

“Este manjar es dulce”: Sweet Synaesthesia in the *Libro de buen amor*

Emily C. Francomano
Georgetown University

Much like Trotaconventos, who promises that the good love of a nun will bring the Archpriest “manjares . . . los muchos letuarios, nobles e tan estraños” (st. 1333cd) and “todo açucar” including, “bolado, polvo, terrón e candi, e mucho del rrosado; / açucar de confites e açucar violado / e de muchas otras guisas que yo he olvidado” (st. 1337), the mellifluous narrator-protagonist of the *Libro de buen amor* (= *Libro*) offers a banquet of sweet nourishment to his audiences. In the *Libro*, words, like sugar itself, are molded into many forms to be savored on the tongue and in the ear.¹

Discussions of food symbolism in the *Libro*, understandably, tend to focus on two central episodes, the doña Endrina and don Melón story and the Battle between Carnal and Quaresma.² Both episodes personify food and “foodify” persons, playing upon the erotic and religious polysemy of food vocabulary. The *Libro* has also been mined as a source for food history.³ Yet, as Nelly Labère notes, there is more to food in the *Libro* than the battle of Carnal and Quaresma: over half of the fables told by the Archpriest and his characters are thematically linked to food and eating (150). Indeed, food imagery and alimentary metaphors abound throughout the *Libro*.

Sweet foods and flavors are especially prominent in the *Libro*'s culinary imagery. From the poetic amplification upon the nature of signs, where we are told that “açucar negro e blanco está en vil caña vera” (st. 17d),⁴ through the many *exempla* and vignettes, where a *goloso* eats Cruz's sweet bread (st. 118d), enticing fruits lead Endrina up the garden path (st. 862), nuns are praised for their eroto-confectionary attractions (sts. 1333-1339), and the fear of death robs honey if its taste (st. 1380c), to, finally, the scabrous play on Psalm 33:9 in stanza 1700, *Gustate, et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus* (Taste and see that the Lord is sweet),⁵ the *Libro* dwells upon the delights and dangers of sweet foods, sweet sounds, and sweet sensations.

Sweetness is an aesthetic and rhetorical term so commonplace in Latin and European vernaculars that its meaning seems self-evident (Carruthers, “Sweetness”). However, as Carruthers demonstrates, sweetness is a multivalent concept that not only refers to a “definable sensory phenomenon” but also to aesthetic responses, knowledge, medicinal qualities, and the very name of God (“Sweetness” 999-1005). Moreover, the Latin *suavis* (sweet) is also etymologically tied to *suadeo* and *persuadeo*, “to persuade,” or literally, “to sweeten” (“Sweetness” 1008). Sweetness appears in all of these guises in the *Libro*.

Sweetness, as I will argue, is a synesthetic concept that lies at the heart of the *Libro*. I use the term *synaesthesia* to refer to both the “intersensorial transfer of adjectives from concrete

¹ All quotes from the *Libro* are from *Libro de buen amor*. Ed. G. B. Gybbon-Monypenny, Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1988.

² On don Melón and doña Endrina, see, for example, John Dagenais, “Mullberries” André Michalski, “Triple Characterization,” Kevin Poole, Louise O. Vasvari, “Vegetal-Genital Onomastics,” and Anthony Zahareas, Oscar Pereira, and Thomas McCallum (174-75). On Carnal y Quaresma, see Kemlin Laurence, Silvia Monti, Eric Naylor, Vasvari, “The Battle of Flesh and Lent,” and Zahareas, Pereira, and McCallum (296-33).

³ See, for example, José Pérez Vidal, Antonio Gásquez Ortiz, and Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada.

⁴ Here, I have reversed Gybbon-Monypenny's correction of the variant in Manuscript S, drawing upon his list of *variantes* (*Libro de buen amor* 513-571) and consultation of the facsimile edition. The change from “açucar dulce e blanco” to “açucar negro e blanco” is discussed below.

⁵ All biblical quotations are from the Latin Vulgate and Douay Rheims English translation.

to abstract,” and to the transfer of stimulus from one sensory organ to another (Tiez 3). Moreover, because sweetness refers to taste, touch, hearing, and knowing, its prominence in the *Libro* suggests a bridging of the divide between body and soul, between the corporeal and the spiritual senses. Sweetness is intersensorial in two ways: it combines the senses of the body, but also crosses the divide between what medieval theologians described as the “lowly” corporeal senses and the divine “spiritual” senses. Attending to culinary metaphors—eating, digesting, ruminating—and the related imagery of sweetness that accompany and illustrate the *Libro*’s preoccupation with the nature of interpretation, reveals what we might call the “somaesthetic” dimension of the book of the Archpriest, to borrow Richard Shusterman’s term. Somaesthetics turns to the body’s role as an “indispensable medium for all perception,” thus bringing the body out of the background and to the fore in discussions of mental processes and aesthetic response (Shusterman 3). The somaesthetic dimension of the *Libro* goes beyond the Aristotelian materialism of the oft-quoted stanza 71, explaining the Archpriest’s natural, human appetites:

Commo dize Aristótiles, cosa es verdadera;
el mundo por dos cosas trabaja: la primera,
por aver mantenencia; la otra cosa era
por aver juntamiento con fembra plazentera.

