

Locke's Pineapple and the History of Taste

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The problem with empiricism, the argument goes, is that it doesn't know that it is an ideology. Its mistake is to assume that the objects of sensation can be isolated from the cultural background of experience, that the matters of fact produced by the methods of empirical inquiry can be isolated from the ideological positions that those methods imply. On the contrary, one might object, matters are more than simply matters of fact; the empirical view of the object is far from being objective. As Bruno Latour puts it, "reality is not defined by matters of fact. Matters of fact are not all that is given in experience. Matters of fact are only very partial . . . very polemical, very political renderings of matters of concern and only a subset of what could also be called *states of affairs*."¹ The contours of the fact, one might say, and even the qualities of the objectivity which it implies, are shaped by the demands and pressures of its historical context. Nor is this claim very surprising for one who is familiar either with the major themes of Latour's career, or, indeed, with the key claims of postmodernism in the humanities. Empirical science, we know by now, declines its own cultural investments; what we need, according to this line of philosophical inquiry, is an empiricism sensitive to its own assumptions as ideological choices embedded in particularized historical conditions. Latour is often summoned up as a champion of exactly this position.

So it may surprise the student of Latour to hear that he has recently claimed that he is a champion of empiricism, of a renewed form of scientific inquiry which he calls a "second empiricism." While we are right to insist that matters of fact reflect the ideological states of affairs in which they are embedded, it is nevertheless wrong, Latour continues, to think these states of affairs describe the entire content of the fact. It is not right to think that "matters" are only "matters of concern." For the real world, so this argument goes, has a reality which is not reducible to the discourse about that reality. Facts attend to the failures, energies, and contingencies of a material world which

has its own potentials and limitations just as much as they are embedded in particular ideological fields. As such, the “next task for the critically minded” is “not fighting empiricism”—indeed, this seems to be the problem—“but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism.” Latour’s call is for an empiricism that can be savvy about cultural matters—that can be smart about its constructedness—but also for a humanism which is smart about the real conditions of the world it helps to structure. This is what the “second empiricism” is meant to accomplish.²

I’d like to suggest, however, that Latour’s “second empiricism” may look very much like empiricism’s first empiricism. I propose, in developing this claim, a return to one of the foundational moments in the empirical tradition, John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. I propose this return partly to clarify what I take to be one easy misreading of Locke’s claims about the status of sensory experience; Locke, I will suggest, doesn’t provide a very good model of what “empiricism” has come to mean, or even what Latour characterizes as the ontological status of the empirical fact as such. But I also hope a return to a specific and famous moment in Locke’s *Essay* will help illuminate a point of intersection between two fields—aesthetic criticism and empirical science—which exist partly because they constitutively refuse to recognize their own moments of overlap. This famous moment, Locke’s turn to the pineapple as an example of the object of sense, is a single historical gesture which might be thought to inaugurate both taste understood as an aesthetic faculty (indeed, an implicitly ideological aesthetic faculty) and taste understood as the effect of a chemical process. Inasmuch as empirical science and aesthetic criticism partly depend for their rhetorical force on disavowing the mutuality of their vocabularies, they are partly depending on a mutual misrecognition of their own shared historical roots. It is here, then, that Locke’s thoughts on taste can help qualify Latour’s project of empirical “renewal”; Latour’s “second empiricism” may be most satisfactorily inaugurated by a glance at empiricism its first time around.

I am limiting my investigation in this paper to the status of “taste” partly because the single word *taste* summons up two very different meanings depending upon where it is uttered on the twenty-first-century university campus. The empirical scientist, working in the field of food science, tends to understand taste as the final cause of a chemical process. The object of this kind of taste has its own inherent properties—its chemical structure and content, its colors, aromas, and textures—which produce sympathetic responses on the tongue and in the upper reaches of the nasal cavities, not to mention the lips, the eyes, the ears, the fingertips, and so forth.³ This is what is commonly known as flavor. Yet, while it is true that people mostly describe eating experiences in terms of the flavor of foods, and flavors as the effects of chemical reactions, food studies which focus on chemical structure don’t tend to be very useful for predicting real-world food preference and consumption.⁴ As

numerous recent studies demonstrate, the “preference ratings” produced from studies focused on sensory experience alone are only able to account for “25–50% of the variability in the consumption of . . . foods.”⁵ There is still an epistemological dark spot—perhaps a necessary one—in the empirical consideration of taste, a gap between food chemistry and the experience of flavor which Armand V. Cardello laconically calls “a process still poorly understood.”⁶

The historical limitation of the empirical approach stems partly from the institutionalized exclusion of the kind of data that could help fill in this epistemological gap. Product packaging, meal ambience, social significance, or other only “contextual” factors are exactly what are left out of such studies of taste.⁷ Indeed, as one food researcher points out, the “sensory scientist deliberately eliminates these critical factors from consideration, because they are believed to be simply sources of bias in the data or are too difficult to measure and/or control.”⁸ In a bit of constructive synaesthesia, such factors are commonly categorized as background “noise,” and as such, not appropriate to the study of taste at all. Although notable and important exceptions exist—one of which I will take up shortly—the well-constructed food science experiment is that experiment which most successfully excludes the kind of cultural factors which might help explain the human experience of eating.⁹

It is part of the curious history of taste in criticism and the liberal arts, however, that the humanist will have almost ceased to hear the alimentary sense of taste at all. Taste, after Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, has come to mean something like disinterested appreciation, a function of an “organ” of the mind, rather than a negotiation between the mouth and an object of food.¹⁰ There was a time when questions of aesthetic taste were still referred to the metaphorized process of eating: Joseph Addison’s analysis of aesthetic distinction by way of the tasting of tea is one such example;¹¹ David Hume’s by way of wine is another.¹² But a survey of more recent studies indicates that this metaphor has become a dead one; we now generally decline to consider aesthetic distinction as being even minimally informed by alimentary desire. Luc Ferry’s influential *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age* is one such example of a study which abstains, as part of its project, from ever addressing taste as a gastronomic category; Ferry is interested only in the category of critical or artistic pleasure, considered as wholly separate from the body and the senses bound up in producing these pleasures.¹³ We have become, in Joseph Litvak’s words, *Strange Gourmets*; “taste,” Litvak suggests, “present[s] itself, in the softened light of its most successful public relations, as primarily a faculty of discernment, a sensitive instrument of discrimination, vaguely located in the metaphorized papillae of a tongue that neither mashes nor churns but subtly, fastidiously appreciates.”¹⁴ To return taste in its aesthetic sense to its literal sources, Litvak suggests, is not so much to “leave a bad taste in the mouth, as to leave the bad mouth in taste.”¹⁵

So while cultural critics historically have left the literal sense of “taste” unexamined because it is too distasteful for liberal academic discourse, food scientists have tended to leave the role of culture in the production of flavor unexamined because it introduces “noise” into measures of taste—culture is in fact what the methodological imperative of empirical food science categorically excludes. Or, to put it another way, cultural critics, in the pursuit of theories of taste, have assumed that flavor is a problem for the chemists; chemists have had difficulty explaining taste because whatever it is that causes people to develop tastes or distastes for flavors seems principally to be cultural. As students of a single phenomenon, we aren’t so much “strange gourmets” as we are estranged gourmets, students of a cultural legacy that finds the object of taste in two noncommunicating fields, each of which claims the vocabulary of taste for its own.

