Chapter 15

The Senses and Material Texts

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> Without harming the binding, one can open most codices far enough to still snugly fit the nose into the gutter.[1]

Taking advantage of the momentum generated by the previous chapters, I want to think about the ways in which we do, and do not, talk about material texts. I don't quite want to trace how each of the senses might relate to the physical book – valuable though that large project would be – but, with a slightly wider focus, I want to make the case for considering the material text in sensory terms. This means, among other things, learning from the early moderns, and from Shakespeare, who often had a richer and more nuanced sense of the sensory possibilities of the book.

A growing interest in the materiality of texts has been a defining feature of early modern literary scholarship for the last twenty-five years. While work under the material texts banner has been various, scholars tend to agree on the axiom that material form effects meaning: or, at least, and in a weaker form of relationship, that material form affects meaning.[2] But the range of forms of materiality has been curiously restricted. We are used now to considering certain kinds of materiality as self-evidently expressive: book format, for example, or typography, or binding or, if we are concerned with reception, marks of annotation and use. But what forms are excluded in these accounts? In this chapter I will think about the text as a sensory object in order to consider versions of materiality that would feature in most people's phenomenological account of consuming old books, but which fall outside the parameters of most academic discussions of the material text. I will look, in part,

to Shakespeare's poetry and drama, to explore how we might develop a language for a more inclusive materiality, and I'll think, too, about how we, as book-users in the twenty-first century, might start to analyse how such qualities as heft, smell and sound shape a modern reader's consumption of Shakespeare's texts. In doing so, I'll be in conversation with recent work on bibliography and the material text, and I'll also be following a path cleared by Bruce Smith's work on historical phenomenology, as outlined in the present volume (XX-XX), and in his *Phenomenal Shakespeare*, where Smith considers the early modern text in phenomenological terms.[3]

There is little or no space for sensory experience in bibliographical descriptions of books, at least as those descriptions are delivered by current research libraries. The 'Controlled Vocabularies for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloging', developed and maintained by the Bibliographic Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the American Library Association, provides what it calls a 'standardized vocabulary for retrieving special collections materials by form, genre, or by various physical characteristics'. This provides an extensive and very detailed set of variables for describing books in terms of bindings ('brass clips'; 'brocade'; 'buckskin'); genre ('nonsense verse'; 'notebooks'; 'novellas'); paper ('trimmed edges'; 'Turkish marbled papers'); printing and publishing evidence ('cancels'; 'casting off'); provenance ('stamps'; 'stationers' labels'); and type ('grooves'; 'grotesque types').[4] But the sensory qualities of books find no place. Copy-specific descriptions – that is, accounts of particular copies of books within editions, a scale of description where one might expect to find note of such qualities – concern such features as imperfections, expurgated copies, insertions, hand-colouring, provenance evidence, binding, and 'bound with' notes. All such features necessarily fall within the purview of sight, but beyond this there is no explicit mention of how these objects might be encountered phenomenologically. Descriptions by rare book

dealers (as evidenced by searching abebooks.com) sometimes include a note of, for example, a 'slight musty smell', but even these are very rare indeed.

In this respect, the study of material texts lags some way behind recent work on object-based learning and museums which has been considering ways of countering an historic 'distrust and denigration of bodily knowing'.[5] In *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden and Ruth B. Phillips present a critique of the dominance of 'Western ocularcentricism' by making the case for a multi-sensory engagement with material culture as 'phenomenologically experienced'. As the editors explain:

> Rather than understanding objects as possessing an unproblematic concrete existence that can be apprehended visually, or flattening their unique properties by considering them only as sites of social inscription, the contributors argue for the necessity of thinking of objects as bundles of sensory properties.[6]

I will return to that resonant final phrase – 'objects as bundles of sensory properties' – at the end of this chapter.

Shakespeare's printed texts are well-described bibliographically in relation to most other books from his period. Here, as an example, are the copy-specific descriptions of 2 copies of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), both in North American research libraries.