In the *Libro*, sweetness is a continual reminder of the presence of the body as a sensing object and subject that serves as the conduit of feelings and information to the soul. Sweetness, along with other metaphors of eating, hearing, and touching, points to the body and spirit existing in a pre-Cartesian relation of what Carolyn Walker Bynum has termed “psychosomatic unity” (5), which contrasts with more stringently dualist conceptions of body and spirit found in the *Libro*. While sight and hearing may involve distance between the sensing subject and the objects sensed, “tasting, eating, and drinking all involve an internalization of the object; hunger and thirst too, are powerful, even primal representations of the force of human desire” (Gibbons 693). The *Libro* is not a treatise on Christian anthropology, but it does reflect upon traditional rhetorical and theological conundrums, and does so in some of its most salacious moments. Moreover, the somaesthetic dimension reminds us of the physical presence and immediacy of the performed, spoken, or sung, text.⁶

The greatest and most varied number of references to sweetness is found in Manuscript S, the most extensive and, decidedly, the most clerkly of the extant manuscripts of the *Libro*. This manuscript, compiled in the fifteenth century, most likely within the orbit of the University of Salamanca, contains the prose sermon-prologue, the “Cántica de los clérigos de Talavera,” and introduces each section of the *Libro* with rubrics, which not only create a sensation of a unified work, but also emphasize the presence and importance of the narrator and author-figure, the Archpriest.⁷ In my view, MS S is simultaneously a fourteenth and a fifteenth-century book, a “moment caught in time” and on paper in the “complex evolution” of what we have come to know as the *Libro de buen amor* (De Looze, translation mine). My readings of sweetness in the *Libro* mainly concern the book’s relation to the Latin Christian tradition. However, it is

⁶ On the performative nature of the *Libro*, see Filios, “Performance Matters in the *Libro de buen amor*.”

⁷ As Dagenais observes, “Indeed, these rubrics . . . are the basis of modern ‘unified’ readings of the *Libro* as a work revolving around the fictional life of the Archpriest of Hita” (170). Jesús Menéndez Peláez argues that the prose sermon-prologue and the “Cántica de los clérigos de Talavera,” which both appeal directly to a clerkly audience, serve as a structuring frame to the *Libro* in Manuscript S (50-52).

important to note that references to specific sweets, such as Trotaconventos's list of different elaborations of cane sugar (*bolado, candí, terrón* etc.), point to a material culture that reflects the particular influence of al-Andalus, where sugar production, refining, and exportation had a long history.⁸ Curiously, there is a lack of sweetness in the epic battle between Carnal and Quaresma, the most food-laden episode of the sprawling confection of textual ingredients making up the *Libro de buen amor*. It is also the episode most suggestive of late medieval "culinary convivencia" and intolerance in the *Libro*. The absence of sweetness among the detailed descriptions of meats, seafood, and vegetables in the Lenten and Carnivorous armies, points to the distinct foodways, both allegorical and material at work in the *Libro*.⁹

I. *Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus*

To embark upon our study of sweetness in the Archpriest's book, let us begin towards the end, that is to say, stanzas 1690 to 1709, where we find a reference to one of the most famous and widely cited references to sweetness in medieval clerical culture. If MS S is the most clerkly, the *Cántica*, appended to the adventures of the Archpriest, is one of the most goliardic sections of the fifteenth-century recension. Indeed, the *Cántica* is an adaptation of three thirteenth-century poems concerning the condemnation of *uxoratos presbyteros*, (priests who were married or lived as married men): *De Convocatione Sacerdotum*, *De Consultatio Sacerdotum*, and *De Concubinis Sacertodum*. These poems are all attributed to Walter Map, but appear in most manuscript sources under the name of *Golias* (Wright ix). The Archpriest, like *Golias*, as author-figure, plays the role of the "burlesque representative of the ecclesiastical order" (Wright, x). Similarly, for Villena, the goliardic figure also represents the rebellion of the body against ascetic ideals, "el goce mismo de sentirse en la vida . . . libre de las normas" (67).

Both Map/*Golias* and the fifteenth-century version of the Archpriest have their clerical characters in the poems lament the loss of *quoniam suave*. One of Map's priests cries, "O quam dolor anxius, quam tormentum grave / nobis est dimittere: quoniam suave" (*De Concubinis Sacerdotum*, 25-26). The Archpriest's *deán* translates loosely: "e con llorosos ojos e con dolor grave, / 'vobis enim dimittere quoniam suave" (1700cd).¹⁰ The Latin conjunction *quoniam* is a well-known euphemism for female genitalia. As Gybbon-Monypenny points out in his note to the stanza, "En castellano, dada la pronunciación medieval del *quo-* del latín, casi dejaría de ser un eufemismo" (st. 1700d, 464 n).¹¹ However, the phrase "quoniam suave" resonates all the more and becomes all the more burlesque when read not just as a barely euphemistic synonym

⁸ At the time the *Libro* was composed and read, the southern coast of the Kingdom of Granada was well known for its sugar industry. Sugar cane growing and refining was also developing on the Valencian coast throughout the fourteenth century and became a principal industry of the region in the fifteenth. See Mohamed Ouerfelli, *Le Sucre*, especially "La péninsule Ibérique," (179-22), and William D. Phillips. The *Libro* is not "un exacto reflejo de la gastronomía de una época concreta de la historia de España" (Gásquez Ortiz, 65), but it certainly reflects elements of Iberian material and culinary culture of the later Middle Ages.

⁹ Michelle Hamilton provides a thoughtful summary of contrasting critical readings of the *Libro* as a work that partakes of either Christian or Andalusian exegetical traditions, and concludes that the *Libro* cannot be understood in isolation from the "mudejar and Mozarab cultural milieu" in which it took shape (29). The *Libro* is indeed a cultural hybrid, an omnivorous work that absorbed and transformed anything and everything within the poetic grasp of the author(s).

¹⁰ The *Libro*'s Castilian imitation of the poetic material attributed to Map may well have been a reaction to the synods of Toledo in 1324 and 1339, which addressed clerical concubinage and leveled severe critiques upon clerical immorality (González Álvarez 43; 50).