The interesting thing is that although food scientists and aesthetic critics haven’t had much to say to each other, they have begun producing homologous models of the factors bound up in the taste experience.¹⁶ For Slavoj Žižek, for example, aesthetic taste and even ideological self-expression are primarily cultural or symbolic operations. The world which Žižek imagines is principally discursive, a vast and plastic network of signifiers organized by the motivated deployment of ideologically important signs. These especially important signs are what he calls *points de capiton*; such “buttoning” or “quilting” points (as Žižek translates it) are sites where individual subjects are “sewn” to the world, where the symbolic chain which is the world of culture is drawn down and “quilted” to the timeline of the single enunciating subject’s own unconscious. Such a point can be a particularly important word—“death,” or “freedom,” for instance;¹⁷ it is telling, however, that Žižek’s principal example of such an abstract, organizing master sign is a familiar and culturally important food product: Coca-Cola. Coke, as Žižek understands it, is an empirical object chiefly notable because it is a site in an ideological or aesthetic field. Coke itself, he proposes, isn’t “the thing.” “Coke” he insists, “isn’t it”; it is “excrement . . . undrinkable mud,” or whatever. Rather, there is an “unattainable something” which the consumer perceives to be “in Coke more than Coke”; it is this “unattainable something” that the consumer of Coke is after, and it is this unattainable something that the consumer either does or does not take away. It may be an image, or a sense of the American spirit that Coke exemplifies, or crispness or freshness, or even a desire to be the kind of person that drinks Coke. In any case, Coke is principally an opportunity for a subject to make a bodily intervention into a symbolic order, or, in our terms, a food object which a taster can choose to drink because it is culturally significant to her, whether she knows it or not. As such, Coke’s chemical composition does not enjoy a valorized status in the symbolic field; sweetness or tartness are signs that differ from other signs only inasmuch as they are more easily legible in the encounter with the food object itself. For such a

critic as Žižek, then, flavor is the index of an ideological intervention.¹⁸

Nearly simultaneous research in the field of food science unexpectedly offers a refinement of Žižek's claims. Armand Cardello and F. M. Sawyer, as food scientists working in the empirical tradition, provide one way of quantifying the role of culture in the experience of flavor. Beginning with the basic empiricist assumption that flavor is reducible to the experience of food on the tongue, Cardello and Sawyer measure the "acceptability" of foods through a "hedonic scale," a common approach which reduces the sensory experience to a position on a one-dimensional numerical scale. They find, however, that the "hedonic" acceptability of a cola beverage is more strongly linked to "expectation" than it is to "chemistry."¹⁹ Given six brands of cola, subjects in Cardello and Sawyer's experiment consistently found a chemical compound sweeter when labeled as a favorite brand than they found the identical chemical compound when it was labeled as a less favorite brand. Pleasure (hedonic "acceptability") seems to be dependent on symbolic cues at least as much as chemical content; the hedonic scale, which presents itself as the simple metric of a simple sense experience, in fact encodes a complicated set of acculturated flavor expectations.²⁰ This isn't to say that the object itself doesn't matter, or that its chemical properties don't figure into the taste experience. After all, it is the effect of the chemical reaction which makes that ideological intervention possible in the first place, and which, in the final analysis, provides a way of speaking about it—the quantified "hedonic measure." Instead, it is to insist that what we seem to be quantifying in the metric of flavor is at least as much a position in a symbolic field as the immediate effect of a chemical reaction.

It is perhaps a mark of the international importance of the Coca-Cola Corporation that Latour also has an opinion on Coke. While Latour agrees with Žižek that Coke may not be a "thing," he still insists that "the industrially made can of Coke remains an object," an "object out there."²¹ But it is also "an *issue* very much *in* there, at any rate, a *gathering*"; it is a gathering of "matters of fact and matters of concern."²² So while Cardello and Sawyer seem to be unaware of Žižek's work, and Žižek to be unaware of Cardello and Sawyer's—and while, indeed, Latour seems to be unaware of either—they all agree that an object's chemical composition and its symbolic status are bound up in one another. It is important, in this regard, not to lose sight of the object; it isn't that the Coke itself doesn't matter. Flavor is neither the simple expression of a chemical reaction nor the simple articulation of a cultural preference. Instead, as Latour, Žižek, and Cardello and Sawyer seem to agree, flavor is the human index of a symbolic discourse which attends on the chemical status of the object, just as its chemical status is partly determined by but still larger than the symbolic discourse which conceives an interest in it in the first place. Indeed, it may be most useful to understand a food object as the chemical site which structures and provides coherence to an accrued

and socially negotiated set of expectations; whatever else a real food object allows, it provides an opportunity of consuming a cultural history.²³ It is this claim that I want to return to Locke to clarify and historicize. And it is this claim that I mean to indicate by gesturing to the “history of taste”: the historicized philosophy of the eating experience, but also cultural history as an integral component of the intimate experience of flavor.

It is here that I’d like to offer a careful reading of Locke’s *Essay*; it is my hope that an accurate reading of one of the foundational moments in the history of taste will help us arrive at a revised understanding of the relationship between the chemical object and the symbolic field. It is also my hope that such a reading will help us refine the position of empiricism in the history of ideas. To return, then, to the point I raised in beginning this paper, Latour’s call for a new brand of realism, what he calls a “second empiricism,” is what I want to suggest is a return to Locke’s empiricism, to a renewed understanding of the stakes of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. The complex of questions, then, which I want to keep in mind is just this: did empiricism ever insist on “matters of fact”? To what extent, on the contrary, might empiricism more usefully be thought always to have been about “matters of concern”? To what extent was the “fact” of empirical concern always also understood to be the site of culturally invested intensity, not at the cost of, but in the service of, the things out there empiricism accepted as its objects?²⁴

I’d like, in other words, to put down the “industrially made can of Coke,” and take up the botanically made pineapple, not least because pineapple, like Coke, is an object both sweet and tart, and an object of particular symbolic saturation. Locke’s famous passage about the sources of empirical knowledge begins by suggesting that discursive knowledge is a derivative substitute for the only real source of ideas, direct sensory experience. This is how we normally understand the difference between object and idea—the idea as derived from the experience of the object. Here’s how Locke puts it:

Ideas [are] conveyd to the minde noe other way but by the senses themselves. nor can all the words in the world—which is very observable—produce in a mans minde one new simple Idea unlesse it be of the sound its self. for I demand whether after all the descriptions a traveller can give of the tast of that delicious fruit cald a pine apple a man who hath never had any of it in his mouth hath any Idea of it or noe? or whether if he thinkes he have, it be any new Idea but rather be not either—some one old Idea or a composition of such severall old Ideas of those tasts which he is told have some resemblance—to the tast of a Pine apple, which Ideas were before produced in his minde by other sensible objects.²⁵

Locke maintains that to learn the “tast of a Pine apple,” one can’t just hear a description of it—one can’t just hear it constructed in the cultural field, in the

(to paraphrase) world of words. As Locke elsewhere suggests, "we see nobody gets the relish of a pine-apple till he goes to the Indies, where it is, and tastes it."²⁶ In this sense, Locke is a realist, a believer in the real objectivity—the "fact"—of the taste experience and its object. He is, in our idiom, a scientist; the pineapple, according to this familiar reading, is the thing on the table and in the mouth, what the senses convert into distinct ideas: taste, color, form, smell, and so forth.

This would seem to be absolutely in opposition to Žižek's insistence that the object of desire is an articulation of an inwardly absorbed symbolic field, or Cardello and Sawyer's discovery that the chemical object is best understood as the confirmation or disconfirmation of a symbolic discourse. This, however, would be to misread Locke's insight altogether. For while Locke begins by insisting on the priority of the object to the idea that it predicates, he quickly insists that such an object itself is ultimately only a principle lurking behind the opportunities for sense perception that it enables. For inasmuch as the object is a source of simple ideas, it is not encounterable in itself, except by mediation of the senses which produce those ideas. The more Locke divides the object of perception up into its constituent parts, the more the thingness of the thing itself retreats into a kind of unknowability: complex ideas give way to simple ideas which resolve finally into what he calls the "*substratum*," a "*something besides* the extension, figure, solidity, motion, . . . or other observable ideas, though we know not what it is."²⁷ Whatever it is that holds the object together is fundamentally and constitutively absent from the collection of sensory data to which we have access, and ideas which we are able to know. Paradoxically, the ideas clustered around the object itself seem to have more substance than the only ideal reality that predicates them.²⁸