> Folger Library STC 22345 copy 1
>
> Burn-holes on B2 and B3, affecting text. Wanting the blank leaf. Red goatskin armorial binding, signed by Hering; paper spine-lining (exposed due to detached

boards) is printed with the following: "Henry Shaw F.S.A." Provenance: possibly Lincoln Cathedral library copy (Folger files); Sir William Bolland copy (bookseller's catalogue entry (lot 2187) for this (?) copy attached to front paste-down, with manuscript note: "Baron Bolland's sale Novr. 1840 Evan's"); gilt arms and crest of Frederick Perkins; inscribed on front free endpaper: "W. [William] A. White"; manuscript bibliographical note signed: "A.S.W. Rosenbach".[7]

Beinecke Library Eliz 179

Bound in brown goatskin, gilt edges. George Daniel's copy, with a manuscript note, signed, on a front flyleaf.[8]

Such accounts are representative of copy-specific descriptions of Shakespearean texts, not only in terms of their relative fullness, but also in their focus on particular kinds of physical trait: attention to binding styles and materials; concern with, paradoxically, what is not there ('wanting the blank leaf'); and detailed records of provenance and sales history. Collectively, these fields of definition suggest something of the way in which bibliographical description grew out of the culture of late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century book auctions with those associations with connoisseurship, the pursuit of the 'perfect' copy, and sales and buyers: a process David McKitterick has recently tracked in relation to the invention of 'rarity' as a bibliographical term of esteem.[9]

But if we return to a founding, and in many ways unfashionable definition of what W.W. Greg calls the 'descriptive science' of bibliography, we find at least the prospect of a role for the senses.[10] 'Bibliography', writes Greg in 1933, 'is the study of books as *tangible* objects'. Bibliography, in other words, is founded on touch: it is, in its first instance, a haptic engagement with books, and from this axiomatically sensory encounter, bibliographical

description can proceed: '[i]t examines the materials of which [books] … are made and the manner in which those materials are put together'.[11]

If Greg was (and the phrase would surprise him) a haptic reader – more W.W. Greg than www.Greg – then early modern bibliophiles were often deeply invested in the book as a tangible object. The letterbooks of Sir William Boothby (1637-1707) of Ashbourne Hall, Derbyshire survive in the Glamorgan Record Office and convey, in the words of Peter Beal, 'the depth and extent of his personal passion for books'.[12] Boothby's correspondence with booksellers vividly portrays an insatiable curiosity for books, and his letters are preoccupied with material form, particularly in moments when his expectations were disappointed: 'your little books bound onely plaine Calve are very deare'; 'The 8^{o} Books are so deare That I desire them Either in quiers or stich'd'. In periods of particular irritation, Boothby's complaints unfurl into a kind of loud, anti-bibliographical howl, a dirge to the physical shortcomings of the book :

> I find all or most are old Books – new Bound – & so many Leaves not cut & most cut narrow - & some Books part of the margett are cut – all wch are great faults – An ill & weake past[e] board (great fault this) yet set downe to deape for binding … you must take great care in Examining & placing things rite, before you send them to me … pastor fido is not well stitched the first sheet is come out …[13]

Like Boothby 'Examining & placing' his books, Shakespeare, in his plays and poetry, consistently draws a connection between books and physical contact. Books are objects to be held, carried, placed, displayed, laid 'on their pillow' (*R3* 4.3.14), 'put … in the pocket of my gown' (*JC* 4.3.251), 'turned o'er' (*MV* 4.1.154), 'kiss[ed]' (*Tem* 2.2.127). Across these snatched bookish references, we can discern something like a Shakespearean bibliographical

culture in which the book is not autonomous or static – not a stable entity existing on its own terms – but rather an object placed in a dynamic relationship with the human body. A prayer book might be worn 'in my pocket' (*MV* 2.2.184), or held 'in his hand' (*R3* 3.7.46). This sense of books as haptic, as having heft, as objects experienced through physical contact, is an aspect of book-life that is distinct from the variables of size and format which bibliography has always been alert to. Indeed, even weight, which certainly can be tidily quantified, is rarely an aspect of bibliographical definition. In 2017, in response to a reader's enquiry, staff at the Bodleian Library took two copies of Shakespeare's First Folio to the conservation studio where the volumes were weighed: Arch. G c.7 and Arch. G c.8 came in at 2.7 kg and 3 kg, respectively. In the words of one of the curators involved, 'someone had finally asked a question no-one had thought of before'.[14]