¹¹ See also Vasvari, "An Example of 'Parodia Sacra'."

for female genitalia, but also as a clear play upon Psalm 33:9: *gustate et videte quoniam suavis est deus*, “O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.”

The echo of the psalm would not have been lost upon the Archpriest’s historical audiences. As Selena Simonatti has observed, the Archpriest’s semantic transformations of Latin emphasize “la ambigua connivencia de lo sacro con lo profano” in the *Libro*. The Archpriest’s borrowed play on *quoniam suave* also points to the ambiguous and problematic solidarity between body and soul in the *Libro* itself and in medieval theology more generally. Psalm 33:9 is central to late medieval meditations on the spiritual senses and the ways in which the material senses can offer access to experience of divinity.

By and large, medieval Christian theology followed the Aristotelian ranking of the senses according to their supposed relations to the body: sight and hearing, which seem immaterial, were considered “lofty” and spiritual, while taste and touch, “lowly” and “bodily,” reflecting the “basically dualist anthropology” that undergirds medieval Christian theology (Rudy 4). While sight and hearing were considered inherently more “spiritual” than taste and touch, the use of sensory metaphors involving the “lower” faculties to describe mystical unions with God is commonplace in medieval theological writing (Rudy 64). Mystical writers and theologians transformed taste and touch into “spiritual senses” related to *affectus*, the faculty of love and desire, often presenting them as senses “best able to attain to God” because of the associations of touch and taste with knowledge “acquired both from bodily contact and from the ‘experience of love’” (Rudy 102). Moreover, as Rachel Fulton comments, discussing the twelfth-century visions of Rupert of Deutz, who kissed and tasted the sweetness of the Cross, metaphors linking the spiritual and the corporeal senses, suggest “a significant correlation between the apprehensions of the soul and the sensory experiences of the body” and challenge “any easy dichotomies we might seek to draw between the body and soul as sites for the medieval experience and understanding of God” (174). The sweetness of mystical kisses as well as the association of both God’s name and Christ’s sacrifice with sweetness is also ubiquitous in mystical and theological writings (Fulton, 176-180).¹² Such metaphors of sweetness are as old as the biblical texts themselves and are explored in interpretations by both Jewish and Christian exegetes (Adnés; Bamberg-Krauss; Chatillon).

A case in point, the Archpriest’s semantically transformed psalm, *Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est deus*, is one of the most prominent biblical intertexts in Bernard of Clairvaux’s sermons on the Song of Songs, which take as a central theme the sensible, “carnal” love of Christ, through which, for all its sensuousness, “sensual love is excluded and, the world is condemned and conquered” (1: 154).¹³ Bernard frequently speaks of his sermons as meals, nourishment to be savored, each one part of the great and convivial spiritual feast offered in the Song of Songs. In Sermon 50, he remarks:

For I still have to set before you some left-overs from yesterday’s feast that I collected to prevent them spoiling. They will spoil if I give them to nobody: and if I wish to enjoy them alone, I myself shall be spoiled. I am unwilling to keep them from that gullet of yours which I know so well, especially as they are presented from the tray of love, as

¹² Fulton provides numerous examples ranging from Augustine’s commentaries on the Psalms to fourteenth-century vernacular devotional lyrics (174-80).

¹³ “Bonus tamen amor iste carnalis, per quem vita carnalis excluditur, contemnitur et vincitur mundus” (*Sermones in Cantica Cantorum* 20.9).

sweet as they are delicate, as tasty as they are small. (III: 30)¹⁴

Tasting and seeing that the Lord is sweet, Bernard asserts, leads the soul away from the pleasures of the flesh and to the “delightful refreshment of [God’s] sweet love,” an affection “seasoned” by the salt of wisdom (III: 33-34).¹⁵

The Archpriest’s divisions between *el loco amor del mundo* and *el buen amor que es de Dios* are comparable to Bernard’s scale of love and, like Bernard, the Archpriest will play upon the similarities of the language of bodily sensation and encounters of the soul with divinity. What the Archpriest and his goliardic models revel in when they mourn the loss of *quoniam suave*, beyond the obvious and lewd pun, is how the play of sensory metaphors describing devotional consolations can lead back to the body and its erotic pleasures just as, if not more, easily as it can be used to lead to spiritual interpretation.

II. The palate of understanding: *Açucar negro y blanco está en vil caña vera*

In the *Libro*, sweetness is a concept found in many gustatory metaphors that build upon the polyvalence of the verb *saber*, which derive directly from the Latin *sapere* and related words. “Perhaps *sapientia*, that is wisdom, is derived from *sapor*, that is taste, because when it is added to virtue, like some seasoning, it adds taste to something which by itself is tasteless and bitter” (Bernard III: 203-04). Bernard goes on to tell us that wisdom cleanses the “palate of the heart” and allows the soul to taste the sweetness promised in Psalm 33.9. The pun is of course not original to Bernard, though he continually plays upon tasting and knowing God in his series of sermons on the Song of Songs. Isidore of Seville provides the following explanation in his *Etymologies*:

Wise (*sapiens*), so called from taste (*sapor*), because as the sense of taste is able to discern the taste of food, so the wise person is able to distinguish things and their causes, because he understands each thing, and makes distinctions with his sense of the truth. The opposite of this is a fool (*insipiens*), because he is without taste, and has no discretion or sense. (228)¹⁶

In the prose sermon-prologue, the Archpriest appeals to the spiritual senses, to the intellect and to three faculties of the soul: memory, will, and understanding. Nevertheless, the Archpriest also reminds his readers of the intimate connection between the spiritual senses and