This occult "*substratum*" binds taste to color to form in order to make the object what we know it to be—a pineapple—yet this reality of the pineapple isn't what is principally important, not at least for the culture industry that makes the pineapple a desirable food object in the first place. Instead, what we are after are ideas which cluster around this unknowable object, but are not the object themselves. As Locke puts it, simple ideas are sensations in the mind "no more the likeness of something existing without us, than the names that stand for them are the likeness of our ideas, which yet upon hearing they are apt to excite in us."²⁹ Excitation, and even desire, are functions of "names," rather than of things themselves. Indeed, the "substance" of the pineapple, its *substratum*, is what emerges as the object of its desirable qualities, the simple ideas that reach out for the *substratum* as the object or end of desire. As Latour insists (he is in fact speaking of Pasteur's chemical ferments), the pineapple "began as attributes and ended up being a substance, a thing with clear limits, with a name, with obduracy, which was more than the sum of its parts."³⁰

Nor does the absence of the object itself pose a problem to the desiring

subject. Desire is not at all precluded by the absence of the object it idealizes. It is in fact constituted on absence; absence is its central principle. For Locke insists that “the uneasiness a man finds in himself upon the absence of anything whose present enjoyment carries the idea of delight with it, is that we call *desire*.”³¹ The pineapple of Locke’s example is just such a “thing”; it is (to put it more precisely) a “thing whose present enjoyment carries the idea of delight with it,” though it itself is “absent,” in Barbados. This is what is encoded in its “deliciousness.” To write “delicious fruit” is to anticipate “present enjoyment”; it is to attach the “idea of delight” to the “name” of the pineapple. So it is in fact *because* the pineapple is absent that it can be desired by the hypothetical man of Locke’s example; he can, as a function of names, know that a pineapple is a “delicious fruit,” and desire it as such a thing, even though he has never “had any of it in his mouth.”³²

The man in Locke’s example, in other words, seems to have a taste *for* the pineapple before he ever gets a taste *of* a pineapple. I suspect that we mostly account for this tension between the objectivism we assume Locke champions and his secret insistence on the “deliciousness” of the pineapple by referring it back to Locke’s authority; we assume that although the hypothetical man of Locke’s example has “never had any of it in his mouth,” Locke himself had. This is what would give Locke the ability to speculate on both the flavor of the pineapple, and the idea of the pineapple in the absence of the experience of eating one. However, at least by his own criteria, Locke himself had never had this experience; Locke insists that “nobody gets the relish of a pine-apple till he goes to the Indies, where it is, and tastes it,” yet Locke doesn’t seem ever to have made the trip himself.³³ This is to say that Locke’s insight about the nature of flavor isn’t constructed from the standpoint of one who has had “the relish of a pine-apple” by having had it in his mouth, but, instead, one who has such a relish by way of the travelers’ reports that precede it. It is the pineapple, in other words, and not the taster, which is hypothetical. What gives Locke the authority to pronounce such an object delicious, and to desire it as a delicious object, is precisely the discourse, the world of words, which structure and make desirable the anticipated experience of the chemical object itself. And while neither Locke nor I am suggesting that eating a pineapple produces no useful sensory experience—in fact, Locke is certainly right that the particular flavor of the pineapple can only be experienced by eating it—he does propose that there are some things, like “deliciousness,” like, perhaps, “tast,” that exist before the act of tasting, that almost certainly structure the idea of the pineapple and the possibility of that idea before and even after it is tasted.

Locke’s *Essay* represents a moment in time when what has come to be called the aesthetic was not distinct from what has come to be called the empirical: when the sacrifice of the unknowable object itself—its *substratum*—was the foundational gesture of both empirical science and aesthetic appreci-

ation. "Aesthetic," etymologically, only means "of the senses"; it is part of the particular narrative of aesthetics that its most rigorous theorists are those who, again, after Locke, denied the materiality of the sensory object itself to turn their attention to the metaphysics of beauty. David Hume and Edmund Burke, as theorists of taste in its cultural sense, were consciously working in a post-Lockean tradition which turns away from the objects of its own contemplation as part of its foundational gesture.³⁴ Likewise, Locke's empiricism provides the theoretical mechanics for concentrating on precisely what is knowable: on the interrelationships between cultural discourse and sensory experience in the absence of recourse to the object itself. "Empirical," etymologically, only means "of experience"; empiricism, in its foundational moments, is the study not of some valorized world out there, but of what is knowable within its rigorously acknowledged epistemological ambit. This is to say that the sacrifice of the object in both the field of food science and the field of aesthetics seems to me to be the single, identical product of a historical gesture. Locke's *Essay*, historically speaking, marks a moment when the scholastic habit of distinguishing the world of words from the world of things—at least in the discourse of "taste"—might be said to begin.

But part of what Locke's *Essay* registers is that just as a food object is desired ideally before it is consumed orally, the pineapple was a cultural object before it was a food object—a real something out there that arrived to London as "the descriptions a traveller can give" before a man might have "had any of it in his mouth." The cultural record bears this out. Though the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* wasn't published until 1689, the passage containing the pineapple was composed in 1671, following what he described as a "conversation" with half a dozen members of the Royal Society.³⁵ At this time, pineapples in England were rare enough that even high-ranking statesmen and belletrists like John Evelyn considered the bare sight of one to be a recordable event. They are recordable, in fact, precisely because they were anticipated, even elaborately advertised, long before their arrival. While the pineapple itself didn't arrive in England until, at the earliest, 1661, travelers' reports had been arriving and celebrating it for about a hundred years.³⁶ And while these "descriptions," Locke reminds us, can't provide a "new Idea," they certainly did provide "a composition of such severall old Ideas of those tast which he is told have some resemblance": an entire catalogue of fruits which might be labeled "delicious." At the heart of the empiricist theory of alimentary desire lurks a structuring strategy appropriated from what food scientist Harold McGee will later call the "lore" rather than the "science . . . of the kitchen": in Locke's words, "the descriptions a traveller can give."³⁷

No direct record of Locke's first encounter with even an imported pineapple exists. We do, however, have one for his Royal Society colleague, diarist, and amateur botanist John Evelyn. Evelyn tasted his first pineapple on Au-

gust 14, 1668, three years before Locke began his *Essay*. Evelyn describes his encounter this way:

Standing by his Majestie at dinner in the Presence, There was of that rare fruit called the *King-Pine*, (growing in *Barbados* & *W. Indies*), the first of them I had ever seen; His Majestie having cut it up, was pleas'd to give me a piece off his owne plate to tast of, but in my opinion it falls short of those ravishing varieties of ~~richesse~~ deliciousnesse, describ'd in *Cap: Liggons* history & others; but possibly it might be, (& certainly was) much impaired in coming so farr: It has yet a gratefull acidity, but tastes more of the *Quince* and *Melon*, than of any other fruit he mentions.³⁸

Like Locke, Evelyn doesn't seem primarily to be interested in the real pineapple; the thing itself is only what supplies a sort of "grateful acidity," what only fills out a taste experience already provided or anticipated by the travelers' reports that help construct the desire to eat it in the first place. Instead, Evelyn seems to be interested in how the taste experience of the real pineapple either does or does not articulate the cultural sense of it (his expectations) that he has already acquired from a life of reading. Like Locke, Evelyn is repeating what he has already no doubt read, not only in "*Cap: Liggons* history," but also in "others"; and even his sense that the pineapple he has eaten was comparatively bland can only produce the apologetic admission not that "possibly it might be," but rather (as Evelyn corrects himself) that it "certainly was . . . much impaired in coming so farr."³⁹

As an amateur botanist and virtuoso, Evelyn was familiar with the latest state of horticultural literature available to him; his sense of the flavor of the pineapple incorporates the terms that these reports provide. One example must stand for many: Thomas Johnson's emended 1633 edition of John Gerard's influential botanical catalogue, the *Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*. Like Evelyn, Johnson himself had almost certainly never seen an actual pineapple, but he had sifted through enough travelers' reports to put together a composite, if slightly idiosyncratic, description of one. As Johnson describes it, the pineapple is a fruit "the bignes of a Melon," which has a "rinde . . . somewhat like that of the Malocotone"—a peach grafted onto a quince.⁴⁰ This is typical of descriptions of exotic fruits; Johnson describes them in terms domestically available, in other "old Ideas" which can stand in for the new Idea he doesn't (according to Locke) have. But I also want to notice that Evelyn constructs his own taste experience of the actual pineapple based on the traveler's reports that Johnson has already digested for him. When Evelyn eats the pineapple, he tastes "Quince and Melon." And so, in the way that Locke acknowledges, Evelyn's private experience embeds a theorization of the pineapple as it was imagined (and recorded by Johnson) in the symbolic field already available for it: a pineapple can taste like

the fuzz of the quince, or the size of the melon. The question, in this regard, isn't whether a man who hasn't had "a pineapple in his mouth" can have any idea of the "tast of that delicious fruit," but whether the simple idea which is the "tast of a Pine Apple" can ever be teased out from the "composition of such severall old Ideas of those tasts which he is told have some resemblance."⁴¹ The simple idea, in other words, seems to involve more than an immediate sensory experience, though, of course, it is sensory experience of some sort which (as Locke tells us, and Evelyn confirms) forms its particular vividness.

