ed. by Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), pp. 134–48 (p. 137).

¹⁴⁷ Ford, *'Tis Pity*, III. 2. 77–79.

¹⁴⁸ Ford, *'Tis Pity*, III. 4. 8–11.

means of preventing or curing this illness, Putana offers a considerably less virtuous prescription, telling Annabella that ‘if a young Wench feel the fit upon her, let her take anybody, Father or Brother, all is one’.¹⁴⁹ The word ‘take’ here, as well as holding sexual connotations, also gestures towards the act of taking medicine, an interpretation facilitated by Putana’s medicalisation of sexuality in her description of sexual desires as ‘the fit’.

However, that this advice is medically as well as morally problematic becomes clear when Giovanni instructs Putana to conceal the true source of Annabella’s sickness by attributing it to ‘some ill diet’, a phrase which ironically – if unsurprisingly – concedes that an incestuous relationship was not an appropriate remedy for her condition.¹⁵⁰ The same impression re-emerges later in the play when Giovanni, adhering to his own advice, tells Vasques that Annabella is unwell because she ‘Took too much of the flesh’.¹⁵¹ In response, Vasques – who knows of her pregnancy – exclaims ‘Troth sir and you I think have e’en hit it’.¹⁵² By conflating Giovanni’s body with edible ‘flesh’ in this way, Vasques’s comment extends the already established link between sex and medicine in this play to present Putana’s advice to Annabella as not only morally reprehensible, but also medically unsound, despite her firm knowledge of the causes and cures of greensickness. Subverting the conventional belief in the power of nurses’ milk to shape the morals of its consumers, Ford here presents Putana’s moral advice as carrying medical consequences, thereby presenting instruction not simply as a conceptual parallel for breast milk, but as its exact equivalent. Ford’s portrayal of Putana therefore strengthens the link between playwrights and nurses, implicitly imbuing theatrical performances with the same power as breast milk to influence the physical and moral health of its consumers, whilst specifically foregrounding the negative implications of this fact.

¹⁴⁹ Ford, *Tis Pity*, II. 1. 46–47.

¹⁵⁰ Ford, *Tis Pity*, III. 3. 26.

¹⁵¹ Ford, *Tis Pity*, IV. 3. 238.

¹⁵² Ford, *Tis Pity*, IV. 3. 239.

The dangerously powerful effects of breast milk are also demonstrated plainly in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, wherein the Nurse offers an extended account of Juliet's weaning. In her relation of this tale, the Nurse describes using bitter 'wormwood' to discourage the infant Juliet from breastfeeding, utilising its unpleasant flavour to make Juliet 'fall out wi'th' dug'.¹⁵³ By using this bitter herb to facilitate the necessary process of weaning, the Nurse stages an unpleasant experience for Juliet in order to bring about a positive effect, in a process wherein pleasure is emphatically dissociated from healthfulness. However, it is significant that this succeeds by working with rather than contradicting the infant Juliet's tastes, relying on her willingness to seek pleasure and to avoid displeasure rather than teaching her that sweetness does not always correspond with wholesomeness. That this worldview continues to inform Juliet's later actions becomes clear when, following the Nurse's return from a meeting with Romeo, Juliet insistently addresses her with gustatory epithets, referring to her as 'honey nurse', 'good sweet nurse', and 'Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse'.¹⁵⁴ As the scene progresses, it becomes increasingly apparent that Juliet's cloying repetition reflects her feelings not towards the Nurse but rather towards the news she carries from Romeo, evidenced when Juliet again codes her desires in gustatory language by complaining that the Nurse 'shamest the music of sweet news | By playing it to [her] with so sour a face'.¹⁵⁵ Shakespeare here establishes a conceptual link between the Nurse's milk and Romeo, both being provided by the Nurse and being sought eagerly by the pleasure-oriented Juliet. This notion continues when, upon being advised by the Nurse to forsake Romeo and to marry Paris in accordance with her parents' wishes, Juliet rejects her former 'counsellor', declaring that they 'henceforth shall be twain' in a repetition of their first separation during

¹⁵³ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, I. 3. 32–34.

¹⁵⁴ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 4. 18, 21, and 54.

¹⁵⁵ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 4. 23–24.

Juliet's weaning.¹⁵⁶ Juliet's rejection of the bitter wormwood as a child thereby prefigures her rejection of the Nurse's unpalatable advice as a young woman, both being disregarded in favour of more appetising alternatives.

Bonnie Lander Johnson sees Juliet's adolescent 'desire for bad medicine' in the form of Romeo as resulting directly from her 'early appetitive corruption' in the form of her traumatic weaning.¹⁵⁷ However, whilst Johnson supports this argument by highlighting the ways in which the Nurse's approach to weaning conflicts with early modern advice, this guidance was by no means uniform, and Johnson's evidence that the Nurse weans Juliet too late can easily be challenged by alternative contemporary accounts.¹⁵⁸ I would contend instead that Juliet's hedonistic desire for Romeo is implicitly caused not by the weaning process, but rather by the milk itself. In the Nurse's first appearance onstage, after hearing Juliet describe marriage as 'an honour that [she] dream[s] not of' the Nurse exclaims "'An honour"! Were not I thine only nurse, | I would say thou hadst sucked wisdom from thy teat'.¹⁵⁹ The Nurse here dismisses the conventional Renaissance belief that nurses' moral and intellectual qualities are transmitted via their milk to the infants they feed, instead self-deprecatingly insisting that Juliet's 'wisdom' belongs to her alone. Whilst the Nurse is far from a reliable mouthpiece, her assessment appears to be corroborated by the fact that she here responds only to a partial and misleading extract from Juliet's statement, in which she is actually speaking of her lack of interest in conjugality. This misinterpretation enables Shakespeare to establish a contrast between Juliet's wise modesty in this scene and the bawdy 'wisdom' of the Nurse, again seeming to contest the contemporary belief that character is passed on through breast milk.

¹⁵⁶ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, III. 5. 204–42. Johnson too picks up on this parallel in 'Blood, Milk, Poison', pp. 146–47.

¹⁵⁷ Johnson, 'Blood, Milk, Poison', pp. 137, 136, and 146.

¹⁵⁸ Johnson, 'Blood, Milk, Poison', p. 142; Jones, *The Arte and Science of Preserving Bodie and Soule in Health*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁵⁹ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, I. 3. 68–70.

Nevertheless, this initial impression of Juliet's temperament as having been unaffected by her consumption of the Nurse's milk in infancy is undermined later in the play by her impulsive desire to marry Romeo, which demonstrates precisely the dubious 'wisdom' initially attributed to her by the Nurse – from whom, we may now suspect, she has derived it. This renders Juliet's rejection of the Nurse's verbal advice to marry Paris particularly significant, since it proves this to be incapable of supplanting the pleasure-seeking tendencies formerly transmitted to Juliet in her milk. Of great importance here is the way in which Shakespeare draws attention to the profound effect of breast milk upon its consumers, suggesting that the characteristics it transmits from nurse to infant can remain even when the milk itself is removed and its teachings undermined by later instruction. Though it is of course arguable that it is a good thing that Juliet rejects the Nurse's advice, since a bigamous marriage to Paris would compromise Juliet's moral health despite procuring her physical safety, this does not undermine the implicit suggestion that breast milk can instil illicit and unshakeable desires in its consumers. Given the association between milk and drama in contemporary discourse, this raises the troubling prospect that any unwholesome messages spectators receive from performances may be similarly difficult to supplant with later, healthier instruction.

The meta-theatrical significance of this idea is rendered explicit in *Bartholomew Fair* through Jonson's depiction of Wasp, whom Quarlous describes as serving the function of 'dry nurse' to Cokes.¹⁶⁰ Whilst literally identifying Wasp as a caregiver who does not supply milk – in a pointed jab at Cokes's immaturity, suggesting that he should have outgrown the need for any sort of nurse – this epithet also implicitly signals Wasp's inability to provide adequate educational sustenance for Cokes. This impression is advanced when Wasp himself informs Littlewit that to 'open or read' a text to him is a 'labour in vain', claiming also that

¹⁶⁰ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 5. 43.

he ‘scorn[s] to be saved by [his] book’ and will ‘hang first’ – a reference to the contemporary practice of sparing Latinate criminals the death penalty, indicating his profound antipathy towards scholarly pursuits.¹⁶¹ Jonson thereby implies that Wasp is, like a ‘dry’ wet-nurse, unequipped with the correct material with which to nurture Cokes. Indeed, Wasp describes his role as that of ensuring Cokes’s ‘well-doing’, adapting the more common expression “well-being” to suggest that his influence extends only to Cokes’s actions, not to his character, further indicating his inadequacy as an instructor.¹⁶² However, the term ‘dry nurse’ also carries a third meaning, reflecting Wasp’s own impression of his role as being that of weaning Cokes off the provisions of his former tutors – these provisions being both culinary and, importantly, theatrical in nature. Lamenting the ineptitude of Cokes’s previous teachers, Wasp insists that they have ‘done nothing but run up and down the country with [Cokes] to beg puddings and cake-bread of his tenants, and almost spoil’d him; he has learned nothing but to sing catches’, presenting unwholesome food and popular songs as Cokes’s former fare.¹⁶³ The comparably detrimental influence of these things is evidenced in Wasp’s following assertion that he ‘dare not let [Cokes] walk alone, for fear of learning vile tunes, which he will sing at supper, and in the sermon-times’, with these ‘vile tunes’ usurping the place of proper physical, intellectual, and spiritual sustenance.¹⁶⁴

It is therefore significant that Cokes himself repeatedly views music as intrinsically connected to performances over the course of the play. Such is the case when, for instance, the sight of Leatherhead’s ‘violins’ causes him to desire a ‘masque’ at his wedding, or when upon hearing Nightingale’s song he declares that its maker will be ‘poet to [his] masque’, or indeed when he assigns each of Leatherhead’s puppet-performers a different musical

¹⁶¹ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 4. 5–7; Emily Steiner, ‘Neck Verse’, *New Literary History*, 53.3 (2022), 333–62 (p. 335).

¹⁶² Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 4. 65.

¹⁶³ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 4. 65–68.

¹⁶⁴ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, I. 4. 69–71.

instrument.¹⁶⁵ Jonson therefore suggests that one of Wasp's tasks as Cokes's 'dry nurse' is that of weaning him off performances – or, more specifically, 'masque[s]', spectacular entertainments as much concerned with providing sensory as intellectual stimulation. However, Wasp repeatedly fails to execute this task, with Cokes running through the fair attempting to buy all the cheap food and entertainment he can find – as when he promises to 'buy up' both Leatherhead's puppet stall and Trash's gingerbread basket so that they can furnish his wedding 'masque' and 'banquet', respectively. As well as suggesting that some forms of drama can exert a detrimental influence upon spectators, Jonson thereby also foregrounds the difficulty of weaning the consumers of such performances onto more nutritious fare, warning that the effects of bad plays – like the effects of Juliet's Nurse's corrupt milk – cannot necessarily be reversed.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, Renaissance dramatists continually draw upon and extend recognised parallels between their own role and that of different forms of food provider. However, whilst this comparison provides playwrights with the opportunity to present themselves as fulfilling the positive social role of nourishing, healing, and nurturing those who watch their plays, many contemporary dramatists instead draw explicit attention to its negative implications. By persistently highlighting the ability of cooks, medics, and nurses to cause physical, emotional, political, and spiritual harm, early modern dramatists therefore present themselves, too, as a potential social threat. This raises the obvious question of why they may have wished to take this approach. A potential clue to the answer may lie in the very ambiguity of this comparison, which stresses playwrights' ability to cause harm whilst emphatically not suggesting that they always and invariably do so. By likening their own

¹⁶⁵ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, III. 4. 79–81, III. 5. 92, and v. 3. 118–21.

profession to one which affords its practitioners extensive power to heal and to harm their customers, even whilst presenting food providers in a negative light early modern playwrights concede only that drama is not uncomplicatedly safe, rather than fully corroborating the accusations levelled against performances by anti-theatricalists. In many ways, this constitutes a stronger argument in defence of drama than would a (manifestly false) reactive portrayal of playwrights in an unambiguously positive light. In particular, it delivers playwrights of the burden of proving that they pose no threat to spectators or society by showing that food providers are relied upon to fulfil a vital function despite the potential risks they pose, implicitly ridiculing the notion that plays should be banned simply because they have the capacity to be dangerous.

‘Dishes to Feed the Eye’: Food and Self-Reflexivity in Early Modern Non-Commercial Entertainments

Introduction

So far in this thesis, I have shown both that food frequently operates as a meta-theatrical symbol in early modern commercial drama and its paratexts, and that contemporary playwrights recurrently emphasise its threatening qualities, thereby imbuing it with the power to highlight the risks as well as the benefits entailed by attending playhouse performances. This chapter examines attitudes towards food and performances in the private and otherwise non-commercial drama of early modern England, covering works such as masques, immersive royal entertainments, public spectacles, and plays designed specifically with courtly audiences in mind. Such works are in many respects functionally distinct from plays produced for the public theatres, and, as we will see, a very different relationship between performance and audience exists within non-commercial drama as opposed to its commercial equivalent. Exploring how the authors of these not-for-profit entertainments conceive of their work in conjunction with their treatment of food therefore provides greater insights into the function of the drama-as-food conceit on the public stage by throwing the reasons underlying its prevalence there into sharper relief.

Early Modern Non-Commercial Drama: Functions and Characteristics

Although the line between public and private performances in the early modern period is often indistinct, with courtly plays working their way into the playhouses and vice-versa, there are nevertheless some broad functional and stylistic distinctions between these different forms of performance. Firstly, private theatrical entertainments (and particularly masques) in many cases hold a different relationship to the lived reality of their audiences than do public plays, with elite patrons frequently participating in rather than merely observing these

performances.¹ As Nathaniel Strout explains, this practice results in there being ‘essentially no imaginative gap [...] between the noble fiction and the real nobility performing it’ in such productions, a difference between public and private entertainments which may conceivably have exerted a significant impact upon how the works themselves were viewed and presented by their authors.² Perhaps even more importantly, alongside providing entertainment to their predominantly elite audiences, masques and other forms of private drama were widely recognised as forms of propaganda, serving both to exemplify and to contribute to the maintenance of their recipients’ power.³ As well as frequently being ingrained in the plots of such works, the propagandistic function of private entertainments is also clearly evidenced in the stark differences between how public and private performances are rendered in print in this era. As Nicola Glaubitz explains, the process of producing playbooks more broadly in early modern England occupied ‘a middle ground between the extremes of releasing performance scripts and refashioning plays completely for reading’.⁴ Indeed, although certain aspects of theatrical performances are invariably lost in the transition from stage to page, Glaubitz argues that many of the paratextual elements of early modern printed playbooks (such as stage directions and scenic descriptions) exist for the purpose of ‘supporting readerly visualisation’ of performances.⁵

However, while some printed masques similarly aim to facilitate the imaginative reconstruction of the events they depict, others actively work to hinder readers’ access to the

¹ See Anikó Oroszlán, “‘Actors’ in “Barbaresque Mantels”: The Blackness of the Female Performers in Ben Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness*”, *The AnaChronisT*, 11.1 (2005), 23–37 (p. 26); Katherine Shrieves, ‘Spiritual Alchemy through Embodied Hieroglyphs in Jonson’s *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court*’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 14.3 (2014), 55–82 (p. 66).

² Nathaniel Strout, ‘Jonson’s Jacobean Masques and the Moral Imagination’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 27.2 (1987), 233–47 (p. 246).

³ James M. Smith, ‘Effaced History: Facing the Colonial Contexts of Ben Jonson’s *Irish Masque at Court*’, *ELH*, 65.2 (1998), 297–321 (p. 307).

⁴ Nicola Glaubitz, ‘Playbooks as Imaginary Theatre: Visuality and Description in Early Modern English Drama’, in *Literary Visualities: Visual Descriptions, Readerly Visualisations, Textual Visibilities*, ed. by Ronja Bodola and Guido Isekenmeier (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 21–78 (p. 33). See also Lauren Shohet, *Reading Masques: The English Masque and Public Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵ Glaubitz, ‘Playbooks as Imaginary Theatre’, pp. 29–31.

experiences of the productions' original audiences. Such an approach is evidenced in the textual rendition of Thomas Campion's masque celebrating the marriage of Lord Hay, the title of which tellingly identifies the text as a '*Description* [sic]' of the performance, rather than as merely a record of the spoken text of the masque.⁶ Campion's use of the past-tense throughout this account – as opposed to the conventional present-tense stage directions of printed commercial plays – situates the performance as a bygone event, rather than covertly instructing or envisaging its future reproduction.⁷ Indeed, at times Campion takes more overt measures to obstruct not only the literal but even the imaginative restaging of the masque, evident when, after describing some of its spectacular devices, he abruptly notes its employment of 'many other inventions, the which for brevitie [sic] sake [he] passe[s] by with silence'.⁸ Campion's teasing refusal to supply these additional details despite acknowledging their existence, and his implausible citation of 'brevitie' as his reason for doing so, speaks to his desire to restrict readers' mental access to the performance. Indeed, by providing just enough information to show readers what they have missed rather than eschewing description entirely, Campion does not merely exclude readers from the production but also heightens our consciousness of this exclusion. Jonson adopts a similar approach in his description of *The Haddington Masque* (1608), claiming coyly that 'The attire of the masquers' would 'suffer under any description, after the shew'.⁹

Whilst Jonson and Campion's approach precludes their accounts from explicitly illustrating the 'extensive [...] artistic resources' available to their benefactors in the manner of contemporary European festival books, it nevertheless enables them to serve as 'official

⁶ Thomas Campion, *The Description of a Maske, Presented before the Kinges Majestie at White-Hall, on Twelfth Night* (London: John Brown, 1607), [unnumbered page].

⁷ See, for instance, Campion, *The Description of a Maske*, sig. B3^v.

⁸ Campion, *The Description of a Maske*, sig. B1^r.

⁹ Jonson, *The Haddington Masque*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. by C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), VII, pp. 243–63 (ll. 358–59)

propaganda' in other, subtler ways.¹⁰ So much becomes apparent in Philip Sidney's printed account of *The Lady of May* (1578), wherein readers' experience of the masque is contrasted even more starkly with that of its original viewers. In its performance before the court circle, Elizabeth I herself is invited in the masque's final scene to determine whether the masque's peasant girl should marry the passionate, volatile Therion or the meek, insipid Espilus. Readers are duly informed that she selects Espilus, 'but what words, what reasons she used for it,' Sidney tells us, 'this paper, which carieth so base a name, is not worthy to containe'.¹¹ Sidney's curtailment of the dramatic climax in this way very pointedly denies readers the satisfaction afforded to attendees of the original production, offering a tantalising glimpse of the fare on offer without permitting us to taste it for ourselves. In adopting this approach, Sidney not only highlights and celebrates but also works to maintain his original audiences' privileged social position by ensuring the exclusivity of certain aspects of their experience of the production. Though not all early modern writers of private theatrical entertainments adopt this approach, with some laying out their work almost exactly like printed accounts of public plays, these examples are sufficient to demonstrate that private performances serve a fundamentally different purpose from their public counterparts in Renaissance England, and as such were viewed differently by their producers. This in turn signals the importance of considering instances of meta-theatricality in private entertainments separately from those which appear in public plays.

Fit for Consumption: Theatrical Safety Beyond the Playhouse

Many early modern authors of private drama engage closely with contemporary debates surrounding the safety and value of theatrical productions, with some even hinting at the

¹⁰ Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Early Modern European Festivals: Politics and Performance, Event and Record', in *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance*, ed. by J. R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 15–25 (p. 23).