¹⁴ “Habeo enim quod adhuc vobis apponam de fragmentis hesterni convivii, quae mihi collegeram ne perirent. Peribunt autem, si nulli apposuero: nam si voluero ea habere solus, ipse peribo. Nolo proinde vestram illis, quam bene novi, fraudare ingluviem: praesertim cum sint de ferculo charitatis, eo dulcia quo subtilia; eo sapida quo minuta.” (*Sermones* 50.1)

¹⁵ “Longe vero tertia ab utraque distat, quae et gustat, et sapit quoniam suavis est Dominus primam eliminans, secundam remunerans. Nam prima quidem dulcis, sed turpis; secunda sicca, sed fortis; ultima pinguis, et suavis est. Igitur per secundam opera fiunt, et in ipsa charitas sedet, non illa affectualis, quae sale sapientiae condita pinguescens magnam menti importat multitudinem dulcedinis Domini; sed quaedam potius actualis, quae etsi nondum dulci illo amore suaviter reficit, amore tamen amoris ipsius vehementer accendit. *Non diligamus*, ait, *verbo, neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.*” (*Sermones* 50.4)

¹⁶ “Sapiens dictus a sapore; quia sicut gustus aptus est ad discretionem saporis ciborum, sic sapiens ad dinoscantiam rerum atque causarum; quod unumquodque dinoscat, atque sensu veritatis discernat. Cuius contrarius est insipiens, quod sit sine sapore, nec alicuius discretionis vel sensus.” (*Etimologías* 846)

the body by continually stressing the body's dependence upon soul, which knows (*sabe*) how to distinguish good from evil:

Tres cosas, las quales dixen algunos doctores philósophos que son en el alma e propia mente suyas; son éstas: entendimiento, voluntad e memoria. Las quales, digo si buenas son, que traen al alma consolaçión e aluengan la vida al cuerpo, e dan le onrra con pro e buena fama. Ca por el buen entendimeinto entende onbre el bien y sabe dello el mal. (105)

While the sermon-prologue does not directly play upon the meanings of *saber*, the stanzas that follow it directly associate understanding with tasting. They are introduced by one of the manuscript's many orienting and structuring rubrics: "Aquí dize de cómo el açipreste rrogó a Dios que le diese graçia que podiese fazer este libro" (111). In this brief section, the Archpriest not only begs God's assistance in the creation of the book, but also amplifies the trope of *corteza* and *meollo*, or husk and kernel, first suggested in the prologue, where readers are instructed to "bien entender e bien juzgar la mi entençión por qué lo fiz. E la sentençia de lo que y dize, e non al son feo de las palabras." As Thomas Hart notes, the trope is traceable to the Pseudo-Fulgentian *Super Thebaiden* (15). It is worth quoting at length because beyond the mention of kernel and shell, the author makes use of another trope, that of reading and eating:

The compositions of poets seem not uncommonly to invite comparison with a nut. Just as there are two parts to a nut, the shell and the kernel, so there are two parts to poetic compositions, the literal and the allegorical meaning. As the kernel is hidden under the shell, so the allegorical interpretation is hidden under the literal meaning; as the shell must be cracked to get the kernel, so the literal must be broken for the allegories to be discovered; as the shell is without taste and it is the kernel which provides the tasty flavor, so it is not the literal but the allegorical which is savored on the palate of understanding. A child is happy to play with the whole nut, but a wise adult breaks it open to get the taste. (240)¹⁷

The trope, like Psalm 33:9 and its interpreters, draws upon the association of taste and understanding, likening reading itself to eating and interpretation to digesting.

Following the promise of a "dezir feroso e saber sin pecado," a "rrazón plazentera" (st. 15cd), the Archpriest's amplification of the *corteza y meollo* trope occurs in stanzas 15-19; the association of reading with eating, drinking, and with the ingestion of sweets is most evident in stanzas 16-18:

Non tengades que es libro neçio de devaneo,
nin creades que es chufa algo que en él leo,
ca, segund buen dinero yaze en vil correo,
ansí en feo libro está saber non feo.

¹⁷ "In nuce enim duo sunt, testa et nucleus, sic in carminibus poeticis duo, sensus litteralis et miscticus; latet nucleus sub testa: latet sub sensu litterali mistica intelligentia; ut habeas nucleum, tragenda est testa: ut figurae pateant quatienda est littera; testa insipida est, nucleus saporem gustandi reddit: similiter non littera, sed figura palato intelligentiae sapit. Diligit puer nucem integram ad ludum, sapiens autem et adultus frangit ad gustum." (Fulgentius 180-81)

El axenuz de fuera más negro es que caldera;
 es de dentro muy blanco, más que la peña vera;
 blanca farina está so negra cobertera;
 açucar negro e blanco está en vil caña vera.

Sobre la espina está la noble rrosa flor;
 en fea letra está saber de grand dotor;
 commo so mala capa yaze buen bevedor,
 ansí so el mal tabardo está el buen amor.

These verses, so familiar to readers of the *Libro*, present the work's fundamental theory of signs and challenge to its audiences, both past and present, to interpret allegorically, to find the signifieds, which lie hidden within deceptive signifiers. Labère reads these stanzas as an invitation to “gustative reading,” to savor love as a text (145-46). However, I would argue that this “gustative reading” is an active kind of reading that invites the audience to ruminate: each instance of the *Libro*'s purposeful ambiguity presents an opportunity for the refinement of the “palate of understanding.”