Lurking among these "old Ideas," and giving them structure, is one that doesn't seem at first to belong. Evelyn doesn't just imagine the pineapple as a fruit among other fruits; he also seems to imagine the pineapple through the idiom of Royalist politics. Evelyn notes that he first tastes the pineapple "in the Presence" of "His Majestie"; this is what frames the possibility of the taste encounter. He also notes its new and current name, which gestures even more pointedly to his freighted expectations for the pineapple: this particular "rare fruite," Evelyn records, is "called the *King-Pine*."⁴² In eating the pineapple, then, Evelyn is articulating a node of cultural pressure, a *point de capiton*.⁴³ By eating the pineapple—the real pineapple—Evelyn is giving shape to his own political ideology; the flavor of the pineapple, what Evelyn breaks down into its chemical composition of quince and melon, encodes his own Royalist politics. Or, to put it another way, the chemical experience of the pineapple seems to structure and be structured by a Royalist experience which is its immediate cultural context.

Evelyn's principal source, he tells us, is Richard Ligon's *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes*; it is this source that develops the discourse of kingship that Evelyn adumbrates. Like Evelyn, Ligon was a Royalist. He was himself implicated in the fallout of the violent civil wars of the 1640s; as an officer in the defeated King's Army, Ligon was exiled to the West Indies, where the pineapple—what was called simply the "pine" because it looked like the pinecone—was already in limited cultivation.⁴⁴ He wrote his *True and Exact History* in 1653, only after his exile; and so it was a Republican revolution, a sort of practical articulation of theories of authority and kingship, that framed the possibility of cultural contact with the pineapple for Ligon at all. While it might be surprising that Ligon renames the "pine" in the first place, then, it isn't particularly surprising that he renames it the "King-pine."⁴⁵ Ligon was invested in a culture of expatriate Royalism; the discourse of political authority which could not be discussed as a political discourse displaced itself onto other available markers. The King-pine which Ligon saw, tasted, and cultivated as an expatriate, without patron or prospects, was implicated in the trauma of revolution that Ligon himself had experienced personally.

The pineapple seems to have absorbed its cultural function partly because it has a number of unusual, kinglike properties: the tuft of vegetation which

sprouts from its top, for instance, which Ligon calls its “Crown of leaves.” It is in fact Ligon’s *History* which introduces the persistent cultural practice of calling this tuft of leaves a “crown,” and while calling it a crown tells us more about Ligon than the pineapple, it is the fact of the unusual structure of leaves (presumably evolved to capture and preserve rainwater) which gives rise to this metaphorical superimposition.⁴⁶ Also implicated in Ligon’s political discourse is the real fact of the pineapple’s curious reproductive cycle, the reproductive cycle particular to the few examples of seedless bromeliad. The pineapple does not reproduce from seeds; it only reproduces from its own fragments. Ligon describes it this way:

A Slip taken from the body of this plant, and set in the ground, will not presently take root, but the Crown that growes upon the fruit it self will sooner come to perfection then it; and will have much more beauty all the time of growing.⁴⁷

“Crown,” then, conceptualizes both the properties of the pineapple itself, and, reciprocally, kingship. It is bound up in how the pineapple reproduces itself; like a king, the King-pine grows from its own crown, a glorious body emerging from its own physical or mortal body.⁴⁸ Both “Crown” and “King-pine,” Ligon suggests, are metonymic substitutions for “King.” In this regard, the *History* participates in a tradition of Royalist iconography, a *sub rosa* allegorical discourse elaborated during the Civil War and Interregnum.⁴⁹ Ligon, speaking of the King-pine, continues:

Some there are, that stand upright, and have coming out of the stem, below, some sprouts of their own kind, that bear fruits which jett out from the stem a little, and then rise upright, I have seen a dozen of these round about the prime fruit, but not so high as the bottom of that, and the whole Plant together, shews like a Father in the middle, and a dozen Children round about him: and all those will take their turnes to be ripe, and all very good.⁵⁰

This is at least as much a fantasy of government as a botanical treatise—the hierarchical clustering of “Children round about” a central King-pine “Father” naturalizes the conventional practice of monarchical government. Likewise, Ligon’s insistence that pineapples “take their turnes to be ripe”—botanically impossible, of course—articulates a vision of the ordered descent of primogeniture, the regular taking of “turnes” between an “upright” king and the “sprouts of [his] own kind.” It recuperates a political order and ideological identity traumatized by the historical experience of regicide.

But what I want to draw attention to, in this discussion of the aesthetics of the pine—of the empiricism of taste—is the way in which a political pressure, a cultural trauma, emerges in something as categorically primitive as taste it-

self. Indeed, Ligon's discussion of kingship through the body of the pineapple emerges most strongly in his description of the pineapple's flavor:

Now to close up all that can be said of fruits, I must name the Pine, for in that single name; all that is excellent in a superlative degree, for beauty and taste, is totally and summarily included: and if it were here to speak for it selfe, it would save me much labour, and do it self much right. 'Tis true, that it takes up double the time the Plantine does, in bringing forth the fruit, for tis a full year before it be ripe, but when it comes to be eaten, nothing of rare taste can be thought on that is not there nor is it imaginable, that so full a Harmony of tastes can be raised, out of so many parts, and all distinguishable.⁵¹

Between the "two extremes" of the sweetness and vigorous sharpness of the King-pine, Ligon continues, "lies the relish and flavor of all fruits that are excellent."⁵² The fact that the pineapple can't "here . . . speak for it selfe" is the invitation for a series of impossible claims: its "full Harmony of tastes," its distillation of "all that is excellent." Like Locke, Ligon understands absence to be the necessary precondition for the production of desire. The absence of the pineapple (echoing, perhaps, the absence of the king) opens up the possibility of taste in its aesthetic sense. And it is of course this same delicious absence—the Barbados pineapple introduced by Ligon's *History*—which will form the opportunity and exemplary instance of Locke's meditations on taste just a few years later.

This isn't to say that Ligon intended the *History* to be an allegorical discussion of kingship. I don't believe that he did. Likewise, I don't mean to suggest that Evelyn consciously read it in this way. I do mean, however, to propose that Ligon and Evelyn participated in a shared political culture that emerged in their shared experience of what they called the King-pine. I also mean, therefore, that the particular "taste" (in the word's extended sense) of and for the pineapple rehearses a cultural pressure that the pineapple itself, chemically speaking, couldn't possibly anticipate. For Ligon, I am arguing, there is more at stake than a particularly delicious fruit; his very real—real in the only way that an empirical object can be real—Barbados pineapple is a quilting point of English, and especially Royalist, discrimination and culture.⁵³ Inasmuch as the pineapple helps fill the cultural function vacated by the deposed king, it becomes fraught with a particular symbolic density. The King-Pine is the king of fruits, and like the king of England, Ligon's description of it—the discourse used to stand in for the thing itself—is panegyric.⁵⁴ It is an aesthetic discourse, one moment where "taste" (in his voice) begins to receive its metaphorical valence, an appreciation of the word it is paired against: "beauty." In other words, the flavor of the pineapple seems to be the opportunity for a world of words—which finds, as the limit or field of its opportunity, the chemical structure of the pineapple itself. To eat the pineapple is to partake of the king.