This sense of books as relational objects is pushed to its limit in Shakespeare's persistent concern with books as objects that might turn into people, or with people who might turn into books. We think, perhaps, of Giuseppe Arcimboldo's *The Librarian* (1566), in which the human subject is literally composed from physical books. In Shakespeare's bibliographical imagination, the book is not only an object to be sensed by the body, but has the potential to become the body itself: the opposition between sensing subject and sensed object collapses. Frequently we encounter what we might call this Ovidian materiality of Shakespeare's books. A 'man's brow', says Northumberland in *Henry IV Part 2*, is 'a title-leaf, / Foretell[ing] the nature of a tragic volume' (1.1.60). 'Your face', says Lady Macbeth to her husband, is 'a book where men / May read strange matters' (*Mac* 1.5.62-3). Richard II figures himself as a written litany of faults: 'the very book indeed / Where all my sins are writ, and that's myself' (*R2*, 4.1.274-5). And in *Macbeth*: 'My dull brain was wrought with things forgotten. / Kind gentlemen, your pains are register'd, / Where every day I turn the leaf, to read them' (1.3.151-3).

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The absence of smell in bibliographical description is particularly striking when one considers how powerful the link is between old books and a musty scent in the popular imagination. Indeed, contemporary artist-perfumer Christopher Brosius developed a scent he calls 'In the Library' from a blend of Russian and Moroccan leather bindings, cloth and wood polish to produce (in Brosius' words) 'a warm blend of English Novel'.[15]

According to Craig Dworkin, the library is, among other things, 'a perfume factory, a laboratory of archived olfactory data'.[16] As one chemical analysis put it, old books often smell like 'a combination of grassy notes with a tang of acids and a hint of vanilla over an underlying mustiness'.[17] While modern bibliography generally fails to engage with scent, there is certainly an early modern awareness of the powerful connections between books and smell. This might function at the level of metaphor, either to praise ('[o]ther Books smell of Men… and a humane Spirit'), or to condemn: thus Henry Crosse, attacking the corrupting qualities of fashionable literary texts ('Inkchorn-termes, swelling words, bumbasted [sic] out with the flocks of sundry languages'), describes the manner in which 'young folkes have licked in the sweete juice of these *stinking books*'.[18] But books might be more than metaphorically smelly. Book scent might be the product of not only the distinctive smells of the materials from which the book is made (glue, ink, leather, paper), but also the environments in which the books have been stored, read, and conserved. As David McKitterick notes, the 'smell of chlorine in old books may indicate over-enthusiastic cleaning, and inadequate subsequent washing'.[19] Book scent, in other words, need not be associated with 'essence', in the way it might sometimes be imagined, but rather might track layers of the history of a particular book, from composition, through use, storage, and

preservation: the 'sweet smell of provenance'.[20] This is part of John Taylor's joke when, in his rambling verse encomium to paper, printed in 1623, Taylor imagines the ways in which formerly humble materials might be converted in fine paper, but with a lingering stink: 'And may not dirty Socks, from off the feet / From thence be turnd to a *Crowne-paper* sheet?'[21]

There is evidence that bookbinders in the sixteenth century rubbed their bindings with something to make the scent more appealing: that, in other words, books were understood to smell badly in their 'natural' condition. Books intended for special presentation, or to mark a particular (often royal) occasion, were frequently perfumed. Thus, for example, when 130 copies of the *Genethliacum illustrissimorum principum Caroli & Mariae a Musis Cantabrigiensibus celebratum* (Cambridge, 1631) were printed to mark (in the Cambridge University account book's words) 'the birth of Princesse Mary *delivered* at Courte etc.', £1 8s was 'paid at London for perfuming 4 of the said books and binding & stitching the rest'. And when 130 books were printed 'att the birth of the Duke of Yorke' in 1633, £9 2s was paid 'For binding stitching & perfumeing them'.[22] In these accounts, the never-elaborated – and therefore presumably relatively routine, or at least culturally comprehensible – act of perfuming takes place alongside gilding, binding, stitching, and filleting with strings. The added scent seems to have been understood both as an augmentation that adds a new kind of splendour to the book (as gilding supplements what is already there), and also as a way to cover up a book's naturally unwinning scent (as a paste-down might conceal the boards).