While stressing the kind of allegorical interpretation expected of readers, the Archpriest too exploits the derivation of *saber* and the association of reading with ingestion and digestion. The *saber sin pecado, rrazón placentera*, and *saber non feo* are drawn in to the semantic and conceptual realms of savoring and tasting. As I have noted elsewhere, the *Libro*'s association of interpretation with “with nuts” is a continual reminder of the “the sensual appeal of interpretation,” a “representation of bodily pleasure inherent in understanding, equivalent to the enjoyment of the soft flesh of a nut” (221). Through his series of analogies, the Archpriest thus creates a synaesthetic union of cognitive and corporeal processes.

Most editors correct MS S's reading of *açucar negro e blanco* to MS G's *açucar dulce e blanco*, perhaps because in the first lines of the stanza, the black walnut shell is contrasted with the soft, white meat of the nut and then white flour is contrasted with the black of the cooking pot. Yet the contrast in line *d* of the stanza is between the *vil caña*, the lowly cane and the sugar within. Sugar, the “veritable epitome of sweetness” (Fulton 195), need not be modified by “dulçe.” Rather, I believe we can see in the reference to dark and light sugars a reference to the material and culinary culture of sugar that the Archpriest and his readers would have known. Highly refined sugar was indeed white, but sugar was used at many stages of refinement and thus was known in many different colors and consistencies.

That sugar may be black and white and still sweet contributes to the overall ambiguity of the Archpriest's sign play in his amplification of the trope, for sweetness may be good for the soul, but sweetness may also signal danger. Augustine, in his commentary on Psalm 118, reflects upon the proper translation of biblical texts from Greek into Latin, suggesting that use of the word *suavis* may not always be appropriate:

We have to remember that sweetness (*suavitas*) can be found in evil (*in malo*), for unlawful deeds can be enjoyable, and it can occur even in legitimate carnal pleasure. We must therefore understand the sweetness ... of the Greek text, to be that afforded by the good things of the spirit. To avoid ambiguity, some of our translators therefore preferred to call it *goodness*. Now when the psalm says, *You have provided sweetness for your*

servant, I think it means neither more nor less than “you determined that I should be delighted with what is good.” (*Expositions of the Psalms* 419; Carruthers, “Sweetness” 1006).

In her seminal work on memory, Carruthers notes that “metaphors which use digestive activities are so powerful and tenacious that ‘digestion’ should be considered another basic functional model for the complementary activities of reading and composition, collection and recollection” (*The Book of Memory* 165-66). The “stomach” of memory is an important image in this digestive model (*The Book of Memory* 165). Like the chaff of signs that hold true, nurturing meaning within, the stomach of memory is the repository of ingested wisdom. Augustine makes use of the metaphor in his *Answer to Faustus* when explaining dietary rules from Leviticus:

No doubt the animal is pronounced unclean by the law, because it does not chew the cud; which is not a fault but its nature. But the men of whom this animal is a symbol are unclean, not by nature, but from their own fault; because, though they gladly hear the words of wisdom, they never reflect on them afterwards. For to recall, in quiet repose, some useful instruction from the stomach of memory to the mouth of reflection, is a kind of spiritual rumination. (100)

The “stomach of memory” is closely related to the broader metaphorical tradition casting memory as a container, a treasure house, which the Archpriest draws upon in his prologue: “E desde el alma, con el buen entendimiento e buena voluntad, con buena remembrança, escoge e ama el buen amor que es el de Dios, e pone lo en la çela de la memoria por que se acuerde dello” (106). The stomach takes on this storage function in a later episode:

Como tiene tu estómago en sí mucha vianda
tenga la poridat que es mucho más blanda:
Catón, sabio rromano, en su libro lo manda;
diz, que la poridat en buen amigo anda. (st. 568)

The stomach, in all its visceral materiality would seem an apt metaphor for the Archpriest, who reminds us continually of the “flaqueza de la natura humana” (107). Despite the inherent weakness of the material, human body, the metaphorical traditions of digestion that the Archpriest draws upon recall the presence of the body as the seat of the senses, both spiritual and corporeal.

The relationship between *corteza* and *meollo* is clearly analogous to the dualist conception of body and soul: the body, *mala presión*, is the temporal and fleshly container of the eternal, spiritual soul. Yet, in later-medieval phenomenology and epistemology, as Aristotelian materialism gained currency, the relation of container and contained transformed to include an intimate connection between body and soul, which, as Jane Chance has observed, “bears a remarkable resemblance to what neuroscientists today call the feeling brain” (252). This relation of containment and the connection of the soul contained within the body is repeated in the prose sermon-prologue: “E desde está informada e instruída el alma que se ha de salvar en el cuerpo limpio” (105). The embodied or feeling mind is present whenever medieval writers employ synesthetic metaphors of tasting and knowing.

III. Manna from Heaven: *El pan más duz*

The Archpriest, unlike Augustine, is not interested in avoiding ambiguity. As we have seen, the sweet taste of God himself is semantically transformed in the *Cántica de los clérigos de Talavera* in a manner that brings the body with its conflicting appetites for knowledge and sex to the fore. A similarly omnipresent digestive metaphor for divine knowledge is transformed in the *troba caçurra*, where the bread of heaven is conflated with the sweet bread of *Cruz, la panadera*. The Archpriest introduces the *troba* in a section of text labeled “De como todas las cosas del mundo son vanidat sinon amar a Dios.” The rubric itself is a kind of editorial slight of hand, for as the verses following explain, not only are all temporal endeavors vanities, it is vanity to attempt to win the love of an unattainable woman (st. 106). The Archpriest announces the change of meter and tone in stanza 114: “Fiz con el gran pessar esta troba caçurra.” The term *caçurra*, referring to comical, satirical, and obscene songs, places the verses about the baker-girl within the same world as the goliardic *Cántica*, as does the reference to the Archpriest’s chosen go-between, an “escolar goloso” (st. 122a). In addition to the reference to the go-between’s gluttony, the term *goloso* may also be related to Goliath himself, a name thought to have derived from *gula* (Wright xi).