It isn't surprising that Evelyn was disappointed with his first taste of a King-pine—no actual object could live up to the taste expectations that Ligon had built for it, especially when those expectations seem to involve what isn't and can't be "here." But Evelyn omits his private doubts about the pineapple—even qualified, as they are, by the sense that it must have suffered by "coming so far"—from the description which he intended for publication. He records the pineapple in his *Elysium Britannicum*—which he began in 1661, but revised and expanded over the course of the next four decades of his life. The only accurate surviving copy—the manuscript itself—is heavily overlaid with corrections. He is celebrating the English garden when he comes to his description of the King-pine:

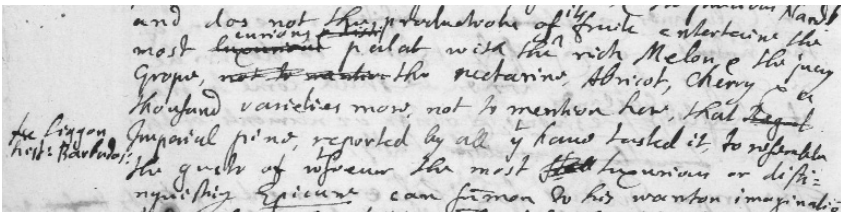


Fig. 1. John Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum*, f172v. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add MS 78342.

And does not the productions of {its} fruite entertaine the most **luxurious** {curious} (~~& disti~~) palat with the rich Melon & the juicy Grape, ~~not to mention~~ the nectarine, Abricot, Cherry & a thousand varieties more, not to mention here, that ~~Regal~~ Imperial pine, reported by all that have tasted it, to resemble the gusto of whatsoever the most ~~still~~ luxurious or distinguishing *Epicure* can summon to his wanton imagination.⁵⁵ (See Fig. 1 above.)

See Ligon
hist: Barbados:

Evelyn records the pineapple by way of everything that the pineapple isn't. This is a descriptive strategy Evelyn seems to have imported, along with the pineapple, from Ligon himself. As Ligon puts it, between the "two extremes" of the sweetness and vigorous sharpness of the King-pine, "lies the relish and flavor of all fruits that are excellent."⁵⁶ As Evelyn puts it, the "Imperial pine" "resemble[s] the gusto of whatsoever the most luxurious or distinguishing *Epicure* can summon to his wanton imagination." Yet he writes the pineapple only under the sign of what he is "not to mention here": what cannot be written, what, for Ligon, the pineapple couldn't "here . . . speak for it selfe." Evelyn's cancellations indicate that this is a carefully controlled effect; the "nectarine, Abricot, Cherry & a thousand varieties more" are decidedly *to be* mentioned. What is and is not mentioned is partly a way of categorizing what is and is not botanically domestic—what is and is not mentioned "here."⁵⁷ But it is also a way of figuring taste at all. What stands in for the absent fruit—the fruit that doesn't appear in the garden—is the textual pineap-

ple that can survive the transatlantic voyage: what Evelyn indicates in his marginal notes with "See Ligon hist: Barbados:." Evelyn, taking British horticultural taste as his pattern, constructs a map of "Regal" or "Imperial" identity—imperial taste inhabiting the void of the king written under erasure—in which the most important British markers of identity are categorically absent, are only of the "world of words." In this way, the pineapple quilts the English garden and the cultivated capacity for discrimination that it catalogues.

This is the political discourse that Locke at least partly excludes from his consideration of the simple idea of the pineapple—perhaps, indeed, because he was a stout Whig. Like Evelyn, however, he finds himself folding the actual pineapple—the ugly, squat thing in Barbados—into a process of desire which cannot disentangle ideology from chemistry; desire, as Locke understands it, is an elaborated function of names tangled up in the facts of the object over which it obsesses. Except maybe for Ligon, then, taste, understood as a philosophical category, seems not to be a response to an experience of contact between a subject and an object at the margins of the body, or, for that matter, at the margins of the empire. Locke's *substratum* is the necessary and longed-for reality of a political crisis; the object of taste is a hypothesized and indefinitely deferred desideratum of cultural or political yearning.⁵⁸ It is the work of art in the age of botanical reproduction; it is the object of a politicized discourse before the language of aesthetics had turned away from the experience of flavor. And it is such an object, I am suggesting, that is the object of both the elaborated methods of food science, and the strikingly similar methods of historically savvy aesthetic criticism.

As I was preparing this paper for the press, Cambridge historian Fran Beauman was completing an extended study entitled *The Pineapple*, what she calls in her subtitle *The King of Fruits*.⁵⁹ Beauman's monograph attests that the cultural construction of this post-Royalist taste for the pineapple persists; the "world of words" continues to lurk under the sign of flavor. As eighteenth-century garden historian Adam Taylor insisted, "The Ananas or Pineapple, in Deliciousness of Taste and exquisite Flavour, so far exceeds all other Fruits, that the Production of it in any tolerable Degree of Excellence is become the fashionable Test of good gardening."⁶⁰ This mixed sense of fashion, gardening, and "taste" turns up in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals*; Mrs. Malaprop, in responding to a particularly involved compliment by Captain Absolute—a compliment which depends upon a horticultural metaphor—means to call him a "pinnacle" of "good-breeding." Instead, she calls him the very "pineapple of politeness."⁶¹ Mrs. Malaprop, of course, is articulating the deep structure of taste through one particularly public quilting point. Pineapples had become, as more than one contemporary encomiast put it, the "King of Fruits," an object of good "taste," of "good-breeding," understood in both the gustatory and aesthetic senses of the terms. In this way, the pineapple continues to bear, as only a surprisingly literal example of an

essential feature of the flavors of foods, a memory of its cultural function. It continues to be the “princely fruit,” what a twentieth-century monograph, typical of the genre, calls the “King of Fruits . . . By Nature Crowned,” the very king of fruits even in a culture that at least auspiciously privileges democracy.⁶²

But I want to insist that this cultural tradition is intimately bound up in how the pineapple is categorized, even in how it is categorizable—even when we approach the flavor of the object itself, figured as its chemical composition. Its flavor is an elaboration of a cultural discourse. I’d like to turn, by way of concluding, to Harold McGee’s rigorous and rightfully popular *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, published in 2004.⁶³ McGee sets out to approach just such food objects by “distinguishing” the “qualities of their own” that they inherently contain, chemical qualities of the object that explain a food object’s “taste” and “aroma.”⁶⁴ Yet, as the pineapple demonstrates, McGee finds himself replicating a much older project. In a subsection of *On Food* titled “The Flavor of the Pineapple,” a subsection which promises to reveal the chemical causes of the flavor of the fruit, he begins instead by quoting something like a traveler’s report:

Pineapples are remarkable for the intensity of their flavor, the experience of which the 19th-century English writer Charles Lamb described as “almost too transcendent . . . a pleasure bordering on pain, from the fierceness and insanity of her relish.” At their best they are both very sweet and quite tart (from citric acid), and with a rich aroma provided by a complex mixture of fruity esters, pungent sulfur compounds, essences of vanilla and clove (vanillin, eugenol) and several oxygen-containing carbon rings with caramel and sherry overtones.⁶⁵

He quotes Lamb, but he might as well be quoting Ligon, for Lamb’s “pleasure bordering on pain,” seems to be rehearsing Ligon’s remark on the “two extremes” of the King-pine, its “sweetness and vigorous sharpness.” This is to say that McGee rewrites Lamb’s “pleasure” and “pain” (or Ligon’s “sweetness and vigorous sharpness”) into “very sweet” and “quite tart (from citric acid).” McGee, like Evelyn, elaborates his analysis with a catalogue of foods of similar flavor, what Locke would object was only “a composition of such severall old Ideas of those tasts which he is told have some resemblance”: sherry, vanilla, and caramel, among others. Nor is this list exhaustive; McGee elsewhere records three more contributing aromas, detected chemically: “meaty, clove, basil.”⁶⁶ This is a large number of flavors, and (as Ligon would remind us) all of them excellent; in fact, it is the largest number of flavors that McGee detects in any single fruit. Viewed formally, the relationship between the “lore” (exemplified by Lamb) and “science” (the flavor catalogue) of cooking is proleptic; Lamb’s aesthetic response to the pineapple has foreclosed the possible

interpretive strategies available to the empirical observer. This is to say that we might expect Lamb's essay to be a response to a discrete culinary experience—a negotiation between tongue and object—which it certainly is; but what we find in McGee's construction of the pineapple after Lamb is a subtle indexing of a taste experience—an experience of the tongue—which encodes the effect of a cultural figuration which has already happened. The effect—the response—delimits the available terms of cause—the object itself, considered scientifically, just as much as the cause produces the effect.