But if perfuming could signify a heightened sense of value, on occasion the scent could become a problem. When Elizabeth I visited East Anglia in the summer of 1578, Richard Howland, the Vice-Chancellor or Cambridge, was warned that the University should be prepared for a possible royal visit. When the suggestion was made of presenting the Queen with 'a book well bound', Lord Burghley, the Queen's chief minister, insisted that any such book should have 'no savour of spike, which commonly bookbinders did seek to add, to

make their books savour well. But that Her Majesty could not abide such a strong scent'. Spike, or spikenard, is a term loosely used to denote (according to the *OED*) an aromatic substance obtained from a plant of the Valerian order from Northern India, or sometimes used as a synonym for lavender. The Queen, who favoured bindings in textiles, not leather, was given a Greek New Testament in folio, 'bounde in red velvet, and lymmed with gowld, with the arms of England sett upon each side', and fragrance-free.[23]

Touch, then, and also smell, might be part of an early modern reader's sense of a book. But taste? In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Sir Nathaniel articulates his disdain for a dullard's lack of learning through a sustained metaphor that centres around taste as both critical discernment, and the experience of eating:

> Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book.
> He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink,
> His intellect is not replenished.
>
> (5.2.24-5)

Nathaniel's speech makes sense in an early modern culture which consistently draws connections between eating and writing, as one sees, for example, in Seneca's formative metaphor of the writer as a bee converting pollen into honey ('so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound'), and Ben Jonson's description of writing as a kind of digestion ('Not as a creature that swallows what it takes in crude, raw, or indigested, but that feeds with an appetite, and hath a stomach to concoct, divide, and turn all to nourishment').[24]

Elizabeth L. Swann describes how this Senecan tradition of understanding imitation in terms of a language of food and digestion developed, in the early modern period, into a 'substantial and subtle poetics of taste' in which literary judgement was grounded in 'the

language of gustation'.[25] Swann notes also – and, for this present discussion, importantly – how this discourse of consumption might be applied not only to conceptions of imitation and creativity, but also to the material components of books and manuscripts: in Swann's words, 'this persistent linking of alimentary and literary taste might be grounded in experiential and materiality reality'.[26] When Hugh Plat introduces his *Delightes for Ladies* (1602) with, 'my pen and paper are perfum'd / I scorne to write with Copres or with galle', Plat is (in Swann's convincing reading) drawing a connection between gall as an ingredient of ink (produced by the gall fly, and also known as copperas or Roman vitriol) and gall as choler, one of the bodily humours.[27] Swann argues that while early modern men and women did not actually eat their octavos (but who knows?), a humoural economy, in which humours were distinguished by flavours (gall was bitter), encouraged an understanding of a real (and not only metaphorical) connection between eating and books.

This humoural alignment of eating and reading was layered over a set of Biblical precedents for bibliophagy which powerfully connects books with the senses, and in particular taste. The notion of eating books receives pre-codex precedent in Ezekiel 3.1-3 in which, in the King James Version, God says to Ezekiel

> Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.[28]

Albrecht Dürer's woodcut of 'Saint John Devouring the Book' (figure 15.1), from his series of prints *The Apocalypse* (1498), is a representation of Revelations 10:8-11: 'Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but

it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.' In Dürer's image, John is sitting on – but also somehow emerging out of – the ground, as he clutches at a book handed down from heaven. John's eating is at the same time a kind of drinking: the page appears to convert into liquid and pour into his mouth, suggesting a desperate appetite, an appetite that can only be conveyed by mixing modes of consumption. John is surrounded by the props of writing, and, as Peter Stallybrass notes in a recent reading of the image, the words John eats are transformed into the new text that John composes.[29] [Figure 15.1 here]

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Samuel Pepys' diary gives expression to a delighted awareness of the material features of books, and his accounts might help us think about our ways of describing our own sensory bibliographical engagements. When Pepys acquired Paul Rycaut's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1667), Pepys' attention to the financial cost of the volume led him to a detailed description of the physical properties of his new book.