¹¹ Philip Sidney, *The Lady of May*, in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (London: William Ponsonbie, 1598), pp. 566–76 (p. 576).

potential dangers of attending performances in a similar manner to that which we have already seen in public plays. John Lyly adopts such an approach in his court comedy *Gallathea* (c. 1585), a play which makes extensive reference to the theatrical device of cross-dressing. Cross-dressing was a matter of particular concern to many early modern anti-theatricalists, with Stubbes arguing that to cross-dress for any reason, even in life-or-death situations, was to ‘adulterate the veritie of [one’s] own kinde’, whilst Gosson similarly suggests that ‘to take unto us those garments that are manifest signes of another sexe, is to falsify, forge, and adulterate, contrary to the expresse rule of the worde of God’.¹² In *Gallathea*, in order to avoid being sacrificed as ‘peace offering[s] unto Neptune’, the young women Gallathea and Phillida disguise themselves as boys, remaining in masculine attire for the entirety of the performance.¹³ Over the course of the play, both of these characters obsessively call attention to the distinction between their inward state and outward appearance, privately lamenting that they are neither ‘as [they] seeme to bee’ nor able to ‘safelie bee what [they] seeme not’.¹⁴ However, by allotting these repeated allusions to the allegedly dangerous practice of cross-dressing to what are, in actual fact, simply two boy actors dressed as male shepherds, Lyly initially appears to undermine the concerns of contemporary anti-theatricalists by teasingly alluding to a practice which is not, in these scenes at least, actually occurring onstage.¹⁵ Elsewhere in *Gallathea*, however, Lyly’s treatment of cross-dressing is considerably more disquieting. Another of the play’s major plot-points involves Cupid masquerading as ‘a silly girle’ in order to force Diana’s chaste female companions to fall in love with Gallathea and Phillida.¹⁶ Not only is genuine cross-

¹² Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London: John Kingston 1583), sig. F5^v; Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), sig. C3^v.

¹³ John Lyly, *Gallathea*, in *Sixe Court Comedies* (London: William Stansby, 1632), sigs P1^r–S11^r (sigs P3^v–P5^v and P7^r–P7^v).

¹⁴ Lyly, *Gallathea*, sig. P10^v. See also sigs P10^v–P11^r and Q9^v–Q11^v.

¹⁵ For an example of this technique on the commercial stage, see Lording Barry, *Ram-Alley* (London: G. Eld., 1611), sigs. A2^r and B1^r.

¹⁶ Lyly, *Gallathea*, sig. P12^v.

dressing taking place onstage, then, but it is also employed for the express purpose of promoting what many early modern viewers would have viewed as sexual immorality, with Cupid insisting that there are no ‘thoughts so staied’ but he can make them ‘waving, weake, and wanton’, delighting in the opportunity to ‘confound’ these women’s ‘loves in their owne sexe’.¹⁷ This speech unmistakeably gestures towards early modern anti-theatricalists’ recurrent contention that cross-dressing encourages homosexuality, particularly amongst boy actors such as those performing *Gallathea*.¹⁸ Unlike that of Gallathea and Phillida, Cupid’s cross-dressing therefore does not straightforwardly mock but instead appears to validate anti-theatricalists’ fears of this practice.

Lyly takes this idea further still in the primary plotline concerning Gallathea and Phillida, which centres in large part on the disguised women’s mutual romantic attraction – a fact which deprives the safely masculine presentation of the play’s leading boy actors of some of its reassuring qualities. Although same-sex attraction towards cross-dressed characters appears elsewhere in early modern drama, these infatuations generally end as soon as the disguised characters’ true gender is revealed. Such is the case in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1602), where Olivia claims to fall in love with the disguised Viola and her ‘perfections’ at first sight, yet her professed feelings seemingly vanish as soon as Viola is revealed to be a woman, at which point Olivia begins addressing her as ‘sister’.¹⁹ However, as *Gallathea* progresses it becomes clear that Gallathea and Phillida are in love despite being fully aware of each other’s real gender. Gallathea’s self-interrogating lines ‘what shouldest thou thinke of thy selfe, that lovest one that I feare mee, is as thy selfe is[?]’ strongly suggest that the end of the illusion will not in this case be the end of the romance, and indeed towards

¹⁷ Lyly, *Gallathea*, sig. P12^v.

¹⁸ For the perceived connection between effeminacy and performance, see Alexander Leighton, *A Short Treatise Against Stage-Plaies* (Amsterdam: Giles Thorp, 1625), pp. 17–18, and John Rainolds, *Th’ Overthrow of Stage-Playes* (Middleburg: Richard Schilders, 1599), pp. 17–18 and 34–35.

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), II, pp. 719–45 (I. 5. 286 and V. 1. 323).

the culmination of the play both women claim to be unable to ‘leave these fond [...] affections’.²⁰

Furthermore, Lyly takes pains to ensure that Gallathea and Phillida’s predicament does not come to a reassuringly heteronormative resolution at the conclusion of the play. A potential opportunity for the restoration of early modern sexual conventions arises in the play’s final scene, when Venus offers to transform one of the women into a man.²¹ Christopher Wixson, arguing that *Gallathea* is a fundamentally ‘conservative’ play, contends that order is effectively reinstated in this scene ‘because the two female lovers are “made” heterosexual’ by Venus’s magical intervention.²² However, Wixson’s interpretation does not take into account the fact that this transformation is merely promised to take place after the culmination of the play. This decision lends the performance a more seditious quality, ensuring that early modern social mores are not restored in the course of the action itself.

Lyly’s approach here can once again be productively set against that of Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*, where although Viola too leaves the stage as ‘a man’, Orsino’s concluding remark that she will only assume the role of his ‘mistress’ once she appears in ‘other habits’ firmly delimits her masculine and feminine roles.²³ This contrasts starkly with the conclusion of *Gallathea*, where the fact that ‘neither’ Phillida nor Gallathea ‘shall know whose lot it shall bee’ to be transformed into a man ‘til they come to the Church-doore’ introduces considerably more ambiguity into both women’s gender roles, and into their relationship with each other.²⁴ As Simone Chess succinctly explains, this elusive conclusion ‘cannot undo the broader erotic work of the play’ – if anything, the suggestion that cross-dressing onstage has the potential to become genuine transformation offstage materialises the precise fears of

²⁰ Lyly, *Gallathea*, sigs R10^v and S7^v–S8^f.

²¹ Lyly, *Gallathea*, sig. S8^f.

²² Christopher Wixson, ‘Cross-Dressing and John Lyly’s *Gallathea*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 41.2 (2001), 241–56 (pp. 244 and 252).

²³ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, v. 1. 382–84.

²⁴ Lyly, *Gallathea*, sig. S9^f.

many contemporary anti-theatricalists.²⁵ Lyly's treatment of cross-dressing in *Gallathea* therefore at least partially vindicates anti-theatricalists' concerns that its witnesses may, like Gallathea and Phillida, be 'inflamed with a sweete desire' for those of their own gender.²⁶

More often, however, early modern authors of private entertainments exculpate their own plays – though not drama in general – from blame, with even Lyly himself adopting this approach elsewhere in his corpus. In *Alexander and Campaspe* (1583), for instance, the martially minded Hephestion laments the waning interest in conquest which he detects amongst Alexander's followers, complaining that those who 'were wont to set the order for a march' now deign to 'tread the measures in a daunce'.²⁷ Later in the play we are afforded a direct view of some of these characters, whose distaste for 'gashing, to make foule scarres in faire faces, and crooked maimes in streight legges' presents their personal vanity as impeding their performance of their martial duties.²⁸ The reference to 'streight legges' here is particularly significant, implicitly suggesting that their enjoyment of dancing is not merely associated with but instead the direct cause of what audiences are clearly supposed to see as their effeminacy. It is of great importance to our understanding of these comments that dancing and theatregoing were regularly aligned by critics of both practices in the years immediately preceding Lyly's composition of *Alexander and Campaspe*. The prominent early modern anti-theatricalists Philip Stubbes and John Northbrooke both condemn dancing alongside performances, whilst Christopher Fetherston in his critique of dancing laments that 'Our fasting is tourned into feasting, our mourning into mumming, our praying into playing', his distaste for dancing coexisting with starkly anti-theatrical sentiments.²⁹ In light of this

²⁵ Simone Chess, "'Or whatever you be": Crossdressing, Sex, and Gender Labour in John Lyly's *Gallathea*', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 38.4 (2015), 145–66 (p. 149).

²⁶ Lyly, *Gallathea*, sig. S7^v.

²⁷ John Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, in *Six Court Comedies*, sigs G2^r–L1^v (sig. K1^v).

²⁸ Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. K5^v.

²⁹ Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, sigs M7^v–O3^v; John Northbrooke, *A Treatise wheren Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine Playes or Enterluds with Other Idle Pastimes &c. Commonly Used on the Sabboth Day, are Reproved by the Authoritie of the Word of God and Auntient Writers* (London: H. Bynneman, 1577?); Christopher Fetherston, *A Dialogue agaynst Light, Lewde, and Lascivious Dauncing* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1582), A5^f.

strong conceptual association between performing and dancing, the suggestion that dancing impinges upon matters of statecraft holds uncomfortable implications for the play's courtly spectators, inviting them to question whether their own time could be better spent in more productive ways. However, this critique is tempered by the fact that Hephestion's comments are aimed specifically at those who participate in dances, rather than those who merely observe them. Whilst many courtly entertainments did involve participation from noble and royal performers, *Alexander and Campaspe* does not. The specificity of Hephestion's comment therefore establishes distance between the practices he condemns and the form of recreation being undertaken by the play's courtly viewers.

A similarly muted form of criticism appears in the comments of the dramatised Diogenes, who, after witnessing Perim's dancing and being asked 'doth he well?', responds with the disparaging remark 'The better, the worser'.³⁰ Despite the reported eccentricity of the historical Diogenes, he is regularly presented in early modern drama as deserving of respect rather than ridicule, with his atypical and bluntly expressed views often being presented in a positive light. Such is the case, for instance, in William Wager's *The Triall of Treasure* (pub. 1567), where after offering several anecdotes illustrating 'how little this Philosopher esteemed | the abountaunt possessions of this mundane treasure', the speaker explicitly describes Diogenes as 'wyse', thereby prompting audiences to concur with his perspective.³¹ Nevertheless, although Diogenes' commanding presence and lively wit throughout *Alexander and Campaspe* indicate that his comments upon entertainments should not be dismissed entirely, his opinions are treated as laughably extreme by the play's other characters, who regularly view his cutting diatribes as a source of entertainment in and of themselves.³²

³⁰ Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. K3^r.

³¹ William Wager, *The Triall of Treasure* (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1567), sig. A2^v.

³² Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sigs H3^r and K7^v.

Furthermore, throughout the play Diogenes is also shown to rail against other, far less controversial practices, as when he explains that he ‘threw away [his] dish, to drinke in [his] hand, because it was superfluous’.³³ As striking a figure as Diogenes may be, Lyly is clearly not advising Elizabeth I to emulate him by doing away with her tableware. This being the case, it is difficult to interpret Diogenes’ scorn for performances as an uncomplicated example of theatrical didacticism, with the philosopher’s conduct seeming to satirise anti-theatricalists as much as to censure theatricality. Therefore, whilst the critiques of dancing throughout *Alexander and Campaspe* may have constituted a gentle reminder to Elizabeth I and her court circle not to esteem performances too highly or engage in them to an immoderate degree, by satirising those who condemn drama outright in his portrayal of Diogenes Lyly further dismisses the notion that courtly viewers are at fault for attending this particular play.

Though Lyly does not use culinary imagery in his engagement with contemporary debates regarding theatrical morality in these court masques, John Milton explicitly highlights the comparably ambiguous status of food and performances in his 1634 masque *Comus*. Near the outset of the masque, Milton highlights the fine distinction between healing and harmful consumable substances when he mentions ‘*Bacchus* that first from out the purple Grape | Crush’t the sweet poyson of mis-used Wine’.³⁴ Though Milton’s depiction of wine as a ‘sweet poyson’ here establishes it as dangerous despite, and indeed quite possibly because of, its sensory appeal, his qualification that it is only ‘mis-used Wine’ which poses a threat lends nuance to this claim, implying that its risks are mitigated when it is consumed in moderation. Elsewhere in *Comus*, Milton presents drama as marked by a similar degree of ambiguity. For instance, early in the masque the Attendant Spirit explains that in order to give ‘safe convoy’ to the Lady and her brothers he ‘must put off | These [his] skie robes, spun

³³ Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. H4^v.

³⁴ John Milton, *A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle, 1634*, in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. by Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), pp. 109–71 (ll. 46–47).

out of *Iris* Wooff’ and exchange them for ‘the Weeds and likenes of a Swain’.³⁵ This claim plainly indicates the positive potential of drama by associating performativity with helpful guidance and sound instruction, an impression undoubtedly emphasised in the original production before the Bridgewater family through the casting of their children’s music tutor, Henry Lawes, in the role of the Attendant Spirit.³⁶ However, this positive view of drama is complicated by Milton’s portrayal of Comus, who later in the masque utilises disguise to a far more sinister end. Upon learning of the Lady’s predicament, Comus resolves to ‘appear som harmles Villager’ and thereby to

cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And [his] quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the Damsel to suspicious flight.³⁷

Of particular importance here is the marked similarity between the disguises of Comus and the Attendant Spirit, whose respective assumption of the appearance of a ‘Villager’ and a ‘Swain’ differ vastly in intent and in potential results but not, in any significant capacity, in external appearance. This detail enables Milton to foreground not only drama’s potential to corrupt its spectators but also, even more disconcertingly, the difficulty of determining safe from dangerous performances using sensory information alone. Milton thereby draws attention to the comparably ambiguous status of wine and theatricality, with the Spirit and Comus’s parallel performances foregrounding the ability of drama both to assist and to maliciously deceive its consumers.

However, rather than leaving this ambiguity in place, throughout *Comus* Milton also draws attention to the ways in which drama’s healthfulness can be ensured. In particular, Milton suggests that safe performances can reliably be distinguished from their morally

³⁵ Milton, *Mask*, ll. 81; 82–84.

³⁶ Flannagan, *The Riverside Milton*, p. 109.

³⁷ Milton, *Mask*, ll. 166 and 156–59.

threatening counterparts when greater focus is given to their auditory rather than their visual content. Though sight and hearing were conventionally considered superior to taste, smell, and touch in early modern sensory hierarchies, scholars such as Simon Smith, Jacqueline Watson, and Amy Kenny have noted that ‘early modern England’ constitutes ‘a cultural context in which hierarchies of the senses were regularly challenged’.³⁸ One of the most prominent manifestations of this debate regarded whether vision or audition was the superior sense. In keeping with the classical privileging of vision, some early modern dramatists present visual information as more reliable than its auditory equivalent.³⁹ Such is the case in Lyly’s *Sapho and Phao* (1583), wherein Sybilla criticises ‘simple women, that are brought rather to beleieve what their eares heare of flattering men, then what their eyes see in true glasses’.⁴⁰ Lyly here frames the distinction between sight and hearing as the difference between first- and second-hand experience, with the ‘eares’ admitting untruths which can be uncovered through the critical employment of the ‘eyes’. Audition was also considered by some early modern writers to be a more dangerous activity than vision; Jennifer Rae McDermott notes a contemporary tendency amongst both medics and moralists to see the ear as ‘a threateningly un-closable entrance into the body’s core’.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Lyly’s estimation of vision over audition was not the prevailing view in this period, not least because of Reformed theologians’ ardent endorsement of audition above the other senses – through which they aimed to replace medieval Catholicism’s multi-sensory approach to worship with

³⁸ Simon Smith, Jacqueline Watson, and Amy Kenny, ‘Introduction’, in *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558–1660*, ed. by Simon Smith, Jacqueline Watson, and Amy Kenny (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 1–16 (p. 6). For a theatricalised contest between the senses demonstrating this hierarchy – and in which sight is presented as the pre-eminent sense – see Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua* (London: G. Eld, 1607), particularly the judgement scene in sigs I3^r–I4^r.

³⁹ Jackie Watson, “‘Dove-like Looks’ and ‘Serpents Eyes’: Staging Visual Clues in Early Modern Aspiration”, in *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558–1660*, ed. by Simon Smith, Jacqueline Watson, and Amy Kenny (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 39–40.

⁴⁰ John Lyly, *Sapho and Phao*, in *Six Court Comedies*, sigs L2^r–O12^r (sig. M10^v).

⁴¹ Jennifer Rae McDermott, “‘The Melodie of Heaven’: Sermonizing the Open Ear in Early Modern England”, in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 177–97 (p. 182). See also Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 124–29.

an attention to the spoken word alone.⁴² We have already seen this view exemplified on the commercial stage in the paratexts to Thomas Heywood's *The Brazen Age* (pub. 1613) and *The Silver Age* (pub. 1613), which respectively denigrate 'sight' in favour of 'The understanding eare' and implicitly oppose 'eyes' and 'judging wits'.⁴³ A striking example of this approach in non-commercial drama appears in Sidney's *The Lady of May*, where after making a brief verbal appeal to the Queen to assist with her daughter's betrothal, the '*honest mans wife of the countrey*' feels obliged to '[leave] the supplication with her Majestie' in written form.⁴⁴ This woman then goes on to claim that she takes this approach because 'our men say [...] the sight of [the Queen] is infectious', an explanation which associates a belief in the potency of visual information with a rustic form of superstition which audiences are clearly intended to interpret as comical.⁴⁵

Although Milton also recognises the vulnerability of ears and their susceptibility to deceptive influences in *Comus*, his portrayal of the senses is heavily informed by Reformed principles. So much becomes evident in Milton's depiction of the play's two brothers, who despite their evident virtue are lost as a result of their undue estimation of visual above auditory information. Upon first entering the stage, the Elder Brother commands the 'faint stars' to 'Unmuffle' to help them to find their way out of the woods, with his brother only later adding

Or if our eyes

Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear

The folded flocks pen'd in their watled cotes.⁴⁶

⁴² McDermott, "The Melodie of Heaven", p. 178.

⁴³ Thomas Heywood, *The Brazen Age* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613), sig. L3^r; Thomas Heywood, *The Silver Age* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613), sig. B1^r.

⁴⁴ Sidney, *The Lady of May*, p. 570.

⁴⁵ Sidney, *The Lady of May*, p. 570.

⁴⁶ Milton, *Mask*, ll. 331 and 342–44. Note that the auditory sense of the term 'unmuffle' does not emerge until the eighteenth century; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "unmuffle (v.), sense 2", September 2023 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2779330277>> [last accessed 9 April 2024].

By attributing the brothers' directionless wandering to their primary reliance upon visual information, Milton strongly suggests that their approach to sensory information is fundamentally flawed. This impression is solidified in Milton's depiction of their sister, the Lady, who from her first appearance onstage is portrayed as a proponent of the Reformed privileging of audition above the other senses, evidenced when she reasons

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now, me thought it was the sound
Of Riot, and ill manag'd Merriment.⁴⁷

Whilst the Lady's reliance upon audition leads her into the dangerous territory of Comus's court, a fact which encourages audiences to be wary of enticing sensory information in general, it nevertheless prevents her from being deceived by Comus's disguise by enabling her to recognise the 'Riot, and ill manag'd Merriment' of his court for what it is.