Indeed, for McGee, the pineapple seems to contain such a plenitude that the simple idea of pineapple flavor (which itself is a hybrid of other excellent flavors) overflows into other fruits that have nothing to do with it: strawberry, for example, and such categorical "flavor elements" as "fruity," "caramel, nutty," and "tropical fruit, 'exotic,' musky."⁶⁷ In some curious ways, then, the pineapple is a critical quilting point in McGee's anatomy of taste, a master signifier which makes the experience of strawberry possible. But, as I have argued here, this is more than a necessary fact of the pineapple absolute; the fetishization of the pineapple is not simply the result of its own complex chemical makeup, though this chemical makeup is implied in its taste, and, indeed, seems to have made its fetishization possible. What McGee is describing is the matter of intense concern of Interregnum and Restoration botany: McGee's anatomy of flavor is in this way a late revenant of Ligon's *True and Exact History*. While McGee's formulation categorically insists that the tartness of pineapple comes "from citric acid," we might suspect that the citric acid was only found there because Ligon's "vigorous sharpness" predicted it in the first place. As McGee himself begins to signal, this cultural investment—this historical discourse—provides the vocabulary for enjoyment; as I have tried to suggest, this particularly important symbolic center—the pineapple, what is figured as its flavor—is also what by way of Locke provides the vocabulary for thinking "taste" in the first place.

NOTES

The author wishes to thank Marcie Ray, Helen Deutsch, Jennifer Fleissner, Jayne Lewis, Anne Myers, Jonathan Naito, and the readers at *The Eighteenth Century* for their numerous suggestions and assistance with this essay.

1. Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Things*, ed. Bill Brown (Chicago, 2004), 151–73, 157; also see Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, 1993), 13–35, esp. 27–29 on "Scientific Representation and Political Representation." Latour's terminology is indebted to Robert Boyle by way of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's *The Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, 1985). Latour characterizes Shapin and Schaffer as arguing that Boyle theorized the structure of the "matter of fact," thereby "invent[ing] the empirical style that we still use today" (Latour, *Modern*, 18).

2. Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?," 157.

3. One comprehensive and authoritative study on this aspect of taste is Armand V.

Cardello's "The Role of Human Senses in Food Acceptance," *Food Choice, Acceptance, and Consumption*, ed. H. L. Meiselman and H. J. J. MacFie (London, 1996), 1–82.

4. The essay by Monique Raats, Beatrice Dailliant-Spinnler, Rosires Deliza, and Hal MacFie, "Are Sensory Properties Relevant to Consumer Food Choice?," *Food Choice and the Consumer*, ed. David Marshall (London, 1995), 239–63, proposes that "many studies report the failure of hedonic measures," measures designed to isolate sensory response, "to predict consumption" (241).

5. Armand V. Cardello, Howard Schutz, Chadwick Snow, and Larry Leshner, "Predictors of Food Acceptance, Consumption and Satisfaction in Specific Eating Situations," *Food Quality and Preference* 11 (2000): 201–16.

6. Cardello, "The Role of Human Senses," 4.

7. Lawrence L. Barber, Eva M. Hyatt, and Richard G. Starr Jr., "Measuring Consumer Response to Food Products," *Food Quality and Preference* 14 (2005): 3–15, 9. For the food scientist "taste is treated as a purely sensory phenomenon" while contributing cultural factors are "largely overlooked or ignored." See also Richard Shepherd, "Dietary Salt Intake," *Nutrition and Food Science* 96 (1985): 10–11; and Shepherd and Raats, "Attitudes and Beliefs in Food Habits," in *Food Choice, Acceptance and Consumption*, 346–64, 347. See as well M. A. Khan, "Evaluation of Food Selection Patterns and Preferences," *CRC Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* 15 (1981): 129–53; and E. Randall and D. Sanjur's "Food Preferences—Their Conceptualization and Relationship to Consumption," *Ecology of Food and Nutrition* 11 (1981): 151–61. Randall and Sanjur's food preference chart (for instance) contains the three major categories of Shepherd's: "Individual," "Food," "Environment."

8. Raats et al., "Sensory Properties," 246. See also Cardello, "What Do Consumers Expect from Low-cal, Low-fat, Lite Foods?," *Cereal Foods World* 38 no. 2 (1993): 96–99; and Sara R. Jaeger, "Non-Sensory Factors in Sensory Science Research," *Food Quality and Preference* 17 (2006): 132–44, 133.

9. Categorized as "noise" are those factors which "are uncontrollable during regular operation of the production process or factors that are uncontrollable during use/consumption of the product." This ratio between what might be called intrinsic to extrinsic flavor factors is known as the "signal-to-noise ratio (S/N)," and it is the goal of most food science studies geared towards putting new products on the market to maximize this quotient, to develop processes which produce foods likeable regardless of cultural or symbolic considerations which are figured as extrinsic to the epistemological structure of flavor. See Margrethe Hersleth, Bjørn-Helge Mevik, Tormod Næs, and Jean-Xavier Guinard, "Effect of Contextual Factors on Liking for Wine—Use of Robust Design Methodology," *Food Quality and Preference* 14 (2003): 615–22, 615.

10. Edmund Burke "Introduction: on Taste," *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. J. T. Boulton (Notre Dame, 1958), 11–30; and Immanuel Kant, *Aesthetics and Teleology*, vol. 5 of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, 1993). Also see Hans H. Rudnick, ed., *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale, 1978). Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant, and G. F. W. Hegel are widely understood to be the founding figures in the Continental theory of aesthetics. See, as one monumental study of this tradition among others, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, 3 vols. (The Hague, 1–2, 1970; 3, 1974).

11. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* No. 409, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), 3:527–31.

12. David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," *Essays Moral, Political and Literary of David Hume* (Oxford, 1963), 271. Also interesting in this regard is Hersleth et al.

13. Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loazia (Chicago, 1993).

14. Joseph Litvak, *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel* (Durham, 1997), 8.

15. Litvak, 8. Partly as a response to a call which is only partly Litvak's, aesthetic theory has begun the task of recuperating its own originary trope, of aesthetic distinction as corporeal, of taste as taste. Carolyn Korsmeyer's *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca, 1999), Diane Ackerman's *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York, 1990), Elizabeth Telfer's *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* (London, 1996), and Denise Gigante's *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, 2005), esp. 1–21, are interested in rescuing food and the gastronomic component of "taste" from its second-class status among objects of liberal academic consideration.

16. Speaking of "representation" in a way similar to how I am understanding "taste," Latour writes "today, now that we are no longer entirely modern, these two senses are moving closer together again." As such, he continues, "the link between epistemology and social order now takes a completely new meaning" (*We Have Never Been Modern*, 27).

17. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, 1989), 96. Žižek is working from a model of the Symbolic elaborated from psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's middle period.

18. Žižek, 96–97. Also see Paul Rozin, "The Socio-Cultural Context of Eating and Food Choice," in *Food Choice, Acceptance, and Consumption*, 83–104, 97. Rozin, commenting on such studies, suggests that food preferences, what we might call "tastes" in the extended sense of the word, are acquired from social pressures: "the particular foods consumed, at least in public, have significance in terms of self-esteem and public esteem." But he goes on to note that the interesting moment isn't when such objects are consumed in cultural settings, but rather when people begin to consume foods for their cultural significances even in private; this is what he calls "internalization," which is, for Rozin, the articulation of cultural values and symbolic cues in the experience of flavor itself. Rozin cites Sir James George Frazer's monolithic *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* as one study that proposes that "traditional cultures" believe "you are what you eat" (Rozin, 83); this is one way of approaching flavor as a sort of cultural incorporation, a kind of "sympathetic magic." Also see Rozin's thoughts on "the law of contagion"—that food acquires the properties of its handlers—in Rozin and Carol J. Nemeroff, "The Laws of Sympathetic Magic: A Psychological Analysis of Similarity and Contagion," *Cultural Psychology: Essays on Comparative Human Development*, ed. J. Stigler et al. (Cambridge, 1990), 205–32; and Frazer, *Golden Bough* (New York, 1911; rpt. 1976), 1:174–214.