As has been amply documented, most of the vocabulary featured in both the *troba* and the stanzas of *cuaderna vía* in which the Archpriest comments upon the composition, contains sexual and even prurient innuendos. Indeed, the episode is a metrical and polysemous tour de force, “a microcosm of the stunning range, linguistic complexity, and artistic breadth of Juan Ruiz’s book” (Gerli 225). The *troba* also partakes of the *Libro’s* series of sustained alimentary metaphors. Read in this context, the plays upon the “sweet bread” of the cross can be seen as part of the synesthetic sweetness of the Archpriest’s poetic confections.

When the Archpriest’s eye alights on the *panadera*, who is “non santa mas sandía” (st. 112c), he begins his extended play upon the name and resonances of *Cruz*, declaring, “yo cruziava por ella” (st. 112d) and later, “Quando la Cruz veía, yo siempre me omillava: / santiguava me a ella do quier que la fallava; /el compañero de çerca en la Cruz adorava” (st. 121abc). In addition to the plays upon the adoration of the Cross, the holy bread of communion is a central transformed metaphor in this episode of the Archpriest’s amorous frustration. Not only is the sensual pleasure of successful seduction framed in gustatory terms, so too is failure:

E por que yo non podía con ella fablar,
puse por mi mensagero, coidando rrecabdar,
a un mi compañero; sopo me el clavo echar:
él comió la vianda, e a mí fazié rrumiar. (st. 113)

The conflation of sexual intercourse and eating serves as a reminder that the satisfaction of the appetites of one sense easily lead to others. Yet the term “rrumiar” returns us to the metaphorical territory of the “stomach of memory” and the meditative practices described by Augustine. Moreover, bread, in addition to its obvious relation to the Eucharist, is a frequent metaphor for the scriptures themselves. In the *Confessions*, Augustine recalls his yearning to know “what exquisite delights [Ambrose] savored in his secret mouth, the mouth of his heart, as he chewed (*ruminaret*) the bread of your word” (137).¹⁸ As Maria Boulding observes, “Until at least the end

¹⁸ “Et occultum os ejus quod erat in corde ejus, quam sapida gaudia de pane tuo ruminaret” (*Opera Omnia Augustini Hipponensis*).

of the middle ages the reading of scripture was understood as an activity involving the whole person, physical as well as mental and spiritual; gastronomic metaphors of mastication, such as chewing the cud, were commonly used for it” (Augustine, *Confessions* 137n 20). Augustine describes Ambrose engaging in a spiritually sensual act, ingesting bread and ruminating upon it. Bernard, likewise likens the books of the Bible to loaves of bread and offers his sermons as “solid food” (“non lacti, sed pani”) and (1: 1-2).

The Archpriest repeats the references to eating and ruminating, thus underlining their metaphorical importance, and at the same time plays upon the term “duz”:

Coidando que la avría,
dixié lo a Ferrand Garçía,
que troxiese la pletesía,
e fuese pleités e duz.

Dixo me quel plazía de grado,
e fizo se de la Cruz privado;
a mi dio rrumiar salvado;
el comió el pan más duz. (sts. 117-118)

Such innuendos, piled upon Eucharistic imagery of adoring the cross while eating bread and references to Easter liturgy and folklore,¹⁹ would no doubt have been obvious to the Archpriest’s intended audience, who may also have recalled the warning that “To a man that is a fornicator all bread is sweet (*omnis panis dulcis*), he will not be weary of sinning unto the end” in Ecclesiasticus 23:24. While the connection to tasting the sweetness of God himself does not, I would argue, justify a mystical interpretation of the *troba*, the episode serves as a prequel to the *Cantica*’s plays upon the mystical convention, “Taste and see that the Lord is sweet.” For Augustine and the later medieval mystical writers who speak of chewing, savoring, and ingesting the bread of scripture, ruminating is a salutary and thoughtful activity. For the Archpriest in the *troba*, on the other hand, rumination is the opposite of tasting and knowing sweetness. The *Libro* unravels the mystical metaphors of spiritual consolation—the sweet sensations of kissing, adoring, and savoring the taste of the Cross—the *troba* plays upon. Unlike the mystic Rupert of Deutz, who felt that an “ineffable taste of sweetness lingers in the mouth of my soul” after his adoration of the Cross, the Archpriest is left to ruminate upon tasteless chaff. Spiritual consolation and sexual satisfaction are rendered equally unreachable by the tasting body of the narrator.

IV. *Gula* and Sweet Temptation

Because of its medicinal qualities, sugar itself was not linked to sinful eating in the middle ages in the way that it is today. Yet, the temptations of sweet tastes were not foreign to the Archpriest and the traditions of sweetness he draws upon. The Archpriest links *gula* to *luxuria*, in his *pelea* with Don Amor, following Christian monastic and exegetical traditions, and also relating *gula* to original sin. The *pelea* lists nine sins, each followed by an illustrative *enxiemplo*. Although the Archpriest does not follow those patristic writers who understood *gula* to be the root of all the deadly sins, but, rather, lists *gula* after *codicia*, *soberbia*, *avaricia*,

¹⁹ For interpretations of the *troba*, see Burke, Gerli, Giles, Michalski, and Shepard.

luxuria and *invidia*, both of the examples that illustrate the sins of greed and avarice involve the desire for food.