This idea is expressed more explicitly later in the masque, when the Lady argues that Comus 'Would think to charm [her] judgement, as [her] eyes' through his verbal arguments, 'Obtruding false rules pranckt in reasons garb'.⁴⁸ The Lady here contrasts the excessive credulity of the 'eyes' with the rational scepticism of the ears, with audition here being portrayed as synonymous with judgement just as it is in the prologue to *The Silver Age*. Moreover, through the concurrent association of Comus's falsehoods with theatricality through their description as being 'pranckt in reasons garb' Milton implies that unprofitable performances can similarly be unmasked by attentive listeners. Milton returns to this theme once again in the Attendant Spirit's closing speech, wherein auditors are enjoined to 'List [...], if [their] ears be true' – an instruction which firmly presents audition as the primary means through which performances should be assessed.⁴⁹ Here, the Attendant Spirit's conditional 'if' could be seen as raising the disconcerting suggestion that even *Comus's* elite

⁴⁷ Milton, *Mask*, ll. 170–72.

⁴⁸ Milton, *Mask*, ll. 758–59.

⁴⁹ Milton, *Mask*, l. 997.

auditors are not exempt from taking this production's meaning amiss. However, this impression is negated through the fact that the Lady – who, as the daughter of the Earl of Bridgewater for whom the masque was presented, can be interpreted as a stand-in for its viewers – has already proven her own and, implicitly, her relatives' ears to be 'true' by successfully recognising and rejecting the sensual temptations offered by Comus. Therefore, although throughout *Comus* Milton foregrounds the negative potential inherent in dramatic performances, he also suggests that plays, like wine, are only dangerous when they are 'mis-used', and that the risks they pose can be eliminated through their advised, judicious consumption. As well as using *Comus* itself to present the 'ears' of its auditors as 'true' – and, therefore, as able to discern safe from dangerous material – Milton thereby further neutralises the threatening potential of his masque by prompting its auditors to approach it from a Reformed perspective, attending to its plot, language, and messages as opposed to its stagecraft. In doing so, Milton evidences his commitment to, and belief in, the possibility of mitigating any threat his masque poses to its audience, even whilst highlighting the potential risks of attending theatrical productions more broadly.

Of course, Milton's suggestion in *Comus* that the safety of performances depends on the judgemental acuity and moral character of their recipients holds classist connotations, with these qualities being viewed by many at the time as pertaining only to the social elite. This is certainly the impression created in Mulcaster's *Passage* (1559), wherein a stark distinction is drawn between the form of spectatorship practiced by the Queen and that demonstrated by the general public. As Mulcaster explains, by the time Elizabeth I reached the first pageant

the noyse was greate by reason of the prease of people, so that [Elizabeth] coulde skarce heare the childe whyche did enterprete the said pageaunt, and her chariot was

passed so farre forward that she could not well view the personages representing the kynges and Queenes abovenamed.⁵⁰

The ‘greate’ noise produced by the crowd here indicates their collective disinterest in hearing the verbal exposition of the pageants, despite the fact that many of them would have been unable to read the written descriptions which accompanied the displays.⁵¹ Mulcaster thereby presents the public as engaging with the procession on a sensory but not an intellectual level, an approach which is set in stark contrast to the calm, ‘attentive’ mode of spectatorship demonstrated by the Queen herself, which is impeded by the surrounding commotion.⁵² Regal engagement with spectacular entertainments is thereby presented in Mulcaster’s *Passage* as both more civilised and more intellectually engaged than that of the commonality, firmly indicating the former’s superiority to baser forms of theatrical consumption such as that which may well have taken place in early modern playhouses.

That it is the nature of a production’s viewers rather than its dramatic content which alters its perceived relationship to food in Renaissance England is evidenced very clearly in the paratextual material accompanying Lyly’s *Sapho and Phao*, wherein the public prologue employs gustatory language in a markedly different way to its courtly counterpart. In ‘The Prologue at the black Friars’, the speaker observes that ‘Where the Bee can suck no honey, shee leaveth her stinge behind’, before going on to express concern that ‘it is like to fare so with us, that seeing you cannot draw from our labours sweet content, you leave behind you a sowre mislike’.⁵³ Despite likening the following performance to a flower, the prologist’s language here is largely gustatory as opposed to olfactory in nature, likening the play’s profitable content to ‘honey’ and describing its ‘sweet’ flavour whilst identifying critical responses to it as ‘sowre’. This paratext therefore makes use of what Swann defines as ‘the

⁵⁰ Richard Mulcaster, *The Passage of Our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth* (London: Richard Tottill, 1558), sig. B1^v.

⁵¹ Mulcaster, *Passage*, sig. A3^v.

⁵² Mulcaster, *Passage*, sig. C1^v.

⁵³ Lyly, *Sapho and Phao*, sig. L3^r.

bee trope', a 'frequently reproduced' metaphor throughout the period wherein elite readers – or in this case auditors – are likened to bees for their ability to 'use their sense of taste to select, and subsequently digest, the flowers of rhetoric'.⁵⁴ The speaker's arrogant suggestion that those who dislike the play simply 'cannot draw from our labours sweet content' therefore affords no weight to the validity of spectators' individual tastes, instead disparagingly identifying those who do not approve of the performance both as inept consumers who are incapable of extracting its valuable nectar, and as the true source of any 'sowre' taste they detect.

Unsurprisingly, this portrait of the general public's viewing experience contrasts starkly with the image of royal consumption generated in 'The Prologue to the Court', wherein the speaker states that

The *Arabians* being stuffed with perfumes, burn Hemlocke, a ranke poyson: and in *Hybla* being cloid with honie, they account it daintie to feed on wax. Your Highnesse eyes whom variety hath fild with faire showes, and whose eares pleasure hath possessed with rare sounds, will (we trust) at this time resemble the Princely Eagle, who fearing to surfeit on spices, stoopeth to bite on Worme-wood.⁵⁵

Although culinary terminology is also prominent in this prologue, it serves a completely opposing function, with the speaker aligning the following play – the same production presented to the Blackfriars audience – with dangerous and unappetising 'Hemlocke' and 'Worme-wood' rather than with the 'honie' and 'spices' on which the Queen is usually presumed to subsist. Furthermore, it is Elizabeth I's 'eyes' and 'eares' which are enjoined to 'stoupeth to bite' on the unpalatable material presented to them, a synaesthetic image which further distances regal consumption of performances from the base process of food consumption. Conversely, no mention is made of which sense playhouse audiences must use

⁵⁴ Elizabeth L. Swann, *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 42 and 70.

⁵⁵ Lyly, *Sapho and Phao*, sig. L4^r.

to ignobly ‘suck’ beneficial material from the performance. Whilst both prologues therefore conceptualise plays in gustatory terms, public audiences’ engagement with the play is imagined in terms of the risky process of literal food consumption, whereas courtly audiences’ dignified sampling of the performance is instead framed in more symbolic terms. This speaks to their author’s belief in an essential distinction between the forms of spectatorship taking place in private and public theatrical settings, wherein courtly audiences are shown to interact with plays in a controlled, self-conscious manner which is considerably safer than the allegedly base, animalistic consumption of plays by the general public.

The notion of food as disconnected from elite forms of entertainment is also present in Gascoigne’s *The Princely Pleasures* (1576), wherein divine (and so, implicitly, ideal) revelry is described as involving, among other things, ‘rejoysing and mirth, singing, daunsing, melody and harmony, amiable regards, plentiful rewards, tokens of love, and great good-wil [sic]’.⁵⁶ Although this celebration is described a few lines later as a ‘feast’, this is presented as the ‘greatest [...] that ever Eye sawe, or Eare heard tell of’, associating it primarily with the esteemed distal senses rather than with base, carnal gustation.⁵⁷ Indeed, food itself is notably absent from this account, with comestibles being implicitly beneath the divine celebrants – who are, of course, stand-ins for the entertainment’s royal viewers, both being portrayed as attended-upon by the present narrator Sylvanus.

An even more forceful iteration of this point arises in Lyly’s *Alexander and Campaspe*, wherein food consumption emerges as a counterpoint to, rather than a parallel for, dramatic spectatorship. The play’s subplot follows the exploits of Manes, Granichus, and Psyllus, pages to the philosophers Diogenes, Plato, and Apelles, respectively, whose preoccupation with food is set in stark contrast to their masters’ preference for intellectual and artistic pursuits. Psyllus, for instance, insists that ‘when [he] would eat meate’, his master

⁵⁶ Gascoigne, *The Princely Pleasures*, in *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, ed. by John W. Cunliffe, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp. 91–132 (p. 122).

⁵⁷ Gascoigne, *The Princely Pleasures*, p. 122.

Apelles, an artist, points only to a painted ‘banquet’, ‘where are many dishes to feed the eye, but not to fill the gut’, claiming that it is possible and indeed easy to ‘fat by colours’.⁵⁸ In response, Manes insists that if he himself could ‘see but a Cookes shop painted’, he would ‘make [his] eyes fatte as butter’, but that instead his master Diogenes fills him only with moral ‘sentences’ decrying ‘abstinence’.⁵⁹ Though Granichus claims to dine better than his companions, describing Plato as ‘a king in his parlour for the body’, he too sets Plato’s artistic values in opposition to his own culinary concerns, noting that when Plato ‘commendeth one that is an excellent Musition’, in response he ‘clap[s] another on the shoulder and say[s], this is a passing good Cooke’.⁶⁰ All three of these pages are therefore shown to share in Manes’ desire for ‘pleasure that goes in at the mouth, not the eare’, preferring to ‘fill [their] guts, than [their] braines’.⁶¹ As such, this scene not only generates distance between food and art, music, and moral instruction – the things comprising the play itself – but also establishes a hierarchical relationship between them, positioning gastronomic concerns as the remit of crude servants whilst intellectual and aesthetic pursuits are reserved for the implicitly more refined tastes of the social elite. To be sure, the philosophers do not emerge from this scene entirely unscathed, with Apelles’ propagation of manifestly false myths such as that of ‘birdes that have beene fatted by painted grapes in winter’ clearly ridiculing those who disregard the need for material food entirely.⁶² Nevertheless, the painting itself does not come under attack at this point, with this and the performance it symbolises being confirmed as worthy of the monarch’s attention though their distance from the base, materialistic concerns of those beyond this elite social circle.

Of particular significance is the fact that Jonson, despite so avidly perpetuating the notion of food as a parallel for drama in his public plays, also frequently distances elite

⁵⁸ Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. G10^v.

⁵⁹ Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. G11^r.

⁶⁰ Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. G10^r.

⁶¹ Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. G10^r.

⁶² Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe*, sig. G10^v.

theatrical spectatorship from food consumption in his masques. Such is the case in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618), which opens with Comus's attendants offering a mock-encomium of the 'bouncing belly' for its role in inspiring the creation of new dishes and cooking implements.⁶³ Although the notion of hunger as prompting new discoveries initially appears to subversively praise carnal appetites for their role in driving cultural advancement, the coarse language in which this claim is framed clearly indicates its parodic nature, allowing it to affirm rather than challenge the distinction between 'eating & drincking, untill thou dost nod' and worthier intellectual pursuits.⁶⁴ This impression is furthered not only through the uncivil '*wilde Musique*' which accompanies Comus and his entourage, but also through the condemnation of these characters by Hercules.⁶⁵ Throughout the masque, Hercules is presented in an unequivocally favourable light, being described variously as a 'Great frend, and servant of the good', an 'active frend of *Vertue*', and as being 'constant to goodnes [sic]'.⁶⁶ Moreover, Hercules is also clearly established as a theatricalised manifestation of King James I/VI through his assumption of a '*Crowne*' towards the end of the masque, a detail which encourages royal spectators to identify with him.⁶⁷ It is therefore telling that he takes a wholly negative view of Comus's gluttony, dehumanising Comus and his company in his evocative descriptions of them as 'Sponges, & not men' and as 'Burdens, & shames of nature' who have 'never liv'd', 'but in the sty | of vice have wallow'd'.⁶⁸ Comus's gastronomic revelry is therefore presented as starkly opposed to the courtly values reflected in Hercules, implicitly distancing the carnal consumption of which he is a proponent from the elite audience's engagement with the masque itself. Indeed, this impression is solidified in Comus's own speech when he critiques the 'ballad' which has been presented to

⁶³ Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, in *Ben Jonson*, VII, pp. 473–94 (l. 13).

⁶⁴ Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, l. 35.

⁶⁵ Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, ll. 4–5.

⁶⁶ Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, ll. 120, 168, and 183.

⁶⁷ Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, l. 172.

⁶⁸ Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, ll. 94 and 102–03.

him in praise of the stomach, claiming that ‘it is not well’ because ‘the Belly is not edified by it’ owing to the fact that it does not have any ‘eares’.⁶⁹ Comus here disparages all entertainments which appeal to the higher senses – including, of course, Jonson’s masque itself – as inferior to the carnal pleasures of immoderate dining. By assigning this opinion to the reviled Comus, Jonson not only places culinary and sensory consumption in opposition, but also firmly attests to the latter’s superiority.

Jonson creates a similar impression in *The Irish Masque at Court* (1613), which opens with the incursion of four servants of Irish political delegates into the English court – an influx which is symbolically conceptualised as an intrusion of the culinary into the realm of the theatrical. So much is apparent in Dennise’s opening claim that he serves James’s ‘owne cashtermonger’, a job that requires him to ‘cry peep’sh, and pomwater’sh’ in the King’s service.⁷⁰ The comic effect of this introduction relies on the court’s recognition of a contrast between the base profession of apple-selling and the noble role of serving the King in which they themselves are occupied. Moreover, in light of contemporary suspicions regarding the practices of Irish food-sellers (discussed more extensively in Chapter Five above), Dennise might also have been viewed as a particularly threatening figure, introducing danger and incivility into the very heart of the English court. This idea is certainly present when Dennise vows that if he speaks his companions may ‘cram [his] mout phit shamrokes and butter, and vayter creshes in stead of pearsh and peepsh’, a comment which connects the heavily accented, non-standard speech of these servants with uncivil, unnatural forms of consumption. The servants are finally interrupted shortly after their dance to ‘*rude musique*’ by ‘*a civill gentleman of the nation, who brings in a Bard*’, and who instructs the servants to ‘let [their] courser manners seeke some place, | Fit for [their] wildnesse’.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, ll. 46–50.

⁷⁰ Jonson, *The Irish Masque at Court*, in *Ben Jonson*, VII, pp. 397–406 (ll. 4–5).

⁷¹ Jonson, *The Irish Masque*, ll. 141, 151–52, and 153.

At this point, the language of the masque undergoes a marked shift, becoming highly sensory as opposed to culinary in nature. For instance, the Gentleman goes on to claim that if Ireland would only turn its ‘eare’ from the warlike ‘drum’ to the ‘musique of [the King’s] peace’, then ‘Shee need not with the spheares change harmony’, framing James’s cultivating influence in explicitly sensory terms.⁷² Indeed, the only culinary reference which occurs after the departure of the Irish servants comes in the Gentleman’s assertion that the King would ‘plant’ ‘all the fruits of blessing’ in Ireland if he were given the opportunity to do so.⁷³ Explicitly symbolic rather than literal, this notion of the King as benevolently and skilfully cultivating these ‘fruits of blessing’ has little in common with the menial occupation of fruit-selling, presenting his role as both distinct from and superior to the servile work undertaken by Dennise. Whilst Thomas Rist rightly notes that ‘The assertion of civility’ in this masque is effected ‘by the movement from servant to gentleman; prose to verse; dialect to “standard” English; and, of course, antimasque to masque’, it is therefore also produced through the movement from food to music; from the culinary to the sensory.⁷⁴ As such, it is highly significant that this is also the point at which the masque becomes most explicitly meta-theatrical, with the Bard asserting in his following song that auditors will ‘feel [them] selves chang’d by and by’ and become ‘new-borne creatures’ simply from standing in the King’s sight.⁷⁵ This claim duly materialises in the action of the masque, with the performers dropping their ‘mantles’ to ‘discover their masquing apparell’.⁷⁶ This transformation is explicitly framed in positive terms in the Bard’s final verse, wherein he claims that just as ‘ice’ is thawed by the ‘sunne’, so ‘all get vigour, youth, and spright, | That are but look’d on

⁷² Jonson, *The Irish Masque*, ll. 158–60.

⁷³ Jonson, *The Irish Masque*, l. 165.

⁷⁴ Thomas Rist, ‘Religious Politics in Ben Jonson’s *The Irish Masque*’, *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 55.1 (1999), 27–34 (p. 28).

⁷⁵ Jonson, *The Irish Masque*, ll. 159 and 177–78.

⁷⁶ Jonson, *The Irish Masque*, ll. 183–84.

by [the King's] light'.⁷⁷ A direct opposition is therefore established in *The Irish Masque* between the culinary and the theatrical, with Dennise's food-inflected language symbolically hindering the masque's onset, and being cast aside and supplanted by orderly, civilised performativity at the culmination of the anti-masque. Jonson, like Lyly, thereby establishes food as an anti- rather than a meta-theatrical symbol in these masques, using it to represent a form of rusticity and base carnality from which the entertainments themselves are explicitly distanced.

A comparable impression emerges in Jonson's unperformed masque *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* (1624), a performance which begins with a discussion between a Poet and a Cooke, throughout which the latter attempts to defend the assertion that 'a good *Poet* differs nothing at all from a *Master-Cooke*'.⁷⁸ As well as highlighting the tendency for food and drama to occupy the same physical spaces by commenting on the use of the 'banqueting-house' as a setting for the Poet's production, the Cooke calls attention to the similar skills involved in their respective jobs, contending that whilst it is his task 'to know how to please the palates of the ghests [sic]', so it is the Poet's 'to know the palate of the times'.⁷⁹ Although Don K. Hendrick contends that the Cooke is successful in his argumentation, there are some indications that Jonson does not fully endorse the Cooke's assertions.⁸⁰ So much is evidenced in the Cooke's protestation that a skilled cook is simultaneously 'an *Architect*, an *Inginer*, | A *Souldier*, a *Physitian*, a *Philosopher*', and 'A generall *Mathematician*', a comically hyperbolic assertion which calls his concurrent claim to the title of '*Poet*' sharply into question.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Jonson, *The Irish Masque*, ll. 186–94.

⁷⁸ Jonson, *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion*, in *Ben Jonson*, vii, pp. 675–700 (ll. 41–42).

⁷⁹ Jonson, *Neptune's Triumph*, ll. 24–25 and 48–50.

⁸⁰ Don K. Hendrick, 'Cooking for the Anthropophagi: Jonson and His Audience', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 17.2 (1977), 233–45 (p. 244).

⁸¹ Jonson, *Neptune's Triumph*, ll. 104–06 and 228.

However, neither does Jonson present the roles of the Poet and the Cooke as entirely dissimilar, with the Cooke later being afforded creative control over the performance's 'Antimasque'.⁸² This is not, in many respects, a particularly flattering role; though the Cooke himself claims to 'hearken after' antimasques, the Poet describes them as 'Meere *By-workes*, and at best *Out-landish* nothings', clearly identifying their inferiority to masques themselves.⁸³ Moreover, Christopher Haile draws attention to the way in which the Cooke's approach to dramatic composition exposes the fact that he desires not to 'improve the understanding and virtue of the audience' but instead only 'to flatter their particular tastes', highlighting also the Poet's covert mockery of this approach over the course of their discussion.⁸⁴ Therefore, whilst Jonson does acknowledge the existence of similarities between cookery and theatrical composition, he suggests that this correspondence only holds for what he portrays as the unedifying and insubstantial elements of drama, thereby likening these, but not their artistically elite counterparts, to food. In doing so, Jonson implies that the main content of his own masque – the 'worthy part', which his audiences have presumably come to see – is not like food at all.⁸⁵ There is, of course, an ironic dimension to this claim; after all, if Jonson genuinely believed that the antimasque would not be of interest to his spectators, he would not have incorporated it into *Neptune's Triumph* in the first place. Nonetheless, the fact still remains that elite, high-quality performances are here actively distanced from – and presented as superior to – food, which is associated with those performances that satisfy only the baser appetites of their consumers. This in turn suggests that Jonson's frequent employment of the drama-as-food conceit in his public plays is done in full knowledge of the negative implications it holds for performances.