19. Cardello and F. M. Sawyer, "Effects of Disconfirmed Expectations on Food Acceptability," *Journal of Food Sensory Studies* 7 (1992): 253–77.

20. Of particular interest is H. L. Meiselman et al., "Demonstrations of the Influence of the Eating Environment on Food Acceptance," *Appetite* 35 (2000): 231–37. The authors' experiment, which addresses, inductively, the problem I am discussing in this paper, involved serving identical meals in three different environments: restaurant, cafeteria, and laboratory. What we might expect is that the subjects of the experiments enjoyed meals more in the restaurant than identical meals eaten in the laboratory; the experiment confirmed this. The interesting thing, however, is that they described their enjoyment in terms of the flavor of the food that they consumed. Restaurant meals tasted better than chemically identical laboratory meals: salads were crisper, fettuccine alfredo was creamier, chocolate mousse was richer when served in a restaurant. With few exceptions, "ratings of sensory attributes in the training restaurant were higher for almost all food" (235). The authors explain this phenomenon through the model of "expectation": subjects expect better food in a restaurant than a cafeteria. This is to say that culture—what the author calls "context (or environment or situation)" (231)—is bound up in the desire for food in the first place; it is also part of the pleasure derived from eating, the symbolic surplus which is taken away. Also see Silvia C. King et al., "The Effect of Meal Situation, Social Interaction, Physical Environment and Choice on Food Acceptability," *Food Quality and Preference* 15 (2004): 645–53, which suggests a similar, but somewhat more complex relationship between sensory and contextual factors; C. Chrea, "Culture and Odor Categorization: Agreement Between Cultures Depends on the Odors," *Food Quality and*

Preference 15 (2004): 669–79, which identifies a complex mapping of qualities onto odors that differs between cultural settings; and Meiselman, “The Contextual Basis for Food Acceptance, Food Choice and Food Intake: The Food, the Situation and the Individual,” in *Food Choice, Acceptance, and Consumption*, 239–63, 239.

For the marketer, the chemical makeup of a food object is secondary to a cultural negotiation internalized by the consumer. The fact that opening packages and sampling food is mostly discouraged in grocery stores, for example, is one sign of this recognition that the symbolic content of the object of taste is far more important than its chemical makeup. Rather, the “consumption” of food, as consumption is understood in the marketplace, is expressible as a symbolic negotiation between consumer “attitudes” and “disconfirmation/confirmation beliefs,” between product expectations and the product itself as it can be situated against those expectations. Food is at most an opportunity for a bodily intervention into a symbolic negotiation; “perceptions of the use experience” are foreclosed by the cultural input and output of a taste event negotiated entirely through a symbolic idiom: see Ernest R. Cadotte, Robert B. Woodruff, and Roger L. Jenkins, “Expectations and Norms in Models of Consumer Satisfaction,” *Journal of Marketing Research* 24 no. 3 (1987): 305–14, 306. Also see R. L. Oliver, “A Cognitive Model of the Antecedents and Consequences of Satisfaction Decisions,” *Journal of Marketing Research* 15 no. 2 (1980): 25–38.

21. The coincidental interest in Coke displayed by these three nearly simultaneous studies may itself exemplify Latour’s point; it was the fiasco of New Coke in the mideighties, the public failure of a “better-tasting” Coke to sell, that taught us the importance of cultural history in the production of the flavor experience. For one expression of this position, see Barber et al., 3–4.

22. Latour, “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?,” 233. Latour is thinking of Martin Heidegger’s *What Is a Thing?*; Heidegger develops a sense of a thing as a “gathering,” a sense of the thing that Žižek probably also means us to hear in his thoughts on Coke.

23. See Žižek, 96.

24. Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?,” 151–74, esp. 157.

25. John Locke, *Drafts for the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, and Other Philosophical Writings*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch and G. A. J. Rogers (Oxford, 1990), 7.

26. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York, 1959), 2.328.

27. Locke, *Essay*, 1.395, 1.394.

28. This *substratum* is what Wallace Stevens—in his meditations on Locke’s pineapple—calls the “angel at the center of this rind” (“Someone Puts a Pineapple Together,” *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, ed. Holly Stevens [New York, 1971], 295).

29. Locke, *Essay*, 1.168.

30. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, 1999), 151.

31. Locke, *Essay*, 1.304.

32. Locke, *Essay*, 2.328. Locke’s career was intertwined with the West Indies: as a policymaker, a landholder, a political philosopher, and a merchant adventurer. He doesn’t seem to have visited them, however. See Maurice Cranston, *John Locke: A Biography* (London, 1957).

33. See Jeffrey Barnouw, “The Beginnings of ‘Aesthetics’ and the Leibnizian Conception of Sensation,” *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mathick Jr. (Cambridge, 1993), 52–95. In the same volume, see also Elizabeth A. Bohls, “Disinterestedness and Denial of the Particular: Locke, Adam Smith and the Subject of Aesthetics,” 16–51.

34. See Locke, *Drafts*, xiii–xiv.

35. The pineapple—under the name “ananas”—first appears in English in André Thevet’s *Singularidades do França Antartica* in 1555, translated under the title *The New Found World or Antartickie* by Thomas Hacket in 1568 (rpt. New York, 1971). The first recorded sighting of a pineapple in England is in 1661 by Evelyn, though it should be

noted that Evelyn himself reports a possible (unconfirmed) earlier example. In his journal entry for August 9, 1661, Evelyn—while recording his own first sighting of “ye famous Queen Pine brought from Barbados,” in the presence of the king—suggests that Oliver Cromwell, then the lord protector, had received a similar gift four years earlier (*Memoirs of John Evelyn, Esq. F.R.S.*, ed. William Bray, 5 vols. [London, 1827], 2:174–75).

36. This is emphasized in the subtitle of Harold McGee’s *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen* (New York, 2004); see also 1–4. Part of what I am exploring here is how a “report,” in Winfred Sellars’s idiom, becomes a “fact.” Fact, according to Sellars’s formulation, is a relation of inner episodes which are “reported”; these “reports,” however, record private experiences which are always already in some important ways intersubjective, part of an “academy of . . . linguistic peers” (*Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* [Minneapolis, 1956; rpt. Cambridge, 1997], 87, 88).

37. Locke, *Draft*, 7.

38. Evelyn, *Memoirs*, 2:304.

39. Food science generally turns to Leon Festinger’s model of cognitive dissonance to explain the kind of apologetic impulse exemplified by Evelyn here; the dissatisfying encounter is more often an opportunity to reaffirm the a priori or culturally appropriated expectation than the a posteriori or orally procured experience. See Raats et al., “Sensory Properties,” 244, which refers to Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, 1957).

As Evelyn’s entry indicates, though the pineapple was elaborately anticipated, the few domestic examples which were available in England came from Barbados by ship, a trip of six to eight weeks, and were stewed before serving. This voyage, and this preparation, destroys a pineapple’s definitive esters, the alcohol and acid compounds that—chemically speaking, at least—give it its particular taste. Evelyn was right, then, to suggest that his specimen pineapple was significantly “impaired in coming so farr”; it probably tasted very much like any other decayed, stewed fruit. For the shipping practices of pineapples, see Richard Ligon, *True & Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (London, 1657), 84. For good discussions of contemporary practices of the preparation of fruit, see Constance A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain* (Chicago, 2003), Sir Jack Drummond and Anne Wilbraham, *Englishman’s Food* (London, 1959), and Richard Tames, *Feeding London: A Taste of History* (London, 2003); for the chemical effect of stewing on pineapple, see McGee, 383–84.

40. Thomas Johnson’s *Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London, 1633) was an edited and significantly enlarged edition of John Gerarde’s seminal 1597 publication. Johnson, in an original entry, describes the “*Ananas Pinias*, or Pine Thistle” (1552–53). Of course, Johnson had never seen a “Pine Thistle,” so his description is a best-guess botanical account of a plant that was only beginning to be imagined at the time.