> I did agree for Rycaut's late history of the Turkish Policy, which costs me 55*s*; whereas it was sold plain before the late fire for 8*s*, and bound and coloured as this is for 20 – for I have bought it finely bound and truly coloured, all the figures.[30]

Regularly in his diary, Pepys is alert to book format ('I had a great mind to have bought the King's works, as they are new printed in folio'),[31] and to binding. Indeed, such is Pepys' fascination with the skill of William Richardson, his bookbinder, that Pepys is happy to devote a large portion of a Wednesday in 1667 to watching Richardson work:

> As soon as dined, I with my boy Tom to my bookbinder's, where all the afternoon long till 8 or 9 at night seeing him binding up two or three collections of letters and papers that I had of him, but above all things my little abstract pocket book of contracts, which he will do very neatly. Then home to read, sup, and to bed.[32]

Binding, reading, eating, sleeping. In his diary, Pepys uses two terms in relation to his interactions with books that suggest a particular kind of bibliographical encounter. On Friday 7 July, 1665, Pepys took '5*l*. worth' of 'new books' home, 'to my great content', and 'at night home to *look over* my new books, and so late to bed' (my italics). What does Pepys mean by 'look over'? It's one of his favourite terms, and he deploys it in relation to a range of texts (his father's accounts, his own papers, pictures). To 'look over' suggests a scale of book-use that includes but also exceeds reading the text: that takes in a wider sense of the material whole. Pepys created particular sensory environments in which his domestic reading took place: his reading of his new books on 7 July 1665 probably took place in his 'closet' – also called his 'chamber' or his 'study' – which housed his book collection and, as Kate Loveman notes, was decorated with considerable care.[33] These reading spaces also had particular qualities of light: ever since Pepys heard instrument maker Ralph Greatorex, in an alehouse in October 1660, talking up the qualities of 'the Lamp glasses, which carry the light a great way', Pepys had decided they were 'Good to read in bed by and I intend to have one of them'.[34] The process of 'looking over' took place in these heightened sensory environments: intimate, decorated, carefully-planned spaces, late at night, the light 'commodiously reflect[ing] upon a *Table*, or to a place assigned'.[35] Pepys' other suggestive verb of book use is 'sort': 'I to the office again', he writes for Tuesday 17 January 1665, 'and there very late, and so home to the sorting of some of my books, and so to bed, the weather becoming pretty warm'. The passage suggests the eroticism of Pepys' kind of book use – something to be

done last thing at night, before snuffing out the candle or the lamp glass – and also, in this instance, a relationship between sorting books and feelings of warmth. To 'sort' books means to arrange books 'according to kind or quality, or after some settled order or system; to separate and put into different sorts or classes'.[36] It conveys not quite reading, or not only reading, but also the handling, the weighing up (in all senses) of books, and the placement of books according to some sense of physical form. Sorting books is an embodied form of book-use, part of that same desire to arrange that Pepys describes as a feature of his own mid-to-late bibliographical style:

> whereas before my delight was in multitude of books, and spending money in that and buying alway of other things, now that I am become a better husband, and have left off buying, now my delight is in the neatness of everything, and so cannot be pleased with anything unless it be very neat, which is a strange folly.[37]

We might learn from Pepys' looking over, and his sorting, and perhaps also his delight. (The 'we' I'm conjuring here is that group of bibliographically-inclined literary critics – including myself – who have some sensory catching up to do.) In 2017, researchers attempted to make smell a variable of bibliographical description. Noting that 'our knowledge of the past is odourless', Cecilia Bembibre and Matija Strlič developed an 'Historic Book Odour Wheel' – 'where untrained noses could identify an aroma' – to capture the ways in which visitors to St Paul's Catherdral's Dean and Chapter library experienced the smell of books. This diagnostic tool could produce a book's 'olfactory profile' for conservators, and was an attempt to consider smells as 'part of our cultural heritage' – a response to the fact that 'there is currently no strategy in the UK for the protection or preservation of smells', and that 'smells are not recognized in the definition of intangible

cultural heritage by UNESCO'.[38] 'Woody' was the most popular description among visitors to St Paul's Library, followed by 'smoky', 'earthy', and 'vanilla', although the Odour Wheel allowed for a much wider smell vocabulary.