⁸² Jonson, *Neptune's Triumph*, l. 230.

⁸³ Jonson, *Neptune's Triumph*, ll. 214 and 223.

⁸⁴ Christopher Haile, "'Pawn! Sufficiently holy but unmeasurably politic": Middleton's *A Game at Chess* and the Political Significance of Shakespeare's *First Folio*', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 8.1 (2019), 191–244 (pp. 201–02).

⁸⁵ Jonson, *Neptune's Triumph*, l. 221.

Conclusion

Clearly, then, the authors of non-commercial early modern entertainments are both aware of and willing to engage with contemporary anti-theatrical discourses. However, whilst some do adopt a similar approach to that of the authors of public plays by hinting at the potential risks to which their audiences are presently exposed, most instead attempt to exculpate private productions – though not, it must be noted, theatrical performances more broadly – from the accusations levelled at drama by its contemporary critics. At the same time, some of the most prolific of these dramatists adopt a very different approach to food than that which appears so frequently on the public stage, presenting it not as a parallel for but instead as a counterpoint to their work. It is also clear that this is more than a coincidental result of the diverging interests of two distinct sets of playwrights. Even Jonson, an avid proponent of the drama-as-food metaphor in his public plays, establishes a firm distinction between food and his court masques, whilst the author of *Sapho and Phao*'s prologues – likely Lyly himself – utilises culinary and sensory language very differently when addressing the court compared to the audience at Blackfriars. Of course, it is difficult to determine from this alone whether these playwrights genuinely believed private performances to be safer than their public counterparts, or instead simply considered it politically inexpedient to emphasise the dangers of theatrical spectatorship to their elite audiences. Nevertheless, their differing approaches to material food and its consumption evidence a contemporary awareness that the conventional comparison between plays and food carries negative implications for performances – one which is extant even amongst playwrights who make extensive use of this parallel in their public plays. This suggests that the drama-as-food conceit in the playhouse drama of early modern England is employed not despite but because of these negative connotations, being used to foreground the potential risks of attending theatrical performances.

Health or Safety: Experiential Openness in Early Modern Drama

Introduction

As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, not only do early modern playwrights frequently use food as a parallel for performances, but they often do so in a manner which acknowledges the risks plays may pose to their spectators rather than focusing exclusively on the benefits they offer. In this chapter, I consider one possible reason why so many contemporary dramatists may have taken this approach, linking their admission that theatrical spectatorship is a potentially dangerous practice to early modern views of experiential openness more broadly. As demonstrated in the influential studies of Ken Albala, Gail Kern Paster, Michael C. Schoenfeldt, and James Kuzner, during the early modern period the boundary between individuals' bodies and minds, on one hand, and the environments in which they lived, on the other, was viewed as particularly porous.¹ In this model of selfhood characterised by 'dynamic reciprocities between self and environment', external influences (whether in the form of material substances such as food, drink, and air, or of sensory phenomena such as sights, sounds, and tastes) do not merely cross but instead challenge and reconstitute bodily boundaries, merging with and altering the self rather than straightforwardly sustaining or destroying it.² Interacting with the world thereby constitutes a perilous endeavour during this period, putting the self at risk of change, fragmentation, and even dissolution. Though many Renaissance playwrights therefore stress the importance of guarding the body against external influences where possible, they also regularly present attending performances as necessitating an extensive degree of sensory and emotional openness. Whilst this initially appears to suggest simply that theatrical spectatorship is a

¹ Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 15, 50, and 115–62; Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 18–19 and 23; Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 11–12; James Kuzner, *Open Subjects: English Renaissance Republicans, Modern Selfhoods, and the Virtues of Vulnerability* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 3–4.

² Paster, *Humoring the Body*, p. 14.

potentially dangerous pastime, such an approach gains additional nuance in light of the early modern conception of health as dependent on a continuous process of engagement with the world, and of identity as dialogically produced rather than self-contained – ideas with which some Renaissance dramatists interact explicitly in their plays.³ Viewed from this perspective, bodily, sensory, and affective openness are essential to maintaining individuals' health even despite the concurrent threat they pose, with theatrical spectatorship, like food consumption, serving a beneficial purpose not merely in spite of, but to some extent owing to, its potential dangers.

As noted in Chapters One and Four, statistical analysis exposes the first decade of the seventeenth century as a significant period for the purposes of this investigation. In the years 1600–1609, an incongruous increase in the ratio of paratexts to printed plays – suggestive of a particularly keen interest in theorising the nature and function of performances – coincides with an increase in the relative frequency of culinary keywords appearing in drama, which is not mirrored in contemporary prose, poetry, or medical and culinary literature. Given the apparent importance of this decade to determining the nature and function of the drama-as-food parallel in contemporary plays, my discussion throughout this chapter focuses exclusively on texts published during this ten-year period, concentrating on the work of the popular and prolific authors Shakespeare, Jonson, and Thomas Heywood.

The Dangers of Sensory and Affective Openness

Throughout this thesis, considerable attention has already been drawn to food's ambivalent role in the maintenance of its consumers' health. This idea has largely been expressed in binary terms, with fresh, clean foodstuffs nourishing their consumers whilst rotten or contaminated foods may sicken or even kill those who ingest them. Though this view of some

³ Paster, pp. 21–22; See also Kuzner, *Open Subjects*.

foodstuffs as inherently safe or dangerous did exist in the early modern period, it was supplemented by another, more nuanced view of individual foodstuffs as holding both harmful and healing potential. In Galenic humoralism, the value of particular foods was not seen as purely inherent but rather was believed to be determined, at least in part, by the interaction between foods and their consumers after the moment of ingestion. As Albala explains, in the Galenic medical system maintaining good health necessitated achieving a ‘balance of hot or cold and moist or dry properties’, these being qualities thought to inhere both within foods and within human bodies.⁴ In this ‘allopathic system’, an excess of one particular quality could be tempered by its opposite, with hot foodstuffs being thought to neutralise bodily coldness, moist foodstuffs to counteract excessive dryness, and so on.⁵ As a result, whether or not a particular comestible was safe or dangerous was thought to depend not only upon its own qualities, but also upon those of its consumer. In this system, even foods considered to have extreme qualities were believed to be safe and even beneficial when consumed by the right person under the right circumstances. For instance, foodstuffs designated as ‘hot’ (such as garlic and onions, both of which are classified as hot in the ‘fourth’ or highest degree by the contemporary dietary author Henry Butts) were believed to be very dangerous for constitutionally hot consumers, increasing their internal heat and so rendering their natural humoral imbalance more extreme.⁶ However, these same foods were recommended to those with cold dispositions for their ability to temper their natural coldness and bring their internal humours closer to an ideal (yet often practically unattainable) state of perfect balance. In the absence of corruption or external contaminants, early modern food was thereby viewed as value-neutral, with its nutritional worth being dialogically determined rather than inherent.

⁴ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p. 48.

⁵ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p. 49.

⁶ Henry Butts, *Dyets Dry Dinner* (London: Thomas Creede, 1599), sigs H4^v and H5^v.

Significantly, many contemporary playwrights present linguistic and gestural signs as working in a similar way, calling attention to the extensive role recipients play in constructing their meaning – sometimes with profound implications for their safety. Shakespeare foregrounds recipients’ role in shaping linguistic meaning several times throughout *Hamlet* (c. 1601), as when Claudius, responding to Hamlet’s distortion of his enquiry into how he ‘fares’ emotionally into a question about how he eats, complains that the ‘words’ Hamlet has responded to ‘are not [his] [i.e. Claudius’s own]’, indicating the way in which Hamlet has usurped their meaning to suit his own purposes.⁷ This notion is emphasised further in Hamlet’s reply, with his concurrent denial of ownership expressed in the words ‘No, nor mine now’ suggesting that the meaning of words never resides solely with their producers but is instead composed in part by their recipients.⁸ This idea receives more explicit attention later in the play, when a Gentleman of the court claims that the ‘unshapèd’ nature of Ophelia’s language during her spell of madness allows its auditors to ‘aim at it | And botch the words up to fit their own thoughts’.⁹ Horatio is quick to identify this as a potentially threatening process, expressing concern that Ophelia’s ungoverned language ‘may strew | Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds’.¹⁰ By framing Ophelia’s words as seeds which germinate into seditious thoughts when lodged in the receptive soil of ‘ill-breeding minds’, Horatio suggests not that they are dangerous in and of themselves, but instead that they hold the potential to become so when their meaning is ‘botch[ed]’ up by their auditors.

A similar impression emerges in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), where in the opening scene we witness Sampson and Gregory’s respective resolutions to ‘frown’ and ‘bite [their] thumb’ at some servants of the Montagues and ‘let them take it as they list’, hoping to keep ‘the law’

⁷ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), III, pp. 1121–63 (III. 2. 93).

⁸ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. 2. 94.

⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV. 5. 8–10.

¹⁰ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV. 5. 14–15.

on their side by making their rivals ‘begin’ the quarrel.¹¹ Despite their nefarious intentions, Sampson and Gregory here use their gestures’ radical openness to interpretation to afford themselves plausible deniability as the instigators of the hoped-for dispute, exculpating them of legal responsibility for the violence which ensues. The vital role of recipients in constructing the meaning of linguistic and gestural signs is further illustrated later in the same scene, when the Prince begins an address to a group of disruptive citizens with the words ‘Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace, | Profaners of this neighbour stained steel’ before abruptly breaking off with the question ‘Will they not hear?’.¹² The contrast between the commanding opening lines and the defeated question which follows them presents the auditors’ indifference to the Prince’s words as voiding them of their power, indicating the profound extent to which his authority depends on his auditors’ receptivity to his message.

The interpretative gap between signs and their meanings is also a major theme in Thomas Heywood’s *How a Man May Chuse a Good Wife from a Bad* (1602). Although this play’s title seems to anticipate a performance grounded in didacticism and therefore reliant upon the straightforward transmission of meaning, over the course of the play Heywood subverts this expectation by foregrounding the fundamental ambiguity of physical and linguistic signs. This idea emerges when, after Yong Lusam [sic] claims that Mistress Arthur’s ‘true love’ for her husband is evidenced by her ‘tears’, Arthur himself responds with the counterclaim that ‘She weepes to see me in her company, | And were I absent, she would laugh with joy’.¹³ By juxtaposing these characters’ conflicting evaluations of Mistress Arthur’s tears, Heywood highlights the fundamental inscrutability of visual signs, illustrating the way in which this obfuscates the truth from their observers. Elsewhere in the play, Mistress Arthur utilises this fact to her own advantage, as when in response to Fuller’s accusation that Arthur frequents the city’s ‘brave Curtizans’ she states

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, pp. 1053–88 (I. 1. 37–40).

¹² Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, I. 1. 78–80.

¹³ Thomas Heywood, *How a Man May Chuse a Good Wife from a Bad* (London: T. Creede, 1602), sig. B1^v.

I suppose

He doth it but in zeale to bring them home

By his good counsell, from that course of sinne.¹⁴

By prefacing her counterargument with the words ‘I suppose’, Mistress Arthur signals her intention not to present her own view as right and Fuller’s as wrong, but instead to highlight the essential subjectivity of both assessments, presenting neither one as superior to the other. In doing so, she calls attention to what Benedict S. Robinson describes as the way in which ‘we see not the world as it is but an idea of the world that is really a mental fiction’, indicating the mind’s extensive role in bridging the chasm between external signs and the realities they signify.¹⁵ Similarly, in response to Old Arthur’s observation that she seems ‘exceeding sad’, Mistress Arthur insists that ‘Tis but [her] countenance, for [her] hart is mery’.¹⁶ Here, rather than obscuring her true feelings by adopting a falsely mirthful demeanour, Mistress Arthur instead calls attention to the fundamental inaccessibility of her psyche. In doing so, she assumes discursive control over her body by evidencing her observers’ inability to productively refute her own account of the condition of her ‘hart’ despite the contradictory verbal and visual signs they are receiving. Heywood’s repeated suggestion throughout this play that it is impossible to determine the truth from external signs alone illuminates the meaning of its title, with Heywood starkly illustrating that the difference between a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ wife rests neither in her behaviour nor even in her inherent nature, but instead in her observers’ interpretations of her conduct.

By drawing attention to recipients’ role in constructing linguistic and gestural meaning in this way, these playwrights appear to set up the argument that it is primarily spectators, rather than playwrights or performers, who are responsible for ensuring the safety

¹⁴ Heywood, *How a Man May Chuse*, sig. E3^v.

¹⁵ Benedict S. Robinson, ‘Thinking Feeling’, in *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form*, ed. by Amanda Bailey and Maria DiGangi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 109–27 (p. 114).

¹⁶ Heywood, *How a Man May Chuse*, sig. G2^r.

of theatrical performances. This idea emerges in the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*, whose speaker concludes with the assertion that ‘if [viewers] with patient ears attend, | What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend’.¹⁷ Whilst presenting the ‘toil’ of performers as capable of compensating for the potential limitations of their play-script, the conditional ‘if’ of the previous line implies that it cannot similarly mitigate for spectators’ improper engagement with the dramatic material on offer. This prologue thereby appears to exculpate playwrights and performers of blame for any negative effects produced by the performance, suggesting that spectators ultimately determine its meaning, quality, and safety by taking its contents ‘as they list’.

This raises the obvious question of exactly what form of spectatorship is necessary to ensure consumers’ safety – an answer to which may be found in contemporary approaches to experiential openness. Kuzner identifies the early modern period as characterised by ‘heightened desires and needs to assert the difference between self and not-self, to enrich and demarcate one’s mind and cordon off one’s body’.¹⁸ Eric Langley concurs, attributing this shift at least in part to the contemporary ‘prevalence of both plague and sexually transmitted pox’, with these ‘malign ‘form[s] of visitation against which isolation may be the only prescription’ creating ‘a sense of the body under external attack’.¹⁹ Of particular interest here are the ways in which this notion inflects contemporary attitudes towards the senses. As McDermott points out, in their discussions of audition early modern moralists generally agree that ‘there is a *proper*’ way to hear, with the ears ideally functioning as ‘doorways’ which admit profitable material whilst barring entry to pernicious influences.²⁰ Since it is difficult to physically obstruct the passage of auditory information into the body, these claims seem to be

¹⁷ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ‘Prologue’, ll 13–14.

¹⁸ Kuzner, *Open Subjects*, p. 86.

¹⁹ Eric Langley, *Shakespeare’s Contagious Sympathies: Ill Communications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 4 and 184–85.

²⁰ Jennifer Rae McDermott, “‘The Melodie of Heaven’: Sermonizing the Open Ear in Early Modern England”, in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 177–97 (p. 183). Italics in original.

intended figuratively, suggesting that auditors should be selective not simply about what they hear but about which sounds they allow to affect them on a psychological or an emotional level.

Shakespeare interacts closely with this idea in *Hamlet*, wherein he uses Hamlet and Horatio's contrasting approaches to audition to illustrate the loss of autonomy attendant upon unchecked sensory and affective openness. Allison K. Deutermann discusses this aspect of *Hamlet* in detail, noting that throughout the play Horatio exhibits a 'thoughtful' and 'measured' form of audition which 'protect[s] him from the aural onslaughts of literally and figuratively poisonous speech' far more effectively than do either Hamlet's 'initial overeagerness' or later 'inattentiveness' as a listener.²¹ So much is evidenced in the play's opening scene, wherein Marcellus claims that Horatio 'will not let belief take hold of him' regarding the tale of the Ghost, with Horatio's obstinate rejection of Marcellus's claims prompting Barnardo to try once more to 'assail' Horatio's 'fortified' ears with the story.²² The militaristic imagery in which Barnardo frames this auditory assault depicts spoken language as an invasive force against which the mind must be defended, with excessive credulity implicitly resulting in a loss of self-possession by rendering auditors captive to – or 'take[n] hold of' by – that which they hear. As Deutermann points out, although Horatio is clearly impervious to Barnardo and Marcellus's speeches, he is explicitly shown to limit 'only his acceptance of what he hears – not his reception more generally' – as evidenced when he invites the company (and, with them, the offstage audience) to 'sit' and 'hear' what Barnardo has to say.²³ By mentally 'filtering and sifting' the auditory information he encounters rather than pre-emptively shielding himself from it, Horatio here models the ideal

²¹ Allison K. Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 114–15.

²² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. 1. 29–30.

²³ Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form*, p. 114; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. 1. 31–32.

form of audition outlined by McDermott, absorbing a wide variety of information whilst carefully selecting which parts of it he accepts.²⁴

The benefits of this measured form of audition become still more apparent when Horatio's mode of hearing is set alongside Hamlet's, whose greater receptivity to auditory influences in the play's early scenes is shown to constitute a pronounced threat to his autonomy. So much is evidenced in his first meeting with the Ghost, wherein Hamlet declares himself 'bound to hear' its injunctions – with the word 'bound' here suggesting that he considers himself a captive to the Ghost's words even before they have been spoken.²⁵ The risks entailed by such subjection become explicit in the Ghost's following identification of Hamlet as equally compelled 'to revenge, when [he] shalt hear', a statement which foregrounds the affective power of auditory information by conflating the processes of accepting and acting upon the subsequent account.²⁶ In his portrayal of Horatio and Hamlet's differing approaches to audition, Shakespeare thereby suggests that the safety of sensory information depends more on the manner in which it is received than on its nature or content, arguing that guarded and carefully controlled reception can neutralise the threat posed by intrusive auditory influences – and, implicitly, by other forms of sensory stimuli.

Shakespeare is far from the only contemporary playwright to make this point, with Jonson also presenting unbounded openness in a negative light. So much is especially apparent through his depiction of Amorous La Foole in *Epicene* (1609–1610), whose repeated transgression of social, bodily, and geographic boundaries is presented in an explicitly negative light. In his first extended speech of the play, La Foole offers an account of his family's dispersal across the 'north', 'west', 'east', and 'south' of England as well as throughout 'Europe', creating an impression of a family uncontained by geographic

²⁴ Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form*, p. 114.

²⁵ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. 5. 6.

²⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. 5. 7.

borders.²⁷ This notion continues in La Foole's following description of his own journeys to 'Ireland' and 'Cadiz', as well as of his movements between the 'court' and 'country' of England, with this latter claim suggesting his disregard not only for spatial but also for social boundaries.²⁸ Whilst La Foole himself appears to view this as a positive attribute, this is not the impression created when he is first introduced to audiences by Clerimont, whose insistence to Dauphine that La Foole will be sure to 'know' him even if they only meet 'but once [...] at church in the midst of prayers' creates an impression of La Foole as obsessively making and affirming social connections, even at inappropriate times.²⁹ This idea is emphasised in Clerimont's following claim that La Foole will 'salute a judge upon the bench, and a bishop in the pulpit, a lawyer when he is pleading at the bar, and a lady when she is dancing in a masque, and put her out'.³⁰ In each of these cases, La Foole is presented as intruding upon tightly choreographed activities, with Clerimont's explicit depiction of these interruptions as inconveniencing those involved implying the need for others to guard themselves against the disruptive effect of invasive external influences. The meta-theatrical significance of this point becomes clear in Clerimont's account of La Foole's fondness for hosting 'plays and suppers', both of which activities involve the absorption of external matter into the body.³¹ As well as extending the association between dining and theatregoing, Jonson imbues both with negative connotations through Clerimont's following claim that La Foole uses 'banquet[s]' and 'sweet-meats' to lure 'women' into his home, and thereby implicitly to enact another form of illicit boundary-crossing.³² Jonson here utilises the common early modern conception of food as provoking sexual immorality by rendering consumers' bodies receptive to other penetrative influences, with the concurrent link he establishes between

²⁷ Ben Jonson, *Epicene*, in *'The Alchemist' and Other Plays*, ed. by Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 119–209 (l. 4. 35–36).