41. Samuel Purchas describes the pineapple in his 1613 *Travels* as “In taste like an Apricocke, in shew a farre off like an Artichoke, but without prickles, very sweet of sent” (*Purchas his Pilgrimage: or, Relations of the World* [London, 1613], 1:431). This is a characteristic report; it builds exoticism into the taste experience: in this case, literally, into how the pineapple must be seen. The pineapple is most itself “in shew” when seen from “a farre off”—as far as (say) the West Indies. From this vantage, it looks like something that might be seen in an English garden already: an artichoke.

Thomas Johnson, for his part, includes an engraving of the pineapple (which he calls the “pine thistle”); it looks, from a close up, like an artichoke (but from “a farre off,” maybe, like a pineapple). He is only picking up in his turn an imaginative and strategic distance already articulated by Purchas (Johnson, 1550).

42. As Allen J. Grieco observes, “according to the world view current [in the late Renaissance], there existed a series of analogies between the world of plants and the world of human beings.” Evelyn, with his interest in botany, seems to be thinking the pineapple through a hierarchical system based on “parallelisms” between people and plants, culture and horticulture, implicit in theories of “the Great Chain of Being.” In such a system,

"the upper strata of society were considered 'naturally' destined to eat foods belonging to the upper reaches of the world of nature" ("The Social Politics of Pre-Linnaean Botanical Classification," *I Tutti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 4 [1991], 131–49, 135, 136). Grieco's thoughtful and insightful essay, "Savoir de poète ou savoir de botaniste? Les fruits dans la poésie italienne du XVe siècle," *Médiévales* 16–17 (1989): 131–46, is also especially interesting in this regard.

43. As one study avers, "factors which may affect consumer expectations, such as product name . . . and product presentation [have] a significant effect on the consumer acceptance and stated likely purchase and use of novel foods" (Raats et al., "Sensory Properties," 247–48). Also see Meiselman et al.

44. Biographies of Ligon are as furtive and episodic as the man they record. The best and most comprehensive is probably Karen Ordahl Kupperman's new entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford, 2004), 33:757–68. Less comprehensive but also interesting are P. F. Campbell's "Richard Ligon," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 37 (1985): 215–38; and J. B. Boddie, "Ligon of Madresfield, Worcester, England, and Henrico, Virginia," *William and Mary College Quarterly* 16 (1936): 289–315. Ligon, it should be noted, penned the *History* after his return in 1650 while incarcerated in the Upper Bench debtors' prison.

45. Most languages call the seedless bromeliad native to Brazil the "ananas," from the Peruvian word *Nanas* first recorded in Thevet's *Singularidades*. And this is how it is catalogued in even the earliest botanical treatises: as *Annanasa sativa*, or *Annanasa comosa*. It seems, popularly, to have been called the "pine" or "pineapple" for its resemblance to the pinecone—the "apple" of the "pine." In this, the English were only following the rest of the international community—the Spanish *piña*, for example. The tradition of calling it the "King-pine," however, is strictly English.

46. Botanists don't call, for example, the little vestigial tuft around the stem of an apple or a tomato a "crown," though it is more evidently crownlike. A review of the Oxford English Dictionary indicates that among fruits, "crown" is unique to the pineapple. This usage does not predate Ligon, but it does stick after Ligon coins it. For example, see François Froger, *Relation of a Voyage Made in 1695–97 on the coasts of Africa, . . . Brasil* (London, 1698): "The Ananas . . . bears a Crown of the same leaves" (n.p.).

47. Ligon, 83.

48. The standard and authoritative study on the two bodies of kingship is Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, 1957).

49. See, for example, John Peacock, "The Visual Image of Charles I," *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Cambridge, 1999), 176–239.

50. Ligon, 83–84.

51. Ligon, 82.

52. Ligon, 84.

53. This tendency of Royalist ideology to insist on the materiality of objects—and to articulate itself to a quasi-scientific discourse—is a point elaborated by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer (apropos of Hobbes's materialist Royalism) in their influential *Leviathan and the Air Pump*.

54. As one pertinent example, see Evelyn's own *Panegyric to Charles the Second* (London, 1661). Speaking of the king's virtues, Evelyn suggests: "I would prayse you Great Prince, but having begun; where shall I make an end? since there remains not a Topic through all that kind, but one might write Decads of it, without offending the truth, were it as secure of your modesty; since I am as well to consider what your ears can suffer, as what is owing to your Virtue: On what heads shall I extend then my discourse? your Birth, Country, Form, Education, Manners, Studies, Friends, Honours and Fortune run through all the partitions of the Demonstrative: An Orator could have nothing more to wish for, nor your Majesty to render you more accomplish'd" (5). Evelyn's catalogue is not so much of the virtues of the king—who was mostly known for hunting and philandering—as of the virtues that one might celebrate as ideally English, beginning with

"Birth" and "Country."

55. Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum, or The Royal Gardens*, ed. John E. Ingram (Philadelphia, 2001), 225.

56. Ligon, 84.

57. The grape and cherry were traditional British fruits, grown in traditional gardens. While the pineapple could be literally cultivated in the *Elysium Britannicum* as early (perhaps) as 1661, it wasn't successfully cultivated in actual Elysia Britannica until gardeners developed heated greenhouses. The best evidence for the first pineapple grown in England is Bernard Mandeville's revised *Fable of the Bees*, ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford, 1957): "The first ananas, or pineapple, that was brought to perfection in England, grew in [Sir Matthew Decker's] garden at Richmond" (2:219). This seems to have been about 1719. See also John Cowell's *Curious and Profitable Gardener* (London, 1730), 27; and Philip Miller's *The Gardener's Dictionary* (London, 1731–39), in his entry on *Bromelia*.

58. A longer study would explore the extended cultural significance of the pineapple in Restoration and post-Restoration England, including its importance as an icon of kingship, exemplified (as one example of many) by Thomas Dankaerts's "Pineapple Portrait" of Charles II (1668). This particular painting was so-called by Horace Walpole, who insisted (apocryphally) that it recorded not the history of an important moment in kingship, but an important moment in the history of the pineapple: the first domestically grown example of the fruit. See George Royle's note, "Family Links Between George London and John Rose: New Light on the 'Pineapple Paintings,'" *Garden History* 23 no. 2 (1995): 246–49.

59. Fran Beauman, *The Pineapple: The King of Fruits* (New York, 2006).

60. Adam Taylor, "A Treatise on the Ananas or Pineapple" (London, 1769): 4, 16n. For Taylor, the pineapple was a test of culture in the Latin sense of "cultura": a test of something like one's "good-breeding."

61. As Elizabeth Duthie suggests, because representations of pineapples were used as pinnacles in the architectural sense—on "tops of pillars, towers, and so on"—Mrs. Malaprop "may be said to make a wild metaphor" (Duthie, ed., Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* [New York, 1979]: 62 and n).

62. Gus M. Oehm, *By Nature Crowned: King of Fruits* (Honolulu, 1953). As Evelyn's "Imperial pine" begins to signal, the pineapple has persisted as a marker of English imperial identity. Charles Darwin reports, of the Tahitian pineapple, that "they are of an excellent flavor—perhaps even better than those cultivated in England; and this I believe is the highest compliment which can be paid to any fruit" (*The Voyage of the Beagle* [London, 1839; rpt. New York, 2001], 363).

63. McGee's *On Food and Cooking* is the second and significantly enlarged edition of an established culinary classic which has been called (so says its dust jacket) the "definitive treatise" of "basic food science." The positive response in cooking and food-science communities seems to be pretty widespread. It may also be of interest to this discussion to note that McGee, before turning to food science professionally, was a writing and literature instructor at Yale; his introduction to food science came while "working in the library and needing a break from 19th-century poetry" (McGee, 1).

64. McGee, 382.

65. McGee (384) quotes Charles Lamb's "A Dissertation on Roast Pig," *Essays of Elia*, in *Works*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 1857), 1:156–63.

66. McGee, 383.

67. McGee, 274–75.