One route forward, then, would be to sustain the research of Bembibre and Strlič to develop something like a standardized vocabulary for the sensory qualities of a book. But might there be an alternative? If bibliography works through the establishment of fields of definition – and the careful vetting of proposed new terms is the task of the aforementioned Bibliographic Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the American Library Association – then another, complementary method might be for critics to resist this norm-setting and instead offer something like a thick description of the physical book: an account that is more subjective, even affecting, and rooted in our multi-sensory encounter with the book. Remembering that injunction to consider objects as not merely apprehended visually but rather as 'bundles of sensory properties',[39] we might consider – for example – a copy of the 1611 third quarto of *Hamlet*, printed by George Eld for John Smethwicke, now held in the Bodleian Library as Arch. G e.13. The copy-specific description is already extremely, and (for Shakespeare, and for the Bodleian) characteristically thorough:

> Binding: Early 19th century gilt tooled English calf, floral roll and double-fillets used to produce panel design, 19th century marbled endpapers and paste-downs. Gilt tooled spine, with title picked out vertically "Hamlet. 1611". Blank upper and lower endleaves are occasionally watermarked with the date 1820, and one leaf contains the watermarked initials "G.A". Evidence of the original stab-sewing is still visible. - Imperfect: Lacks preliminary blank at A1. - MS additions: Minor MS corrections to text on C1r. - Provenance name: Heber, Richard, 1773-1833. - Provenance note:

> Purchased by Bulkeley Bandinel, Librarian 1813-1860, in 1837 for the price of 10 guineas. It had previously belonged to Richard Heber, and had been sold in 1834 at the sale of his books for 9 guineas.[40]

Those tendencies of bibliographical description that we noted earlier – a concern with binding, missing parts, and provenance – are once more on display. But a supplementary, sense-alert description of the same text might begin in the following way:[41]

> The spine is embossed to the touch and reads, in gold lettering, 'HAMLET. 1611'. A later label, a faded yellowy-brown, is pasted at the bottom of the spine and records in handwritten ink 'Arch. G e.13'. The book is neat in the hand, comfortable to hold, easy to lift and, if we want to, carry. It is a slender volume, bound with hard boards: the impression is of both slightness and also of duration through time. The front board feels surprisingly heavy and, once lifted, falls easily and abruptly open: the spine seems fragile. How many more times can this book be opened? The pastedown and the conjugate free endpaper bear a repeated marbling pattern in red, yellow, blue, green, purple and white. The book has little discernible scent until, on reaching the text block itself ('THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET Prince of Denmarke'), each turned page yields a waft of musty leather – although one must lean in what feels transgressively close (certainly within 6 inches) to notice the scent. The smell is strongest on each page turn, and particularly when pages are turned quickly and in number. Slower page-turning induces less scent. The title-page, front and back, is marked with brown circles suggestive of damp. The pages of printed text are somewhat rough to the touch. When the page is lifted, light passes through so that text from the other side is glimpsed, although, being backwards and faded, it is not quite

> legible. Each page turned feels thin, robust, dry, pliable. Turning the pages produces a crisp, crackling sound: the thicker endpapers lower in tone than the higher-pitched pages of the play itself.[42]