²⁸ Jonson, *Epicene*, l. 4. 54–56.

²⁹ Jonson, *Epicene*, l. 3. 28–30.

³⁰ Jonson, *Epicene*, l. 3. 31–33.

³¹ Jonson, *Epicene*, l. 3. 33–34.

³² Jonson, *Epicene*, l. 3. 39–40.

plays and food suggesting that plays, too, can facilitate a morally dangerous state of bodily openness in their attendees.³³

An appropriate means of engaging with the external world appears to be modelled by Truewit and Dauphine, whose temperate approach to absorbing and emitting information is shown to afford them greater power over both themselves and others than that which is available to the play's less guarded characters. So much is evidenced in Truewit's description of himself as being 'Struck into stone, almost' by Clerimont's account of Morose's peculiar eschewal of auditory information.³⁴ Whilst this claim certainly indicates Truewit's surprise at what he has heard, the qualifying 'almost' – emphasised through its grammatical partitioning off from the rest of the sentence – firmly signals its limited affective power over him, suggesting that he, like Horatio, is safely 'fortified' against its influence. Truewit's cautious approach to sensory receptivity is exhibited still more explicitly in his insistence that he will not remain with Dauphine and Clerimont 'with the danger to meet Daw' for the sake of his 'ears', indicating his awareness of a need to defend his bodily boundaries against invasive assaults.³⁵ Whilst Truewit's vigilance against sensory information constitutes an appropriate defence against potentially threatening forms of outside influence, Dauphine's cautious self-containment, meanwhile, renders him invulnerable to external scrutiny. Dauphine's esteem of interpretative closure is demonstrated clearly in his description of Clerimont as 'a strange open man' for revealing their plot to Truewit, as well as in his subsequent assertion that 'with the fewer a business is carried, it is ever the safer'.³⁶ Indeed, his claims here are vindicated in the very next scene, with Truewit's attempts to frighten Morose out of marrying in the belief that he is helping Dauphine actually threatening to ruin the latter's plan.³⁷

³³ See Imke Pannen, "'I would not Taste of Such a Banquet': Ill-f(l)avoured Consumption in *The Bloody Banquet*", *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare*, 29.1 (2012), 93–104 (pp. 95–98).

³⁴ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 2. 2.

³⁵ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 2. 67.

³⁶ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 3. 1 and 10–11.

³⁷ Jonson, *Epicene*, II. 2. 48–130 and II. 4. 33–40.

Jonson's portrayal of Truewit and Dauphine as respectively impervious to external sensory influences and aware of the benefits of self-concealment renders it particularly significant that these are also the characters who wield the greatest authority throughout the play. So much is evidenced in Dauphine's successful deception of Morose, and in Clerimont and Truewit's gulling of Daw and La Foole – all of which tricks are rendered possible by their victims' excessive susceptibility to external manipulations (with Morose's obsessive physical insulation from sound proving no substitute for the guarded form of audition modelled by Horatio).³⁸ Furthermore, whereas many of *Epicene*'s characters (including Morose, La Foole, and Daw themselves) are described by others before their first appearances onstage, with their identities therefore subjected to the shaping influence of others, it is often Dauphine, Clerimont, and Truewit who offer these accounts.³⁹ This fact once again points to these characters' extensive social power, framing them as capable of manipulating their fellow characters' identities whilst also maintaining firm and exclusive control of their own self-presentation.

Alongside Shakespeare and Jonson, Heywood too stresses the importance of maintaining bodily and interpersonal boundaries, particularly through his depiction of Wendoll in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603). Throughout the play, Wendoll is repeatedly conceived of by the play's other characters as an integral element of his friend Frankford's body. For instance, whilst contesting Wendoll's attempts to seduce her, Anne insists that he must refrain on account of the fact that her husband Frankford 'esteems him, | Even as his brain, his eye-ball, or his heart'.⁴⁰ By likening Wendoll to Frankford's 'brain' and 'heart' – organs contained within the body and required for its continued survival – Anne initially appears simply to indicate the perceived importance of Wendoll's friendship to

³⁸ Jonson, *Epicene*, III. 3. 1–71.

³⁹ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 1. 67–81 and 130–73, I. 3. 24–44, II. 6. 46–66, and also indirectly via La Foole at I. 4. 21–30.

⁴⁰ Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, in '*A Woman Killed with Kindness*' and *Other Domestic Plays*, ed. by Martin Wiggins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 69–128 (6. 112–13).

Frankford's wellbeing. Nevertheless, the 'eye-ball' constitutes an outlier in this reading, being non-essential to survival and constituting one of many permeable barriers through which external influences are able to penetrate the body. What these organs do all have in common, however, is their role in transmuting sensory information into passions according to early modern medical doctrine, with the brain conducting an 'evaluation of sensory input' (such as visual stimuli entering through the eyes), whilst the heart constitutes the 'principal site of the sensitive soul [...], and of the emotions with it'.⁴¹ In light of this fact, Anne's statement can be interpreted as highlighting not Wendoll's indispensability to Frankford but instead his status as a permeable boundary through which external influences can enter and assimilate into the private spaces of Frankford's body, home, and marriage.

The threatening implications of this idea become clearer in Wendoll's own claim that he is

to [Frankford's] body

As necessary as his digestion,

And equally do make him whole or sick.⁴²

Wendoll is here affiliated with a process through which external influences – culinary, in this instance, rather than sensory – enter into and become part of the body, with his attendant admission that he may make Frankford 'whole or sick' explicitly emphasising his status as a potential weak point in Frankford's defences. That Frankford himself similarly fails to draw an appropriate division between himself and his friend is evidenced in his invitation to Wendoll to 'be a present Frankford in his absence', conceiving of the two as interchangeable in a manner which does not reflect the social reality of their situation – as the inappropriateness of Anne and Wendoll's adulterous relationship plainly demonstrates. While the title's pun on 'kindness' as denoting both mercy and likeness is often interpreted as

⁴¹ Michael Stolberg, 'Emotions and the Body in Early Modern Medicine', *Emotion Review*, 11.2 (2019), 113–22 (p. 114).

⁴² Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 6. 40–42.

attributing Anne's demise either to Frankford's unmerited grace towards her or, alternatively, to her excessive sympathy towards Wendoll, it could therefore equally denote Frankford's excessive 'kindness' towards his friend. Heywood thereby presents the failure to uphold stable divisions between self and other as exposing individuals to moral contamination, indicating the importance of guarding oneself against potentially threatening external influences.

Heywood also foregrounds the importance of exercising caution regarding the extent of our entanglement with others through his ambivalent portrayal of pity over the course of the play. Though Anne initially attempts to resist Wendoll's sexual advances, she eventually succumbs to his seductive speeches, conceding with the admission that he 'move[s]' her 'to passion and to pity'.⁴³ By presenting Anne's extension of 'pity' to Wendoll as a precursor to sin, Heywood here appears to corroborate the contention of many anti-theatricalists that performers' emotionally affective speeches can provoke formerly honest spectators to immorality. However, elsewhere in the play 'pity' is presented in a more favourable light, including in Heywood's negative portrayal of Susan's relatives, who reject her solicitations for financial help on behalf of her imprisoned brother Sir Charles. After the fact, Susan complains to Sir Charles that she has 'Laid open all [his] griefs and miseries', presenting her requests for help as creating a symbolic 'open[ing]' between him and his prospective benefactors – an invitation to sympathetic entanglement 'Which they derided'.⁴⁴ So much is evidenced in Old Mountford's claim that Sir Charles 'lost [his] kindred when he fell to need', a statement which indicates the severing of their social and familial ties – sentiments echoed in Sandy's claim to 'neither know [Susan] nor [her] suit' and in Tydy's sententious profession 'each man for himself'.⁴⁵

⁴³ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 6. 138.

⁴⁴ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 10. 67–68.

⁴⁵ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 9. 17, 25, and 34.

Heywood's condemnation of this closed-off approach is rendered apparent in Old Mountford's claim that he 'cannot spare a cross' for Charles.⁴⁶ Whilst literally referring to the crosses stamped on contemporary pennies, this expression also carries prominent religious connotations, linking charitable conduct with Christ's self-sacrifice upon the Cross.⁴⁷ As well as establishing Old Mountford as morally bankrupt, this phrase thereby presents charity as a process wherein givers not only supply money to beneficiaries but also symbolically assume their burdens just as Christ assumed humanity's sins, establishing it as a literal giving of the self rather than as an impassive transaction. This impression is advanced when Old Mountford goes on to justify his conduct with the assertion that 'This is no world in which to pity men', conceptually associating the charitable distribution of money with the more personally involved act of extending 'pity' to others.⁴⁸ Although the Christian imagery Heywood uses in this scene strongly suggests the perils involved in creating such bonds, it equally indicates that extending 'pity' to others is a morally valuable practice nonetheless. By foregrounding the disconcertingly close proximity between Christ's Passion and the 'passion' Anne experiences in response to Wendoll's tempting speeches, Heywood suggests that affective openness holds both positive and negative potential, indicating the importance of determining when and to whom 'pity' is extended.

Moreover, throughout *A Woman Killed with Kindness* the security of characters' identities is shown to be tied to the degree of control they exert over their interpersonal boundaries. In his quest to seduce Susan, Sir Francis resolves to 'fasten such a kindness on her, | As shall o'ercome her hate and conquer it' by freeing her brother Sir Charles from prison.⁴⁹ When Sir Charles discovers the identity of his benefactor, he marvels that 'he, nor father, nor ally, nor friend' should offer them assistance, stressing that as 'More than a

⁴⁶ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 9. 3.

⁴⁷ D. F. Allen and W. R. Dunstan, 'Crosses and Crowns: A Study of Coinage in the Elizabethan Dramatists', *British Numismatic Society*, 23.1 (1941), 287–99 (p. 292).

⁴⁸ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 9. 5.

⁴⁹ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 9. 66–67.

stranger, both remote in blood, | And in his heart oppos'd [his] enemy', Frankford's kindness constitutes a pronounced subversion of the expected rules of social interactions.⁵⁰ He then abruptly breaks off, exclaiming 'Oh! there I lose myself. What should I say, | What think, what do, this bounty to repay?', presenting Sir Francis's unwarranted 'kindness' as instigating the loss and subsequent reconstruction of Sir Charles's identity by contesting and reformulating the boundaries of his social community.⁵¹ Failing to comprehend his new relationship to Sir Francis, Sir Charles also becomes a stranger to himself, with his perceived lack of control over his social boundaries constituting a threat to his sense of self. This point is reiterated later in the play through Heywood's depiction of another display of 'kindness', this time in the form of Frankford's banishment of Anne following her affair with Wendoll. Upon discovering Anne's transgression, Frankford resolves to 'kill [her] even with kindness', allowing her to live comfortably in his 'manor seven mile off' on the condition that she makes no attempt to 'see', 'meet', or 'send, by word or writing, gift or otherwise, | To move [him], by [herself], or by [her] friends'.⁵² Rather than simply exacerbating Anne's guilt through its contrast to the severity of her wrongdoing, Frankford's superficially lenient response actually constitutes another dimension to her punishment by symbolically intensifying their separation. Whereas reactive violence would establish Frankford's actions as relationally 'bound' to Anne's, by responding with 'kindness' rather than in kind Frankford not only separates them physically but signals the severance of their former sympathetic entanglement. Frankford's kindness (his mercy towards Anne), as a result of its unkindness (its inequality to her crime), therefore itself constitutes an unkindness (injury), threatening her identity where an equivalent response would merely have caused her emotional distress. By presenting Anne and Sir Charles as suffering due to these externally

⁵⁰ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 10. 113–15.

⁵¹ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 10. 117–18.

⁵² Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 13. 155, 164, and 173–76.

imposed alterations to the boundaries of their social communities, Heywood indicates the importance of controlling the extent of our entanglement with others.

‘Stumbling on Abuse’: The Myth of Safe Consumption in the Early Modern Playhouse

These playwrights’ portrayal of experiential openness as fundamentally unsafe carries extensive meta-theatrical implications. As Deutermann points out, the ‘sonic assaults’ offered by performances are capable of affirming spectators’ ‘control’ over their bodies and minds, rather than only of producing an ‘exhilarating obliteration of subjectivity’.⁵³ However, Deutermann also presents this effect as conditional upon their reception being devoid of affectivity, constituting ‘the voluntary act of a privileged subject who can be entertained, rather than merely altered, by what he hears’.⁵⁴ Though Deutermann is here speaking specifically of auditory information, her argument that being ‘altered’ by sound entails a loss of ‘control’ on the part of the auditor is plainly applicable to other forms of external influence. Langley, for instance, makes the same point with regard to affective openness, explaining that ‘to be passionate’ in early modern England ‘still involved the sense that the subject is moved, informed, and influenced’ – in other words, passively subjected to the effects of invasive external forces.⁵⁵ The reasoning behind this view is illustrated clearly, if comically, at the outset of *Romeo and Juliet*, when in response to Sampson’s claim that ‘A dog of the house of Montague moves [him]’ to anger, Gregory facetiously remarks that ‘To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand. Therefore if thou art moved thou runn’st away’.⁵⁶ As well as further evidencing the indeterminacy of linguistic signs by illustrating the ease with which recipients can appropriate their meaning, Gregory’s claim here indicates how being emotionally ‘moved’ by an observed event involves being subjected to its influence,

⁵³ Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form*, p. 56.

⁵⁴ Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form*, p. 69.

⁵⁵ Langley, *Shakespeare’s Contagious Sympathies*, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, pp. 1053–88 (I. 1. 7–9).

and so relinquishing some of one's self-possession. As Cynthia Marshall elucidates, in a system where individuals are 'so vulnerable to the effects of the passions', spectators 'put themselves in real danger by attending stage plays designed to arouse emotional response'.⁵⁷ This is indeed a prominent concern of contemporary anti-theatricalists such as William Prynne, who in his compendious anti-theatrical tract *Histrion-Mastix* (1633) explicitly condemns performances for their ability to 'animate' and 'excite' spectators and actors alike, and for inflaming them to 'Anger, Malice, Duels, Murthers, Revenge, and more then Barbarous crueltie'.⁵⁸ The words 'animate' and 'excite' here indicate plays' ability to prompt their viewers into action by stirring up their passions, with Prynne arguing that attending plays invariably leads to violent and dangerous conduct. By presenting restrained engagement with external influences in a positive light whilst foregrounding the risks of unmitigated openness to them, playwrights such as Shakespeare, Jonson, and Heywood appear to suggest that the safest way for playgoers to approach performances is from a position of affective detachment.

Indeed, Shakespeare clearly expresses as much in *Romeo and Juliet*, where he utilises the conceptual association between drama and medicine to present the safety of performances as conditional upon spectators' cautious and temperate consumption of the staged material. So much is evidenced in Friar Laurence's description of one of the herbs in his garden, which he claims 'being smelt, with that part cheers each part', and yet 'Being tasted, stays all senses with the heart'.⁵⁹ The longstanding association between performances and (potentially dangerous) medicine discussed in Chapter Five may well have prompted audiences to view this herb as a meta-theatrical symbol, an interpretation supported by Friar Laurence's language elsewhere in this description. After highlighting the remedial power of natural

⁵⁷ Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 17.

⁵⁸ William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix* (London: Edward Allde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes, and William Jones, 1633), sig. K4^v.

⁵⁹ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 2. 25–26.

resources such as ‘herbs’, ‘plants’, and ‘stones’, Friar Laurence’s soliloquy becomes more abstracted, as he claims that there is ‘nought so vile’ but that it may be of some benefit, ‘Nor aught so good but, strain’d from that fair use, | Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse’.⁶⁰ He then adds that ‘Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied; | And vice sometimes by action dignified’.⁶¹ The generalised nature of Friar Laurence’s comments in these lines admits the possibility that he is no longer speaking of literal medicine alone, and indeed the terms he uses here hold distinct theatrical resonances. The words ‘Virtue’ and ‘vice’, for instance, clearly recall the Virtues and Vices of medieval and sixteenth-century drama, especially when deployed in such close proximity to the theatrically inflected term ‘action’. By incorporating such language, Shakespeare encourages audiences to view Friar Laurence’s speech as a reflection not only upon plants, but also upon drama, with his claim that even ‘vice’ can be ‘dignified’ by ‘action’ indicating not only that dangerous substances in general can be rendered safe when used appropriately, but that this is true of performances in particular. As such, his claim that his herb is remedial when smelled but lethal when tasted comes to suggest that the medicinal or toxic nature of productions is similarly determined by how they are consumed by audiences. It is therefore significant that Shakespeare here presents olfactory consumption as safer than its gustatory equivalent. This is because olfaction involves the assimilation of information emitted by a substance into the body without concurrently requiring the ingestion of the substance itself, and as such constitutes an experiential mode which is neither direct nor detached. By advocating, through Friar Laurence, for this form of engagement with external stimulants, Shakespeare thereby implies that the ideal form of engagement with performances is characterised by a healthy degree of affective detachment, rather than by complete passionate captivation.

⁶⁰ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 2. 16–20.

⁶¹ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 2. 21–22.

However, Shakespeare's use of olfaction as a conceptual parallel for the ideal form of theatrical spectatorship sits uncomfortably with the frequent comparison of plays to food in contemporary drama. Indeed, although Shakespeare, Heywood, and Jonson's endorsement of a restrained form of engagement with the world seems to suggest that plays, like food, can be rendered safe when consumed dispassionately by spectators, this does not constitute a particularly strong argument in defence of performances, with even some anti-theatricalists acknowledging as much. Northbrooke, for instance, unambiguously outlines what he sees as the profound threat performances pose to their viewers, insisting that public plays are 'not tollerable nor sufferable in any common weale' owing to their ability to instruct spectators in

howe to ravishe, howe to beguyle, howe to betraye, to flatter, lye, sweare, forswear, howe to allure to whoredome, howe to murther, howe to poyson, howe to disobey and rebell agaynst Princes, to consume treasures prodigally, to moove to lusts, to ransacke and spoyle cities and townes, to bee ydle, to blaspheme, to sing filthie songs of love, to speake filthily, to be prowde, howe to mocke, scoffe, and deryde any nation.⁶²

However, he also draws the culinary parallel himself, conceding that just as 'We cannot denye that wyne of his owne nature is good, which yet, is not given to one that is in an ague, nor that the wyne is evill, but because it agreeth not with a bodie that is in that maner affected', neither can drama be said to be either good or bad 'of [its] own nature'.⁶³ Although Northbrooke here obviously recognises that there is nothing either good or bad but drinking makes it so – that plays are not inherently corrupt, but merely hold the potential to become so when consumed inappropriately – he evidently does not accept this fact as offering sufficient justification for their production. So much is rendered explicit when he claims that although there may 'be some one man or other so chaste, that he is nothing moved' by performances, it

⁶² John Northbrooke, *A Treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine Playes or Enterluds with Other Idle Pastimes &c. Commonly Used on the Sabboth Day, are Reproved by the Authoritie of the Word of God and Auntient Writers* (London: H. Bynneman, 1577?), pp. 58 and 67–68.