In the *pelea*, the Archpriest accuses Don Amor of unrestrained gluttony:

La golossina traes, goloso, laminero:
querriés a quantas vees gostar las tú primero;
enflaquesçes pecando; eres grand ventenero:
por cobrar la tu fuerça eres lobo carniçero.

Con la mucha vianda e vino, creçe la flema:
duermes con tu amiga, afoga te postema;
lieva te el diablo, en el infierno te quema;
tú dizes al garçón que coma bien e non tema. (sts. 291 and 293)

The Archpriest then reminds his audience of the origins of present-day gluttony and lustfulness:

Adán, el nuestro padre, por gula e tragonía,
por que comió del fruto que comer non devía,
echó le del paraíso Dios en aquesse día;
por ello en el infierno, desque morió, yazía. (st. 294)

The interpretation of original sin as the sin of *gula*—not just excessive eating, but eating inspired by sensual attraction—makes food, as Allen Grieco observes, “the door to all vices” (146).²⁰ Moreover, as Carruthers notes, the story of the serpent’s and consequently Eve’s seduction regarding sweet fruit also “exploits [the] ancient association of taste with knowledge,” and “can serve as an exemplar of the aesthetic and moral ambivalence posed by ‘sweetness’” (“Sweetness” 1003).

The Archpriest chastises Don Amor for his sweet, persuasive words, which, like the serpent’s lies, cause untold woes in this world:

Toda maldad del mundo e toda pestilencia,
sobre la falsa lengua mintrosa apareçencia,
dezir palabras dulzes que traen abenencia,
e fazer malas obras e tener mal querençia. (st. 417)

The ambivalence of sweetness is underlined when we learn that sweet words and fruits are the stock and trade of the go-between’s persuasive art. Trotaconventos woos doña Endrina – a sweet morsel herself – for the equally sweet don Melón by telling stories, sententious warnings, a description of don Melón’s attractions, and finally by the promise of a copious and pleasurable meal, a *buena merienda*:

Verdad es que los plazer es conortan a las de vezes;
por ende, fija señora, id a mi casa a vezes:
jugaremos a la pella e a otros juegos rraezes;
jugaredes e folgaredes, e darvos he ¡ay que nuezes!

²⁰ See also William Yeomans and André Derville, “Gourmandise Et Gourmandise Spirituelle.”

Nunca está mi tienda sin fruta a las loçanas:
 muchas peras e duraznos, ¡qué çidras e qué mançanas!
 ¡qué castañas, que piñones e qué muchas avellanas!
 Las que vós queredes mucho, éstas vos seran más sanas. (sts. 861-862)²¹

Trotaconventos, who speaks of her art as “mi melezina” (st. 709c), appeals to doña Endrina’s gustatory appetite, at the same time claiming that the foods she offers will be beneficial to the widow’s health. The Archpriest’s intended audiences undoubtedly understood the innuendo. Endrina’s palate of understanding does not seem to be as finely honed as the *Libro*’s readers’, and she falls into the honey-trap that Trotaconventos and don Melón set for her.

The metaphorical relation between sweets and words of persuasion are concretized yet again when Trotaconventos describes all the sugary delicacies and electuaries that nuns give their beloveds:

¿Quién dirié los manjares, los presentes tamaños,
 los muchos letuarios, nobles e tan estraños?

Muchos de letuarios les dan muchas de vezes:
 diaçitrón, codonate, letuario de nuezes;
 otros de más quantía, de çanahorias rrahezes,
 enbian unas a otras cada día a rrevezes.

Cominada alixandria, con el buen diagargante;
 el diaçitrón abatis, con el fino gengibrante
 miel rrosado, diaçiminio, diantoso va delante;
 e la rrosata novela, que deviera dezir ante.

Adragea e alfenique, con el estomatricón,
 e la garriofileta, con diamargaritón;
 triasándalix muy fino, con diasaturión,
 que es para doñear preçiado e noble don.

Sabed que de todo açucar allí anda: bolado,
 polvo, terrón e candi, e mucho del rrosado;
 açucar de confites e açucar violado,
 e de muchas otras guisas yo he olvidado.

Monpesler, Alexandria, la nonbrada Valençia,
 non tienen letuarios tantos nin tanta espeçia;
 los más nobles presenta la dueña que es más preçia;
 en noblezas de amor ponen toda su femençia. (sts. 1333dc-1338)

²¹ On the names in this episode, see Anthony Zahareas, Oscar Pereira and Thomas McCallum (174-75; 202) and Vasvari, “Vegetal-Genital Onomastics.” Although David Hook has shown that fruit-and-vegetable names, including *Melón* are historically documented in the later Middle Ages, the sweet and fruit-oriented associations of the names are clearly being exploited in the *Libro*.

Electuaries, like *buen amor*, are difficult to define. Elaborated with honey, sugar, fruits, and spices, electuaries appear in medieval texts as both delicacies and medicine (Pérez Vidal 141-57; Valles Rojo 100). As medicines, the consumption of electuaries was permissible during fasting (Fulton, quoting Thomas Aquinas, 199n). Yet as Trotaconventos suggests, there are more reasons for taking an electuary than seeking to sugar a pill. The electuaries that Trotaconventos lists are well known sweets, digestive aids, and aphrodisiacs, meant to balance the humors and aid dyspeptic stomachs (Pérez Vidal 157-226; Kane).²²

Trotaconventos' rhetorical excess is a kind of verbal gluttony, filling her own mouth and the ears of her listeners. *Copia*, rhetorical abundance, meets *gula* and *luxuria* in Trotaconventos' inventory of sweets and electuaries. Offering "todo plazer del mundo e todo buen doñear / solaz de mucho sabor e el falaguero jugar," the go-between's saccharine overflowing of words is reminiscent of the honey that flows from the mouth of the *mulier aliena* of Proverbs. The appeal of her words is to the corporeal senses, to tasting and eating sweets, synechdochally related to sexual pleasure.