⁶³ Northbrooke, *A Treatise*, p. 128.

is nevertheless wrong to ‘suffer all the rest to be indaangered’ for that reason.⁶⁴ By describing such incorruptible spectators as ‘chaste’ and ‘nothing moved’ by performances, Northbrooke concurs with contemporary playwrights that the only safe form of engagement with drama involves affective closure from its influence. Nevertheless, by attributing such an approach only to ‘some one man or other’, he also stresses its rarity, suggesting that theatrical spectatorship will prove dangerous for the vast majority of participants. Therefore, in conjunction with his belief in the dangers of succumbing to their influence, Northbrooke’s conviction in the difficulty of interacting with plays in an appropriately detached manner leads him to contend that the mere possibility of rendering performances safe through dispassionate consumption does not constitute sufficient grounds for allowing their production.

Further insight into Northbrooke’s reasons for using this argument can be gained by placing his claims in dialogue with those of Milton in his prose tract *Areopagitica* (1644). Intriguingly, in this text Milton at first seems to invoke the same contention in support of uncensored printing which Northbrooke rejects in defence of performances. Abstracting the precept that ‘To the pure, all things are pure’ from its original culinary context and applying it to ‘knowledge’ in general, Milton contends that the beneficial or detrimental impact of any written work on its readers depends on their moral and critical faculties rather than on its own inherent qualities.⁶⁵ In support of this argument, he claims that just as nourishing foods ‘to a vitiated stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome’, so ‘best books to a naughty mind are not unapplicable to occasions of evill’ – echoing Northbrooke’s suggestion that good ‘wyne’ may nevertheless have a negative effect on someone ‘in an ague’.⁶⁶ Although these authors’ use an identical premise to support starkly different arguments, with Milton

⁶⁴ Northbrooke, *A Treatise*, p. 125.

⁶⁵ John Milton, *Areopagitica*, in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. by Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), pp. 987–1024 (p. 1005).

⁶⁶ Milton, *Areopagitica*, p. 1005.

advocating for the release of dangerous material whilst Northbrooke desires to withhold it, this apparent paradox can be resolved by attending to the slight but fundamental differences which exist between Milton's argument and Northbrooke's. For one, whilst access to books presupposes some level of education, and so (allegedly) a superior ability to sort wholesome from detrimental material, by the same elitist reasoning performances' openness to a broader cross-section of society – including illiterate, uneducated, and female viewers – renders them more readily accessible to 'naughty mind[s]', thereby heightening the risk of them being turned to ill. Moreover, Milton's argument is also distinct from Northbrooke's in that he explicitly presents both books and food as possessing inherent value, explaining that 'books are as meats and viands are; some of good, some of evill substance'.⁶⁷ Significantly, this view forces him to abandon the culinary metaphor altogether when he reaches the crux of his argument – that 'bad' books can nevertheless be turned to good purposes through proper consumption. Conceding that corrupt food 'will scarce breed good nourishment in the healthiest concoction', Milton argues that 'the difference is of bad books, that they to a discreet and judicious reader serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate'.⁶⁸ Here, in order to justify the argument that even 'bad' works can be of value to 'pure' minds, Milton is forced to acknowledge their fundamental distinction from 'bad' food, which is normally detrimental to all its consumers. Conversely, Northbrooke's adherence to the view that both plays and food are 'of their own nature' harmless absolves him of the need to prove that plays are inherently corrupt, instead allowing him to contend simply that the benefits they offer to some are not worth the risks they pose to others.

Intriguingly, some contemporary playwrights corroborate Northbrooke's argument, emphasising both the difficulty of remaining unaffected by performances and the profound risks entailed by failing to do so. For instance, Heywood vindicates Northbrooke's fears

⁶⁷ Milton, *Areopagitica*, p. 1005.

⁶⁸ Milton, *Areopagitica*, p. 1005.

regarding excessive affective engagement with plays through Anselme's extreme reaction to Mistress Arthur's apparent death in *How a Man May Chuse a Good Wife from a Bad*. The 'frantike humour' which 'haunt[s] [Anselme's] sense' as he grieves seems more akin to madness than to misery, an impression advanced through Anselme's claim that

When [he] would speake, her name intrudes itself
Into the perfect echoes of [his] speech.
And though [his] thought beget some other word,
Yet will [his] tongue speake nothing but her name.⁶⁹

By presenting Anselme as able to 'beget' other thoughts but not to give them voice, Heywood presents his disturbed passions as depriving him of self-possession by causing him to literally lose command over his speech. Given Heywood's acknowledgement of the potential psychological risks of extreme affective entanglement here, it is significant that he also takes measures to prevent spectators from falling into a similar condition, encouraging us to merely observe rather than to participate in Anselme's hyperbolic grief. As Langley points out, 'in Aristotle's influential formulation, pure pity [...] entails a regulated proximity, circumventing terrifying immediacy', with the cathartic properties of performances requiring spectators to be 'informed by influence, saturated, but also to pull back from absolute sympathetic affiliation'.⁷⁰ One way in which Heywood ensures that spectators of *How a Man May Chuse* remain at a safe emotional distance from its events is through alerting us in advance that Mistress Arthur's death is illusory, revealing that the 'poyson' with which Arthur 'Temper[s] the Cup [his] loathed wife shall drinke' is in fact a medicine designed only to put patients 'Into a deep, a cold and senceles sleepe'.⁷¹ In doing so, Heywood diminishes the emotional stakes of the play, inoculating spectators against the emotive power of Mistress Arthur's supposed death and allowing us to witness Anselme suffer its full effects from a position of

⁶⁹ Heywood, *How a Man May Chuse*, sig. H1^r.

⁷⁰ Langley, *Shakespeare's Contagious Sympathies*, pp. 204 and 119.

⁷¹ Heywood, *How a Man May Chuse*, sigs F1^r and G2^r.

affective detachment. However, despite ensuring that this play in particular is safe for consumption, Heywood's approach here implicitly substantiates the argument that performances in general risk evoking excessive passionate responses from spectators, thereby forcing them into a dangerous state of self-abandonment.

This concept re-emerges in Heywood's later play *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, where Heywood continues to advocate for the maintenance of emotional distance from the play's events even whilst rendering this task more difficult for viewers than is the case in *How a Man May Chuse*. Indeed, throughout the play spectators are regularly pulled into sympathetic affinity with Anne, including when, before performing on her lute, she proclaims

All you that have true feeling of my grief,
That know my loss, and have relenting hearts,
Gird me about, and help me with your tears
To wash my spotted sins!⁷²

Smid comments on the intense affectivity of this scene, noting the fact that according to Renaissance principles 'Anne's breath and music are themselves material entities that enter the bodies of the hearers, generating tears by changing the hearers' [humoral] properties', with her direct address to spectators also seeming to involve us personally in the scene.⁷³ In playing the lute, Anne thereby simultaneously plays upon spectators, prompting us to shed tears on her behalf and so symbolically to assume her burden as our own. Rather than guiding audiences to observe these proceedings from an emotionally detached perspective as he does with Anselme in *How a Man May Chuse*, Heywood here heightens our affective entanglement with Anne, enticing us into a state of direct participation in her suffering.

This form of sympathetic identification is modelled elsewhere in the play by Frankford, who whilst addressing Anne before banishing her from his home declares

⁷² Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 16. 26–29.

⁷³ Deanna Smid, 'Broken Lutes and Passionate Bodies in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 38.2 (2015), 93–120 (p. 113).

Spare thou thy tears, for I will weep for thee;
And keep thy countenance, for I'll blush for thee.
Now, I protest, I think 'tis I am tainted,
For I am most ashamed.⁷⁴

Frankford here assumes Anne's penitence for himself, not merely crying and blushing for her externally but also feeling inwardly 'ashamed' as though he himself were 'tainted' with her sin. However, that this may not be an entirely positive experience is indicated by the pathological connotations of the word 'tainted', with these lines appearing to corroborate Langley's claim that 'Coming into contact is a jeopardous business', with 'each sympathetic touch – a loving contact – recall[ing] the tainting touch of plague'.⁷⁵ The desirability of such identification is called further into question in the play's final scene, where Frankford's proclaimed 'wish to die' with Anne out of 'pity' for her state is shown to be shared by (almost) 'all' of her observers, presenting sympathetic connections as placing the lives and identities of those involved at risk.⁷⁶

This impression continues when the servant Nicholas breaks in upon this tragic scene with the more measured assertion 'So will not I; | I'll sigh and sob, but, by my faith, not die'.⁷⁷ The tonal disparity between Nicholas's pragmatic comment and the affective abandonment of the play's other characters affords it a comedic dimension, undercutting the preceding pathos and disrupting spectators' emotional engagement with the scene. By forcing audiences to adopt Nicholas's position in this way, Heywood implicitly endorses it, presenting his tempered sympathy as preferable to the unrestrained identification modelled by his fellow characters. Neither impervious to Anne's suffering nor wholly consumed by it, Nicholas is established as a model for audiences' engagement with performances, allowing

⁷⁴ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 13. 83–86.

⁷⁵ Langley, *Shakespeare's Contagious Sympathies*, p. 11.

⁷⁶ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 17. 95–97.

⁷⁷ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 17. 98–99.

others' afflictions to touch him without imperilling his own wellbeing or identity. Nevertheless, the bathetic impact of Nicholas's statement relies upon its auditors being, up until this point, completely absorbed by the performance, exposing our original form of engagement with the play as potentially risky. In illustrating as much, Heywood once again vindicates Northbrooke's accusations against theatrical productions, offering a practical demonstration of the difficulty of remaining unmoved by performances.

Jonson uses a similar technique to highlight this fact in *Epicene*, wherein audiences' initial impression of being afforded a privileged position as the confidantes of the self-possessed, authoritative characters Dauphine, Clerimont, and Truewit is firmly undercut in the play's final scene. Scholars have frequently noted that Dauphine's revelation that Morose has 'married a boy' is as surprising to viewers as it is to the other characters onstage.⁷⁸ Jonson's inclusion of this device therefore aligns the play's audiences not with the trick's orchestrators, but instead with their gullible victims. As Douglas Lanier evocatively explains, at this moment early modern spectators become 'aware, at a conscious level, of what has been silently before them all along', namely that 'the boy playing a woman is no more than a boy playing a woman', with Jonson suddenly 'undermin[ing] our suspension of disbelief'.⁷⁹ What Jonson reveals here is therefore not merely the presence of a theatrical façade but, more specifically, spectators' extensive susceptibility to such deceptions, which permeate our minds to such an extent that the sudden exposure of the truth becomes a shock. Jonson thereby confirms Marshall's assessment of theatrical productions as events at which the 'boundaries of the self or ego are (at least temporarily) lifted, the self purged', with the

⁷⁸ Jonson, *Epicene*, v. 4. 183. See also Philip Mirabelli, 'Silence, Wit, and Wisdom in *The Silent Woman*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 29.2 (1989), 309–36 (p. 312), and Ari Friedlander, 'Mastery, Masculinity, and Sexual Cozening in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 53.2 (2013), 379–99 (p. 392).

⁷⁹ Douglas Lanier, 'Masculine Silence: *Epicoene* and Jonsonian Stylistics', *College Literature*, 21.2 (1994), 1–18 (p. 14).

appealing and emotionally engaging material set before audiences causing us to literally “lose ourselves” in performances.⁸⁰

‘Flow Loosely’: Risk as Benefit in Renaissance Drama

However, even whilst suggesting that theatrical spectatorship almost always entails a loss of self-possession, these playwrights also call the possibility – and indeed the desirability – of attaining complete self-mastery sharply into question. Such is the case in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, wherein Heywood affords the association between bodily enclosure and personal autonomy extensive attention through his depiction of Anne’s relationship to her lute. Upon discovering the forgotten lute following Anne’s banishment from the house, Frankford reflects upon the ‘pleasant strange airs’ that Anne and her instrument have ‘jointly sung’, a phrase which establishes the two as symbolically interconnected.⁸¹ Anne creates a similar impression when, upon being reunited with the lute, she describes herself and her instrument as ‘both out of tune, both out of time’, extending the play’s oft-noted linkage of musical with social harmony to reflect upon her separation from her community.⁸² It is therefore significant that instruments not only facilitate sensory, social, and affective openness, with their musical output provoking passionate responses whilst drawing players and auditors together in a shared experience, but also embody the idea of being acted upon by these influences through their susceptibility to external manipulations. Shakespeare utilises this concept in *Hamlet*, where Hamlet’s recognition that both ‘playing a pipe’ and ‘lying’ demand that performers ‘Govern these ventages with [their] fingers and thumb’ presents the body as an instrument which must be selectively opened and closed in order to permit only

⁸⁰ Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self*, p. 146.

⁸¹ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 15. 22.

⁸² Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 16. 18; Smid, ‘Broken Lutes and Passionate Bodies in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*’, p. 118.

the desired information to exude from it, and then only in the desired way.⁸³ Hamlet then extends this musical metaphor to deny his pliancy to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's machinations, insisting that they cannot 'play upon [him]' as they would an 'instrument'.⁸⁴ By aligning herself with her lute, Anne thereby acknowledges her own vulnerability to external influences, gesturing to both her earlier submission to Wendoll's sexual advances and to her current subjection to her husband's demands.

As such, Anne's later destruction of the lute affords significant insight into her own subsequent assumption of a destructive state of bodily enclosure. Nancy A. Gutierrez identifies Anne's self-starvation as 'simultaneously religious salvation and political resistance', a means of 'self-mortification' which also constitutes an 'exercise of self-autonomy'.⁸⁵ However, Anne's accompaniment of the proclamation 'Last night you saw me eat and drink my last' with the claim that the song she has just played is 'the last music that [she] e'er shall make' situates her self-starvation not only as a rejection of authority in and of itself but also as a side effect of the broader goal of obtaining affective enclosure.⁸⁶ Deanna Smid interprets the lute's destruction not merely as symbolising but in fact as instigating this process, arguing that Anne thereby 'cuts herself and her passions off from the [humoral] influence of the airy spirit of music, just as she is about to cut herself off from the [humoral] influences of food and drink', removing 'music's power over her body by destroying her music altogether'.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Smid also rightly identifies this enclosure as a means to an end, with Anne's corresponding rejection of food and sensory information disrupting her

⁸³ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. 2. 339 and 345–46.

⁸⁴ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. 2. 359–60.

⁸⁵ Nancy A. Gutierrez, "'Shall She Famish Then?': Female Food Refusal in Early Modern England' (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 48–50.

⁸⁶ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 16. 62 and 71.

⁸⁷ Smid, 'Broken Lutes and Passionate Bodies in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*', p. 111.

body's ability to signal her thoughts and feelings to others such that 'those around her can no longer "read" her'.⁸⁸

That Anne's renunciation of external influences does indeed afford her some measure of autonomy is evidenced when, in response to her question 'Blush I not?', Sir Charles observes that 'sickness hath not left [her] | Blood in [her] face enough to make [her] blush'.⁸⁹ Anne then explicitly remarks upon the desirability of this situation, describing her self-induced 'sickness' as a 'friend' which '[her] fault would hide'.⁹⁰ The sense of these lines is therefore not that Anne's fasting atones for her adultery, but rather that it affords her interpretative self-mastery, interrupting the flow of information both into and out of her body and so placing her, through her speech, in control of her self-presentation. However, just as the lute must be destroyed in order to protect it from external influences, so Anne's brief attainment of self-possession comes at the expense of her life, establishing bodily and affective enclosure as leading not to the ultimate assumption of control, but instead to its complete renunciation. Although Anne's death is directly brought about by her rejection of food, its simultaneous affiliation with her rejection of sensory information presents sensory openness, too, as paradoxically necessary to the maintenance of bodily and mental integrity even whilst it renders individuals bound to the world around them.

Indeed, elsewhere in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* Heywood advocates for affective openness even whilst highlighting the risks it entails. Over the course of the play, interpersonal connections are repeatedly associated with disease transmission, as when Frankford, whilst banishing Anne from their home, instructs her to 'Take with [her] every thing which hath [her] mark'.⁹¹ By framing Anne's moral corruption as a disease which contaminates the objects with which she has been in contact, Frankford presents her

⁸⁸ Smid, 'Broken Lutes and Passionate Bodies in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*', p. 107.

⁸⁹ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 7. 54 and 57–58.

⁹⁰ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 7. 59.

⁹¹ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 13. 163.

banishment as a necessary means of ensuring the safety of the rest of the household community. However, the removal not only of Anne but also of her belongings – and therefore her memory – from the house is clearly calculated to create emotional rather than merely physical distance between her and its remaining inhabitants, establishing the severance of this social connection as vital to the maintenance of the latter’s wellbeing. The risks entailed by social and emotional bonds are rendered even more explicit when Frankford rejects Wendoll’s offer to accompany him on an excursion by insisting that he would not ‘for [his] private business’ wish to ‘disease [his] friend and be a trouble | To the whole house’.⁹² These lines offer a none-too-subtle condemnation of Wendoll’s own conduct, presenting the ‘private business’ of his affair with Anne as detrimentally impacting even those who are not directly involved in the betrayal. Heywood here implies that, just as the chances of catching a physical ‘disease’ increase in proportion to one’s physical proximity to an afflicted individual, so positive correlation exists between our emotional closeness to another person and our risk of being detrimentally impacted by their actions. This in turn indicates that those who form many strong emotional connections are at greater risk than those who hold fewer, weaker ones, and that it is safer not to become too emotionally entangled with others.

However, that Heywood nevertheless does not advocate such an approach is evidenced in the play’s final scene, wherein Frankford responds affirmatively to Anne’s question of whether or not he will deign ‘Out of [his] grace and [his] humanity, | To take a spotted strumpet by the hand’.⁹³ Raina Green argues that Anne’s freedom from externally manifested ‘shame’ in this scene – brought about, as we have seen, by her self-starvation – results in her ‘once again’ being ‘deemed chaste by her husband’, with Christopher Frey and Leanore Lieblein concurring, noting that this interpretative blocking enables Anne to

⁹² Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 11. 78.

⁹³ Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 17. 76–77.

successfully enter into ‘a redefined marital relationship’ with Frankford.⁹⁴ However, Anne’s explicit reference to her ‘spotted’ or disease-ridden hand suggests that Frankford is not simply accepting her here because she has been rendered “clean” by her actions, indicating instead that this re-establishment of their former emotional bond entails significant risks for him. By presenting Frankford as submitting to Anne’s request despite his knowledge of its dangers, Heywood suggests that the benefits of sympathetic connections outweigh, even if they do not eliminate, their risks.

Jonson makes a very similar point in *Epicene*, wherein Morose’s superficially laughable fear of sound is in fact shown to be well-founded in many respects. The threatening potential of auditory information is suggested early in the play when Clerimont describes how he once left Morose ‘flourishing with the air’ with his sword after subjecting him to unwanted noise during a visit.⁹⁵ Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605) was evidently in Jonson’s mind during *Epicene*’s composition, being referenced directly by Truewit later in the play, and by recalling its eponymous hero’s famous attack upon the windmills Clerimont here seems to present the threat Morose detects in sound as equally illusory.⁹⁶ However, such a reading is challenged by the fact that ‘air’, one of the six non-naturals involved in maintaining health during the early modern period, was widely acknowledged in this era as a potentially harmful substance, with Boorde going so far as to claim that ‘There is nothyng except poyson that doth putryfye or doth corrupt the blode of man and also doth mortyfye the spyrytes of man, as doth a corrupt and a contagious ayre’.⁹⁷ As such, Clerimont’s comment may present Morose not as laughably delusional for fearing harmless ‘air’, but instead merely as exhibiting a disproportionate response to the very real threat posed by sensory information.

⁹⁴ Raina Green, ‘Open Ears, Appetite, and Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*’, *ESC*, 31.4 (2005), 53–74 (p. 67); Christopher Frey and Leanore Lieblein, “‘My breasts sear’d’: The Self-Starved Female Body and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*”, *Early Theatre*, 7.1 (2004), 45–66 (p. 47).

⁹⁵ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 1. 151.

⁹⁶ Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. by Edith Grossman (London: Vintage, 2004), pp. 58–59.

⁹⁷ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p. 115; Andrew Boorde, *Dyetary of Health* (London: Robert Wyer, 1542), sigs B3^v–B4^r.

Although Morose's 'flourishing with the air' retains its comic futility, Jonson thereby also imbues it with pathos by establishing the object of Morose's fear, if not his reaction to it, as eminently reasonable.

This impression continues in Clerimont's following explanation of how 'by reason of the sickness, the perpetuity of ringing has made [Morose] devise a room with double walls and treble ceilings, the windows close shut and caulked, and there he lives by candlelight'.⁹⁸ Although Morose's reaction here is clearly unwarranted, the implicit link between sound and sickness established in these lines suggests that his enclosure from the noise of the church bells also affords him some measure of protection from the plague which prompts their ringing. Moreover, as Mimi Yiu astutely points out, throughout *Epicene* Jonson also renders the violence of auditory assault viscerally rather than just conceptually apparent to audiences, as 'the particularly compact, enclosed auditorium at Whitefriars' permits early modern spectators to empathise with Morose's distress by '[amplifying] the trumpets, drums, and loud voices' with which he is harried.⁹⁹ Whilst Jonson obviously intends audiences to ridicule Morose for his vain battle against sound, he therefore stops short of presenting his fears as entirely unfounded, suggesting that auditory information – including that to which audiences are subjected during noisy performances such as *Epicene* – does indeed constitute a threat to its recipients.

However, Jonson also suggests the importance of remaining open to such influences despite their dangers by presenting Morose's obsessive attempts to shield himself from sound as placing him in even greater danger. As in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, throughout *Epicene* enclosure from external influences is associated with food-refusal, as when Truewit explains that Morose 'has been upon divers treatises with the fishwives, and orange-women; and articles propounded between them', and that 'He cannot endure a costermonger; he

⁹⁸ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 1. 166–69.

⁹⁹ Mimi Yiu, 'Sounding the Space between Men: Choric and Choral Cities in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene; or, The Silent Woman*', *PMLA*, 122.1 (2007), 72–88 (p. 74).

swoons if he hear one’.¹⁰⁰ Referring to the market criers that comprised a key element of early modern London’s soundscape, on the surface these lines indicate only that Morose pays these traders to advertise their wares out of earshot of his house. However, the connection between sensory and culinary abstinence here also presents the former as a genuine threat to Morose’s health. This idea emerges once again in Cutbeard’s later suggestion that Morose’s wedding should be officiated by ‘One that has catched a cold [...] and can scarce be heard six inches off’ – a suggestion which is enacted later in the play, with Jonson explicitly indicating that the Parson ‘*speaks, as having a cold*’ and ‘*coughs*’ upon those around him.¹⁰¹ Whilst Morose’s ‘caulked’ windows offer him some measure of protection from the threat of plague, here his self-imposed auditory enclosure actually places his health at greater risk by exposing him to the Parson’s illness.

Indeed, Morose’s attempts to sequester himself from noise deprive him not only of his physical health but also of his personal autonomy, ironically rendering him ‘bound’ to others in exactly the same way that Hamlet’s indiscriminate openness to auditory information leaves him ‘bound’ to the Ghost. As Maggie Vinter points out, ‘[whilst] in the ordinary course of events, a person of Morose’s status would have little direct contact with fishwives, his aversion to sound generates a new set of contractual relationships around street cries’, legally entangling Morose with those of a considerably lower social status than himself.¹⁰² Alexander Paulsson Lash makes a similar point, explaining that whilst Face and Subtle in Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (1610) exploit the sound of knocking to maintain control of their performance space in Lovewit’s household, Morose’s contrivances to ensure that ‘knocking is never heard in advance of entrances to his house’ prevent him from exerting control over his household’s boundaries.¹⁰³ Morose’s subjection is further evidenced when he promises Dauphine that he

¹⁰⁰ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 1. 136–38 and 139–40.

¹⁰¹ Jonson, *Epicene*, III. 2. 39–40 and p. 158.

¹⁰² Maggie Vinter, “‘Who’s There?’: Hearing Character in *Hamlet*”, *ELH*, 90.1 (2023), 1–27 (p. 10).

¹⁰³ Alexander Paulsson Lash, ‘Ben Jonson’s Doors’, *Renaissance Drama*, 48.1 (2020), 31–55 (p. 46).

‘shalt deserve [him] and have [him]’ if he can legally end his marriage to Epicene, promising to ‘seal’ to whatever his nephew proposes or even to a ‘blank’ whereupon Dauphine can ‘write [his] own conditions’ at a later point.¹⁰⁴ Morose’s willingness to unconditionally bind himself to Dauphine’s whims in this way presents his attempts to avoid noise as leading to the loss not only of his financial stability, but also of his self-possession. Whilst Jonson vindicates Morose’s fear of auditory stimuli, he therefore also warns against attempting to close the body to its influences, with Morose’s efforts to shield himself from intrusive noises threatening his bodily health, his social status, his financial affluence, and even his personal liberty.

Heywood and Jonson’s approaches in these plays find justification in early modern medical beliefs. As Dror Wahrman concisely explains, the notion of ‘the individual subject with a well-defined, stable, unique, centered [sic] self’ post-dates the early modern period.¹⁰⁵ Instead, what Paster describes as ‘the pneumatic character of early modern life in time’ – the contemporary view of ‘the human body as a threshold for the passage of air’ and ‘human flesh as a sponge in the atmosphere’ – meant that individuals’ identities were seen as fundamentally unstable, subject to the shaping influence of external forces.¹⁰⁶ Jean-Christophe Mayer concurs, noting the way in which identity was in the early modern period believed to be ‘constructed through material, social, intellectual, and aesthetic encounters’.¹⁰⁷ By this reasoning, self-containment emerges not only as an unattainable goal, but also an undesirable one. As Paster points out, although experiential openness was recognised as being ‘fraught with peril’ throughout this era, it was simultaneously viewed as ‘the *sine qua*

¹⁰⁴ Jonson, *Epicene*, v. 4. 151–52 and 169–70.

¹⁰⁵ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. xii.

¹⁰⁶ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, p. 237.

¹⁰⁷ Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare’s Early Readers: A Cultural History from 1590 to 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 70.

non [...] of bodily health'.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Clifford M. Foust remarks upon the 'almost universal belief in the importance of keeping the body open, both for the healthy and the afflicted' in early modern medicine.¹⁰⁹ In Renaissance medical thought, it is therefore not merely the nature of what goes into the body but the very fact of its doing so which contributes to the maintenance of individuals' health. In such a view, eating constitutes not merely a conceptual parallel for theatrical spectatorship, but its exact equivalent, with both processes serving the valuable role of keeping the bodies and minds of consumers open to external influences, maintaining their health even whilst threatening their safety. By comparing performances to food, playwrights may therefore be contending not that drama should be permitted because it can, theoretically, be rendered safe, but rather because its benefits both outweigh and inhere within the risks it poses, with bodily openness constituting a valuable end in and of itself.

The notion of selfhood as reactive and relational rather than active and inherent emerges very prominently in *Epicene*, including through Jonson's depiction of Captain Otter's use of his 'carousing cups', which we learn from Truewit have been named after particular animals.¹¹⁰ Captain Otter later justifies his request to his wife to use these cups at the upcoming feast with the assertion that this is what he is 'known to the courtiers by', it having been 'reported to them for [his] humour' such that they 'receive it so, and do expect it'.¹¹¹ By presenting Captain Otter as displaying these cups only to fulfil others' expectations of his behaviour, Jonson establishes this aspect of his identity as a reactionary response to external demands rather than as an agential imposition of an internalised selfhood onto the world. Moreover, that identity is not merely performed in response to societal expectations but instead actively shaped by them is evidenced through Jonson's portrayal of Morose, whose aversion to noise is established as performative rather than pathological in origin. So

¹⁰⁸ Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Clifford M. Foust, *Rhubarb: The Wondrous Drug* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. xx.

¹¹⁰ Jonson, *Epicene*, II. 6. 56–57.

¹¹¹ Jonson, *Epicene*, III. 1. 10–12.

much becomes apparent in Morose's encounter with Truewit after discovering Epicene's hitherto concealed loquacity, where despite initially viewing Truewit's speeches as an 'affliction', as their conversation progresses Morose develops something of a tolerance for Truewit's interjections.¹¹² Although Morose rarely responds directly to Truewit's remarks, his rage at being deceived temporarily seems to cure him of his fear of auditory assault, with Truewit getting through twenty-one lines of dialogue unchecked by Morose.¹¹³ However, Morose then abruptly curtails their conversation with the declaration 'Good sir, no more. I forgot myself', a phrase which presents his antipathy to sound not as an integral aspect of his psyche but rather as an affectation that can be assumed and discarded at will.¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, a distinction between Morose's fear of sound and Captain Otter's performative use of his drinking cups is signalled by Morose's use of the word 'myself' to encapsulate this facet of his character, indicating the complete assimilation of this assumed 'humour' into his identity. This idea re-emerges towards the end of the play, where Morose reveals that during his 'education' his father 'was wont to advise [him] that [he] should always collect and contain [his] mind, not suffering it to flow loosely', claiming also that he was taught to 'endear [himself] to rest and avoid turmoil, which now is grown to be another nature to [him]'.¹¹⁵ Eschewing the equivocation in Hamlet's remark that 'use almost can change the stamp of nature', Jonson here collapses the distinction between seeming and being entirely, suggesting the ease with which performance can merge into personality.¹¹⁶ Indeed, that Morose's aversion to sound is neither the external manifestation of a psychological peculiarity nor a wilfully assumed characteristic but is itself a response to an aurally received instruction appears to vindicate his fears, foregrounding the powerful and potentially detrimental effects of unchecked openness to external influence. Jonson's depiction of

¹¹² Jonson, *Epicene*, III. 5. 51.

¹¹³ Jonson, *Epicene*, III. 5. 52–91.

¹¹⁴ Jonson, *Epicene*, III. 5. 95.

¹¹⁵ Jonson, *Epicene*, v. 3. 42–47.

¹¹⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 'Additional Passages', G, 1. 8.

Morose therefore seems to substantiate the concerns of contemporary anti-theatricalists regarding the porous boundary between performed and actualised immorality – a view encapsulated in John Rainolds’s account of an actor ‘who made boyes effeminate by instructing the[m] how to play the wemen’.¹¹⁷ By suggesting that Morose’s temperament has been materially altered by the combined effects of the verbal instruction supplied by his father and his initially voluntary adherence to it, Jonson lends credence to the assertions of anti-theatricalists such as Rainolds that performances risk habituating both actors and playgoers to vice in the world beyond the playhouse.

However, Jonson also calls attention to the inherently problematic nature of Morose’s father’s instruction through Morose’s description of a mind exposed to external influence as being in ‘turmoil’. Though usually denoting an objectionable state of disorder, one context in which ‘turmoil’ is significantly more desirable than rest is with respect to water – a substance with which Morose’s mind is aligned when it is described as possessing a comparable ability to ‘flow loosely’. Boorde devotes considerable attention to the importance of dwelling near safe water sources, advising against establishing a house near ‘stynkyng and putryfyed standyng waters, pooles, pondes, nor myers’, or at the very least ensuring that ‘some fresshe sprynge have a recourse to nouryshe and to refresshe the sayd standyng waters’.¹¹⁸ By emphasising the fluidity of Morose’s mind, Jonson suggests that the same reasoning applies; that just as a tumultuous river is healthier than a standing pond, so a mind in ‘turmoil’ is healthier than one which is left to fester undisturbed. As Paster contends, ‘vigorous, even turbulent activity’ is a feature rather than a flaw of humoral bodies, a fact which establishes Morose’s father’s injunction against ‘turmoil’ as both impossible to follow and fundamentally misguided.¹¹⁹ This also lends additional significance to Clerimont’s Boy’s claim early in the play that ‘we that love [Morose] devise to bring him in such as we may,

¹¹⁷ John Rainolds, *Th’ Overthrow of Stage-Playes* (Middleburg: Richard Schilders, 1599), p. 21.

¹¹⁸ Boorde, *Dyetary of Health*, sig. B4^v.

¹¹⁹ Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, p. 12.

now and then, for his exercise, to breathe him. He would grow resty else in his ease'.¹²⁰ The pun on 'resty' and "rest" here strongly implies that mental 'ease' is not necessarily healthy, with the boy framing his exposure of Morose to noise not as harassment but rather as a form of therapeutic purgation. Jonson therefore symbolically aligns Morose's father not with performers, as initially appears to be the case, but instead with anti-theatricalists, contending that the cathartic mental 'turmoil' which performances generate in spectators is actually beneficial to their health for the very same reasons that it threatens their safety.

That to be 'moved' by external influences is in fact essential to the maintenance of a stable identity is also evidenced in *Epicene* through Jonson's depiction of the relationship between bodies and cosmetics. In the play's opening scene, Truewit expounds upon the commodification of female beauty in early modern society, claiming to 'love a good dressing before any beauty o' the world' and advising women to 'practise any art to mend breath, cleanse teeth, repair eyebrows, paint, and profess it'.¹²¹ Marjorie Swann contends that, although ostensibly defending these practices, by 'demystify[ing] the artful, "pieced" woman' in this way Truewit actually reveals that "what is theirs is not theirs at all", with women's use of cosmetics fragmenting rather than augmenting their identities by transmuting them into possessions of the marketplace.¹²² This view appears to find support in Captain Otter's later declaration that his wife's 'teeth were made i' the Blackfriars, both her eyebrows i' the Strand, and her hair in Silver Street', with Swann identifying his claim that 'Every part o' the town owns a piece of her' as foregrounding the 'lack of autonomy' resulting from early modern women's cosmetic practices.¹²³

Nevertheless, a more nuanced impression of women's relationship to the marketplace emerges from Captain Otter's following assertion that every evening his wife 'takes herself

¹²⁰ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 1. 154–55.

¹²¹ Jonson, *Epicene*, I. 1. 94–95 and 99–100.

¹²² Marjorie Swann, 'Refashioning Society in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 38.2 (1998), 297–315 (p. 304).

¹²³ Jonson, *Epicene*, IV. 2. 83–85; Swann, 'Refashioning Society in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*', p. 307.

asunder' into boxes.¹²⁴ His use of the word 'herself' here draws no distinction between Mistress Otter's natural and artificial appendages, indicating the complete assimilation of these manufactured objects into her identity. Therefore, although Mistress Otter's recourse to cosmetics threatens her self-possession by establishing her as the property of London's markets, Jonson also presents her as gaining something from this interaction, indicating the existence of a dialogic relationship between her body and the marketplace by portraying this as shaping rather than simply eroding her identity. The notion of selfhood as simultaneously endangered by and dependent on interactions with the world is reiterated even more clearly when, upon discovering Epicene's formerly concealed verbosity, Morose exclaims that he will be 'o'erwhelmed with noise', which he believes 'beats already at [his] shores'.¹²⁵ Morose's conception of his psyche as a beach assaulted by an uncontrollable ocean of noise reveals his impression of its fragility, as he imagines it as liable to change and even to disintegrate when touched by auditory information. Morose's view thereby closely parallels that which Marshall ascribes to Gosson when she reflects on the latter's belief that the self is 'fundamentally unsound' and that 'exposure to mimed emotion will dissolve an established identity'.¹²⁶ However, embedded within Morose's claim is also a contradictory image of selfhood not as imperilled but actually as composed by the shaping influence of external forces, with 'shores' possessing no reality beyond their connection to the sea. As such, without denying that waves alter and even erode shorelines, Jonson here encourages audiences to recognise the two as mutually constitutive, establishing bodily, sensory, and affective openness as vital to the construction and maintenance of a coherent identity.

¹²⁴ Jonson, *Epicene*, IV. 2. 87.

¹²⁵ Jonson, *Epicene*, III. 6. 3–4.

¹²⁶ Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self*, p. 17.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, considering these playwrights' attitudes towards experiential openness provides significant insights into their employment of the drama-as-food conceit. Shakespeare, Jonson, and Heywood all highlight the risks entailed by bodily, sensory, and affective openness, states which they show to be produced by both food consumption and theatrical spectatorship. Moreover, despite suggesting that performances can be rendered safe when they are consumed in an appropriately dispassionate manner, these playwrights also foreground the difficulty of engaging with drama in this way. Nevertheless, a consideration of Renaissance medical doctrine reveals that the threat posed by experiential openness neither can nor should be avoided, with the maintenance of individuals' health and the stability of their identities depending on a continuous flow of matter and information into and out of the body. The process of food consumption illustrates the reasoning behind this concept particularly effectively. Rather than constituting the use of external material as a prop to support the maintenance of an interior self, eating can more accurately be said to contest the boundaries of selfhood through its translation of the external into the internal. Food consumption therefore particularly starkly evidences the impossibility of self-sufficiency, illustrating the way in which the self is destroyed rather than protected when the body and mind are enclosed from external influence. Eating, like sensory reception, thus exposes the fact that healthy bodies and stable minds are characterised by porousness, foregrounding the nature of selves not as *in* dialogue with the world but *as* dialogue with the world, the self only defined by its relation to the other. The insistent comparison between performances and food throughout early modern drama therefore highlights the essential role drama plays in testing and reformulating – and thereby in constituting and securing – spectators' identities. In doing so, rather than simply contending that the benefits of theatrical spectatorship outweigh its risks, contemporary dramatists instead suggest that these risks can themselves amount to

benefits, firmly distinguishing between safety – which necessitates containment – and health, which demands openness. Food and drama both pose risks to their consumers, yet by conceptually aligning the two, Renaissance playwrights present the processes of eating and spectatorship as equally beneficial, sustaining viewers' identities in the act of challenging them just as shores are constituted by their contact with the sea.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored early modern playwrights' uses of the drama-as-food conceit in their plays, highlighting the prevalence of this trope and indicating some of the potential reasons for its employment, whilst simultaneously considering what its use can tell us about Renaissance dramatists' attitudes towards their work. My research has revealed that the conceptual association between food and plays has a long history in the English dramatic tradition, stretching back at least to the cycle drama and morality plays of the Middle Ages. As my study has also made clear, the particular resonances of this connection undergo significant changes over time, responding to shifting cultural attitudes towards food, drama, and materiality more broadly. In medieval drama, playwrights regularly highlight the similarities between food and performances in order to present plays as capable of facilitating their consumers' spiritual growth, though with the caveat that both must be used correctly in order to be of value, being approached by audiences neither as purely secular nor as sacramental events. In post-Reformation drama, food retains its associations with worldliness, but in these plays worldliness itself is portrayed in a considerably more negative light, constituting a distraction from important eschatological concerns rather than a potential aid to spiritual enlightenment. However, food in these works is often presented as a counterpoint to, rather than a parallel for, performances, with Protestant dramatists thereby attempting to justify drama's utility as a tool for the dissemination of Reformed doctrine. Nevertheless, drama's compatibility with the Reformists' cause soon comes into question, and by the second half of the sixteenth century parallels between food and drama begin to appear once again – this time with negative implications for performances, which emerge from such comparisons not only as purely secular entertainments, but also as profoundly detrimental to the moral and spiritual health of their consumers.