Although Garoça is not the target of Trotaconventos' promise of sweets and electuaries, it is she who warns of treachery as she exchanges *enxiemplos* with the go-between. First, in the conclusion to the *Enxiemplo del ortolano e de la culebra*, doña Garoça says that she sees through the old bawd's persuasive tactics: "Alegra se el malo en dar por miel venino, / e por fructo dar pena al amigo e al vezino, / por piedat engaño, donde bien le avino;" (st. 1354 abc). Then, in the *Enxiemplo del mur de Monferrado e del mur de Guadalajara*, which abounds in culinary axioms, doña Garoça extends her warning:

'Este manjar es dulce, sabe como la miel.'
Dixo el aldeano: 'Venino yaze en él;
el que teme la muerte, el panal le sabe fiel;
a ti solo es dulce, tú solo come dél.

'Al omne con el miedo nol sabe dulce cosa;
non tiene voluntad clara, la vista temerosa;
con miedo de la muerte la miel non es sabrosa;
todas cosas amargan en vida peligrosa.' (sts. 1379-1380)

Doña Garoça introduces yet another *enxiemplo* by equating Trotaconventos' own *enxiemplos* with deceptively sweet flattery: "Estas buenas palabras, estos dulces falagos, / non querría que fuesen a mí fiel y amargos" (st. 1436ab). The many electuaries enumerated by Trotaconventos are matched by doña Garoça's copious warnings about misleading sweetness. The Archpriest is coquettish regarding the outcome of Trotaconventos and Garoça's persuasive dueling of sweet words. Yet what is abundantly clear is the concentration of sweetness, the "diacitrón, codonate, letuario de nuezes . . ." on the tongue of the go-between, and the honeycomb in the mouth of the nun.

V. Eat this book: "Sea vos chica fabla, solaz e letuario"

²² In this light, it is interesting to note that following the last stanzas of the *Libro*, folio 104v of MS S contains seven medicinal recipes (Kinkade and Capuano).

In the *Libro*, sweetness is synesthetic, that is to say, it is evocative of multiple yet simultaneous sensations: the Archpriest reflects upon sweetness, while he and his characters urge their readers and listeners to interpret. Throughout, sweet tastes upon the tongue are equated with understanding and knowledge, with the use of the immaterial faculties of the soul. However, sweetness—like rhetoric and *buen amor*—is double-edged and can lead to good and evil.

In the stanzas introduced by the rubric “De commo dize el Arçipreste que se ha de entender este su libro,” the Archpriest offers the *Libro* itself as a small and delicious dose of something medicinal, sweetened with honey or sugar:

Fiz vos pequeño libro de testo, mas la glosa
non creo que es chica, ante es bien grand prosa,
que sobre cada fabla se entiende otra cosa,
sin la que se alega en la rrazón fermosa.

De la santidad mucha es bien grand liçionario,
mas de juego e de burla es chico breviario;
por ende fago punto e çierro mi armario:
sea vos chica fabla, solaz e letuario. (sts. 1631-32)

By presenting the book as a salutary sweet to be consumed, the Archpriest rhetorically transforms the *Libro* in to a synesthetic object, a mixture of sounds to be savored by the corporeal senses and ideas that continually appeal to the spiritual senses as well. Consuming books of sweet words is of course an ancient metaphor. In the Bible, Ezekiel is given a book to eat by an angel:

And he said to me: Son of man, eat all that thou shalt find: eat this book, and go speak to the children of Israel. And I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that book: And he said to me: Son of man, thy belly shall eat, and thy bowels shall be filled with this book, which I give thee. And I did eat it: and it was sweet as honey in my mouth. (The Prophecy of Ezekiel 3:1-3)

The Apocalypse of John describes a similar event, but while the book is still as sweet as honey in the mouth, in the case of the Apocalypse, it is bitter in the belly:

And I went to the angel, saying unto him, that he should give me the book. And he said to me: Take the book, and eat it up: and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the book from the hand of the angel, and ate it up: and it was in my mouth, sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. (Apocalypse 10:9-10)

These two biblical episodes partake of the now familiar digestive metaphor for reading and internalizing spiritual teachings. However, like all somaesthetic metaphors, they also call attention to the physical dimensions of reading and understanding. The second of the two suggests that digesting sweet words may be an indication of meditation upon divine things, but also of intestinal and eschatological discomfort.

The *Libro*'s many references to tasting sweetness also serve as a reminder of the sensing body that reads or speaks aloud the words of the *Libro*, the body that at once imprisons the soul and its spiritual senses of memory, will, and understanding, but that also provides the spirit with material knowledge and experience. The concepts of sweetness and taste counter the relentless language of dualism between body and soul, *corteza y meollo*, with the immediacy of sensory experience. The *Libro*, whether performed aloud or read silently, offers smooth and sweet words to be savored, heard and sung. Sweet synesthesia corresponds to the three possible outcomes of reading the *Libro* that the prose sermon-prologue offers: knowledge of the *buen amor* of God and the fulfillment of the spiritual senses; erotic know how and the satisfaction of the "lower" physical appetites; and poetic skill, a blend of sweet sounds on the page, in the ear, and on the tongue. The *Libro de buen amor* is a work to be savored, sweet in the mouth, sweet to hear, an invitation to audiences to fill the stomach of memory, to *saber bien e mal*—to taste/know good and evil—all the while offering itself as a digestive aid for the very discomfort its many ambiguities may cause.

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