In light of this contextual background, it is particularly significant that early modern playwrights – especially those writing after the turn of the seventeenth century – make such insistent use of the drama-as-food conceit. Comparisons between plays and food appear extremely frequently in early modern dramatic paratexts between 1600 and 1639, wherein the parallel is used not merely to foreground the superficial similarities between consuming a play and consuming a meal, but also to explore the nature and function of performances, as well as their value to spectators and to early modern society more broadly. Given the prevalence of this parallel in dramatic paratexts, it would be surprising if it did not extend into the performances to which they are attached, and indeed references to food and its providers in the main bodies of Renaissance plays regularly hold meta-theatrical connotations. However, rather than emphasising food's positive qualities as a source of pleasure and nourishment, contemporary dramatists instead often focus on its potential to cause harm to its consumers. Whilst doing so imbues plays, too, with this threatening capacity, in light of food's indispensability to the maintenance of health this comparison enables Renaissance playwrights to question the wisdom of eschewing performances in the manner advocated by contemporary anti-theatricalists. In particular, by highlighting the essential distinction between safety and health the drama-as-food parallel frames anti-theatricalists' calls for the abolition of plays as dangerously, even comically misguided, implying that banning plays to keep people safe would be just as counterproductive as banning food for the same purpose. Moreover, by likening plays to food dramatists such as Shakespeare, Jonson, and Heywood present safety – in the theatre as at the table – as not only distinct from health, but as fundamentally incompatible with it. Drawing on contemporary beliefs regarding the role of bodily and affective openness in facilitating individuals' wellbeing, these authors present plays as valuable not despite but because of their ability to generate these dangerous but, ultimately, necessary states in their attendees. Therefore,

without disputing early modern anti-theatricalists' claims regarding the dangers of attending theatrical performances, in their recurrent use of the drama-as-food metaphor contemporary playwrights put forward a compelling argument for the continued production of plays, presenting their benefits not only as outweighing, but in some cases even as synonymous with, their risks.

As well as lending further insight into historical attitudes towards food, medicine, selfhood, and the senses, my investigation into the relationship between food and drama throughout the medieval and early modern periods advances current scholarship on Renaissance drama in several major respects. For one, it addresses a lacuna in early modern dramatic scholarship by offering a possible explanation for the surge of anti-theatricalism in the late sixteenth century, attributing this not to Reformers' inherent suspicion of drama's materiality, its ties to Catholic worship, its growing commercialisation, or even its content, but instead to the fundamental conflicts they discovered, through a process of trial and error, between the dramatic form and Reformed doctrine. It also picks up on hitherto unexplored nuances within early modern theatrical debates, highlighting the fact that anti-theatrical arguments are in many cases founded not simply on fears regarding the immoral content or context of performances, but instead on eminently reasonable concerns regarding what at the time were seen as the profound risks of corporeal and affective openness – states which performances produce in actors and audiences alike. Moreover, my work provides further insight into contemporary playwrights' disparate conceptions of public and private audiences, and reveals one significant way in which this belief materially influenced their writing, with culinary imagery being presented not as a parallel for but as the antithesis of drama in courtly entertainments. Perhaps most significantly, this study shows that Renaissance playwrights use the drama-as-food metaphor to engage in dialogue with contemporary anti-theatricalists in a manner which goes beyond straightforwardly satirising, contesting, or even corroborating

their arguments. Instead, these writers liken plays to food in order to depict performances as potentially health-giving experiences which nevertheless pose very real and entirely unavoidable risks to their consumers. This in turn provides significant insights into early modern dramatists' conception of their work, revealing both their impression of drama as a profoundly meaningful practice rather than an innocuous pastime, and their cognisance that their own role affords them the power to shape spectators and society alike – for good or evil, as the case may be.

Alongside these findings, this study opens up some potentially productive avenues for future research. For one, having demonstrated that the connection between food and plays is already present in the medieval mystery cycles, it invites consideration of precisely when this association emerges in English drama. At the opposite end of the chronological spectrum, it raises questions regarding the development of the drama-as-food conceit after 1639, including how it changes in response to the closure of the public theatres in 1642 and whether or not it continues (or re-emerges) in Restoration drama. It also paves the way for a more fine-grained approach to food's meta-theatrical valences in Renaissance plays themselves, prompting consideration of the specific resonances of particular foodstuffs, generic and thematic differences in the use of the conceit, and of course more subtle alterations to the drama-as-food metaphor as it passes from the Elizabethan to the Jacobean to the Caroline period. The findings of my quantitative research, in particular, merit further exploration. What, for instance, causes culinary imagery to proliferate and dwindle in drama at particular times? What happens when these statistics are broken down into individual years, rather than decades? Do any particular plays, or playwrights, go against these trends? How does culinary imagery operate in early modern poetry and prose, in light of its meta-theatrical function in contemporary drama? Answering these questions goes beyond the remit of this investigation,

but doing so might well serve to enhance our understanding of early modern drama even further.

Evidently, then, my analysis provides valuable new insights into early modern drama and its producers, as well as raising new questions to be addressed by future scholarship. Indeed, in light of the profound influence of early modern plays upon many later authors, in making these advances my work can also be applied to expand our understanding of the literature of the following centuries. However, studies such as this also contribute in other, less easily measurable ways. My research intersects with a current trend in early modern scholarship towards taking a more intimate approach to social and literary history, wherein close attention is afforded to elusive or fleeting details of quotidian life. This approach, as well as offering valuable insights into both contemporary eating habits and embodied sensation – fields of inquiry which have closely informed my own work – has also generated an increased interest in living history in both culinary and theatre studies, with researchers recreating everything from bread recipes to performance spaces in an attempt to experience how it may have felt to be present at a Renaissance play, or an early modern meal.¹ In the words of Hamlet, it seems as though many of us ‘would [we] had been there’, though such a desire invariably precludes satisfaction, with proponents of living history almost unanimously – albeit reluctantly – acknowledging the impossibility of accurately recreating the meals, plays, or experiences of the past armed only with modern materials, techniques, and philosophies.² Indeed, studying the past through its reproduction in the present invariably confronts us with a disconcerting reminder of just how much has been irretrievably lost.

¹ See, for instance, Ken Albala, ‘Cooking as Research Methodology: Experiments in Renaissance Cuisine’, in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare*, ed. by Joan Fitzpatrick (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 73–88, and the performances described by Laura A. Lodewyck in “‘Look with Thine Ears’: Puns, Wordplay, and Original Pronunciation in Performance”, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 31.1 (2013), 41–61. See also Carolyn Korsmeyer, ‘Historical Dishes and the Search for Past Tastes’, in *A Philosophy of Recipes*, ed. by Andrea Borghini and Patrik Engisch (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 99–110.

² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 1121–63 (I. 4. 233).

Nevertheless, investigations which focus on recovering these vanished things – whether literally or, like my own, on a purely conceptual level – are in many ways more important now than ever, not despite but because of their inability to fully realise their goal. In an age characterised by an erroneous belief in the limitless reproducibility of products, information, and experiences, studies which centralise transient events and ephemeral objects provide a timely reminder of the impermanence of so much that is of value.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Words Used in Data Collection

Ale; Almond; Anchove/Anchovy; Anise/Aniseed; Apple; Apricot; Artichoke; Bacon; Bake; Banquet; Barley; Bean; Beef; Beer; Beetroot; Berry; Biscuit; Bitter; Blackberry/Blackeberry; Boar; Boil; Brandy; Bread; Breakfast; Bream; Broccoli; Broth; Butter; Cabbage/Cabbege; Cake; Canary; Cannibal; Capon; Carrot; Cashew; Cauliflower; Caviar; Celery; Cheese/Chese; Cherry; Chestnut; Chicken/Chickin; Claret/Clarret; Chocolate; Cinnamon/Cynnamom/Cynamome/Cynnamon/Sinamom/Sinnamom; Coconut; Coffee; Confection; Comfet/Comfit; Coriander; Corn; Crab; Cream; Crop; Cucumber; Cup; Curd; Cure; Custard; Dessert; Digest; Dine; Dinner; Disease; Dish; Distil; Drink; Eat; Eel; Egg; Eggplant; Famish; Feast; Fennel; Fig; Fish; Fresh; Fruit; Fry; Garlic; Ginger; Glutton; Goat; Gooseberry; Grain; Grape; Grease; Haddock; Halibut; Harvest; Hazelnut; Herb; Herring; Heron; Honey/Hunnie/Hunny; Hunger; Ice; Jam; Jelly; Kid; Lamprey; Lard; Leek; Lemon/Limon; Lentil; Letice/Lettice/Lettuce/Lettyce; Lobster; Malmesie/Malmesey/Malmesye/Malmsie/Malmsey; Marchpane; Marmalade; Meat; Medicine; Mellon/Melon; Milk; Mushroom/Mushrum/Mushrume/Mushrummes; Mustard; Mutton; Nectarine; Nut; Nutmeg; Oat/Oaten; Oil; Onion; Orange; Oregano; Oyster; Parslie/Parsley; Parsnip; Partridge; Pastry; Pea; Peach; Peanut; Pear; Pepper; Pestilence; Pheasant; Physic; Pickle; Pigeon; Pineapple; Pistachio; Plague; Plum; Poison; Pomegranate; Pork; Porridge; Posset; Potato; Pottage; Preserve; Pudding; Pumpkin; Purgative; Purge; Quince; Radish; Raisin; Raspberry; Remedy; Rhenish; Rheubarb/Rhubarb/Ruberbe; Rice; Rind/Rynd; Roast; Rosemary/Rosmarie; Rot; Rum; Rye; Saffern/Safforne/Saffran/Saffrom/Saffron/Saffrone; Salad; Salmon; Salt; Satiare; Sauce; Sausage; Sop; Sorrel; Soup; Sour; Spice; Spinach; Spoil; Spoon; Starve; Stomach; Strauberrie/Strawberry/Strawburie; Sugar; Sup; Sweet; Sweetmeat; Syrup; Tart; Taste; Tea; Tench; Toast; Tobacco; Tomato; Treacle/Treakle/Treakles; Trencher; Trout; Truffle; Turnip; Veal; Vegetable; Venison; Vinegar; Vomit; Walnut; Water; Wheat/Wheaten; Whiskey; Wine

Appendix B: List of Medical and Culinary Sources Used from EEBO

1560s:

Brunschwig, Hieronymus, *A Most Excellent and Perfecte Homish Apothecarye*, trans. by John Hollybush (Cologne: the heirs of Arnold Birckman, 1561)

Bullein, William, *A Comfortable Regiment* (London: John Kyngston, 1562)

— *A Dialogue bothe Pleasaunte and Pietifull*, ed. by Willyam Belleyn (London: John Kingston, 1564)

Gale, Thomas, *Certaine Workes of Chirurgerie* (London: Rouland Hall, 1563)

Lanfranco of Milan, *A Most Excellent and Learned Woorke of Chirurgerie*, trans. by John Hall (London: Thomas Marshe, 1565)

Moore, Philip, *The Hope of Health* (London: John Kyngston, 1564)

Ruscelli, Girolamo, *The Second Part of the Secretes of Master Alexis of Piemont*, trans. by William Warde (London: John Kyngston, 1560)
 ——— *The Thyrd and Last Parte of the Secretes of the Reverende Maister Alexis of Piemont*, trans. by William Warde (London: Roulande Hall, 1562)
 ——— *A Verye Excellent and Profitable Booke*, trans. by Richard Androse (London: Henry Denham, 1569)
 Turner, William, *The First and Seconde Partes of the Herbal of William Turner Doctor in Phisick* (Cologne: the heirs of Arnold Birckman, 1568)

1570s:

Banister, John, *A Needefull, New, and Necessarie Treatise of Chyrurgerie* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1575)
A Booke of Sovereigne Approved Medicines and Remedies (London: Thomas Dauson and Thomas Gardyner, 1577)
 Brasbridge, Thomas, *The Poore Mans Jewel* (London: George Byshop, 1578)
 Cartwright, Thomas, *An Hospitall for the Diseased* (London: Edward White, 1579)
 Gesner, Konrad, *The Newe Jewell of Health*, trans. by George Baker (London: Henrie Denham, 1576)
 Gratarolo, Guglielmo, *A Direction for the Health of Magistrates and Students*, trans. by T. N. (London: William How, 1574)
 Jones, John, *The Arte and Science of Preserving Bodie and Soule in Healthe* (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1579)
 Lemnius, Levinus, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, trans. by Thomas Newton (London: Thomas Marsh, 1576)
 Partridge, John, *The Treasurie of Commodious Conceits* (London: Richard Jones, 1573)
The True and Perfect Order (London: J. Charlewood, 1575)

1580s:

Arcaeus, Franciscus, *A Most Excellent and Compendious Method of Curing Woundes in the Head*, trans. by John Read (London: Thomas East, 1588)
 Barrough, Philip, *The Methode of Phisicke* (London: Thomas Vautroullier, 1583)
 Dawson, Thomas, *The Good Huswives Jewell* (London: John Wolfe, 1587)
 Fioravanti, Leonardo, *A Short Discours of the Excellent Doctour and Knight, maister Leonardo Phioravanti Bolognese uppon Chirurgerie*, trans. by John Hester (London: Thomas East, 1580)
 J. W., *The Copie of a Letter sent by a Learned Physician to his Friend* (London: John Wolfe, 1586)
 Newton, Thomas, *Approoved Medicines and Cordiall Receiptes* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1580)
 ——— *The Olde Mans Dietarie* (London: G. Robinson, 1586)
 Partridge, John, *The Widowes Treasure* (London: Edward Allde, 1588)

Prepositas his Practise (London: John Wolfe, 1588)

Wecker, Johann Jacob, *A Compendious Chyrurgerie* (London: John Windet, 1585)

1590s:

Buttes, Henry, *Dyets Dry Dinner* (London: Thomas Creede, 1599)

du Chesne, Joseph, *The Sclopotarie of Josephus Quercetanus, Phisition*, trans. by John Hester (London: Roger Ward, 1590)

Clever, William, *The Flower of Phisicke* (London: Roger Ward, 1590)

Dawson, Thomas, *The Second Part of the Good Hus-wives Jewell* (London: Edward Allde, 1597)

Hester, John, *The Pearle of Practise* (London: Richard Field, 1594)

Kellwaye, Simon, *A Defensative against the Plague* (London: John Windet, 1593)

Langham, William, *The Garden of Health* (London: the deputies of Christopher Barker, 1597)

du Laurens, André, *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight: of Melancholike Diseases; of Rheumes, and of Old Age*, trans. by Richard Surphlet (London: Felix Kingston, 1599)

Plat, Hugh, *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies against Famine* (London: Peter Short, 1596)

Present Remedies Against the Plague (London: J. Danter, 1594)

Rosselli, Giovanne de., *Epulario*, [translator unknown] (London: Adam Islip, 1598)

Wateson, George, *Cures of the Diseased* (London: Felix Kingston, 1598)

1600s:

du Chesne, Joseph, *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke, for the Preservation of Health*, trans. by Thomas Timme (London: Thomas Creede, 1605)

Clarke, John, *The Trumpet of Apollo* (London: Peter Short, 1602)

Duncon, Eleazar, *The Copy of a Letter Written by E. D. Doctour of Physicke* (London: Melchisedech Bradwood, 1606)

Hobbes, Stephen, *A New Treatise of the Pestilence* (London: John Windet, 1603)

Lodge, Thomas, *A Treatise of the Plague* (London: Thomas Creede and Valentine Simmes, 1603)

Manning, James, *A New Booke, intituled, I am for you All, Complexions Castle* (London: John Legat, 1604)

Plat, Hugh, *Certaine Philosophical Preparations of Food and Beverage for Sea-men, in their Long Voyages* (London: H. Lownes, 1607)

Pomarius, Petrus, *Enchiridion Medicum*, trans. by Stephen Hobbes (London: Henry Ballard, 1609)

Thayre, Thomas, *A Treatise of the Pestilence* (London: E. Short, 1603)

Vaughan, William, *Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health* (London: Richard Bradocke, 1600)

1610s:

- Gardiner, Edmund, *Phisicall and Approved Medicines* (London: E. Alde, 1611)
Murrell, John, *A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen* (London: T. Snodham, 1617)
Paré, Ambroise, *The Method of Curing Wounds made by Gun-Shot*, trans. by Walter Hamond
(London: Isaac Jaggard, 1617)

1620s:

- Bradwell, Stephen, *A Watch-Man for the Pest* (London: John Dawson, 1625)
Folkingham, W., *Panala Medica vel Sanitatis et Longaevitatis Alumna Catholica* (London:
Miles Flesher, 1628)
Venner, Tobias, *Via Recta ad Vitam Longam* (London: Edward Griffin, 1620)

1630s:

- Bacon, Francis, *Historie Naturall and Experimentall, of Life and Death*, [translator unknown]
(London: John Haviland, 1638)
Bonham, *The Chyrugians Closet, or An Antidotarie Chyrurgicall* (London: George Miller,
1630)
Boraston, William, *A Necessarie and Briefe Treatise of the Contagious Disease of the
Pestilence* (London: B. Alsop and T. Fawcet, 1630)
Bradwell, Stephen, *Physick for the Sicknesse, Commonly Called the Plague* (London:
Benjamin Fisher, 1636)
Bruele, Gualtherus, *Praxis Medicinae, or The Physicians Practice* (London: John Norton,
1632)
*Certain Necessary Directions, as well for the Cure of the Plague as for Preventing the
Infection* (London: Robert Barker, 1636)
Guybert, Philbert, *The Charitable Physitian*, trans. by I. W. (London: Thomas Harper, 1639)
Hart, James, *Klinike, or The Diet of the Diseased* (London: John Beale, 1633)
The Kings Medicines for the Plague (London: Henry Gosson, 1636)
Lessius, Leonardus, *Hygiasticon, or The Right Course of Preserving Life and Health unto
Extream Old Age*, trans. by George Herbert (Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1634)
Makluire, John, *The Buckler of Bodilie Health* (Edinburgh: John Wreittoun, 1630)
Paré, Ambroise, *The Workes of that Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey*, trans. by Thomas
Johnson (London: Thomas Cotes and R. Young, 1634)
Sadler, John, *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (London: Anne Griffin, 1636)
Simotter, George, *A Theater of the Planetary Houres*, trans. by George Baker (London:
August Matthewes, 1631)
A Treatise of the Plague (London: R. Young and R. Cotes, 1630)
Vaughan, William, *The Newlanders Cure* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1630)
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- Beaumont, John, *The Metamorphosis of Tabacco* (London: John Flasket, 1602)
- Belchier, Daubridgecourt, *Hans Beer-Pot* (London: Bernard Alsop, 1618)
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- *Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fooles* (London: S. N., 1619)
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- Clyomon and Clamydes* (London: Thomas Creede, 1599)
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- *The Second Part of The Honest Whore* (London: Elizabeth Allde, 1630)
- *If It Be Not Good, the Divel Is In It* (London: Thomas Creede, 1612)
- *Old Fortunatus* (London: S. Stafford, 1600)
- , and John Marston, *The Roaring Girle* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1611)
- Edwards, Richard, *Damon and Pithias* (London: Richard Jones, 1582)
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