I can't supply an account of the taste of this copy of the third quarto of *Hamlet*, but in its place, I want to end by noting a document of book consumption that is curious even by early modern standards. *Vox piscis: or, The book-fish* (Cambridge, 1627) is, the title-page declares, a book 'contayning three treatises which were found in the belly of a cod-fish in Cambridge Market, on Midsummer Eve last, anno Domini 1626.' The book's preface narrates the circumstances of the discovery of the original fish carrying three 1540s devotional works by John Frith, an early protestant martyr. The fish, caught by one William Skinner off the coast of King's Lynn in 1626, was brought to Cambridge Market where the head was cut off and the fish gutted. At this point, a 'woman, casually standing by, espyed in the maw of the fish a peece of canvasse, and taking it up found the Booke wrapped up in it, being much soyled, and defaced, and covered over with a kinde of slime & congealed matter'. The preface gives a speculative account of how the little decimosexto book, wrapped in canvas, ended up inside the fish:

> it seemeth most probably, that upon some wrack this booke lying (perhaps manie years) in the pocket of some man, that was cast away, was swallowed by the Cod, and that it lay for a good space of time in the fishes belly. For the booke was much consumed by lying there, the leather cover being melted and dissolved, and much of the edges of the leaves abated away and consumed, and the rest very thin and brittle, having beene deepe parboiled by the heat of the fishes maw.[43]

Alexandra Walsham has read this text in the context of a seventeenth century in which ‘divine intervention in earthly affairs was deeply embedded and etched’, the discovery of a fish’s carcass containing Henrician treatises signalling ‘an unfolding apocalyptic chronicle’.[44] But the book-fish stands also as an expression of an early modern bibliographical culture that, to twenty-first scholars policed and repressed by bibliography’s rather stark regime of book noticing, seems characterised by a kind of material and sensory excess: the book, in this instance, ‘soyled’, ‘defaced’, ‘covered over with a kinde of slime & congealed matter’, and smelling terrible. [Figure 15.2 here]

[1] Craig Dworkin, *The Perverse Library* (York: Information at Material, 2010), 31. Thanks to David Pearson, Caroline Duroselle-Melish and Jo Maddocks for advice towards this chapter, and also to members of the SHARP discussion list, who responded generously to my questions.

[2] For the muddle around and the consequences of this slippage, see David McKitterick, *The Invention of Rare Books* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 340n25.

[3] Bruce Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 87-93.

4 'RBMS Controlled Vocabularies', at http://rbms.info/vocabularies.

[5] *Engaging the Senses: Object-Based Learning in Higher Education*, ed. Helen J. Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan (London: Routledge, 2015), 5.

[6] *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden and Ruth B. Phillips (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 3, 8.

[7] Hamnet, copy-specific notes, https://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=1&ti=1,1&Search%5FArg=Folger%20Library%20STC%2022345%20copy%201&Search%5FCode=GKEY%5E%2A&CNT=50&PID=t56urRtMLsj8DUiNbLc4OAPsOsHe4&SEQ=20190301051448&SID=1.

[8] Orbis, copy-specific notes, http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/3618606.

[9] McKitterick, *Invention of Rare Books*.

[10] W. W. Greg, 'What is Bibliography?', *The Library* 12, no. 1 (1913): 40.

[11] W.W. Greg, 'The function of bibliography in literary criticism illustrated in a study of the text of *King Lear*', in *Collected papers*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 271. My italics.

[12] Peter Beal, '"My Books Are the Great Joy of my Life": Sir William Boothby, Seventeenth-Century Bibliophile', *The Book Collector* 46 (1997): 351. Noted in Kate Loveman, *Samuel Pepys and His Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 184.

[13] Beal, 'William Boothby', 357, 359.

[14] Jo Maddocks, email correspondence, February 2019.

[15] http://cbihateperfume.com/shop/perfumes-a-to-z/306. The novel is not identified, although Dworkin (*Library*, 42n13) speculates it may be Henry Williamson's *Tarka the Otter* (1927).

[16] Dworkin, *Library*, 27.

[17] M. Strlič et al, 'Material degradomics: on the smell of old books', *Analytical Chemistry* 81, no. 20 (2009): 8617-22, quoted in Cecilia Bembibre and Matija Strlič, 'Smell of heritage: a framework for the identification, analysis and

archival of historic odours', *Heritage Science* 5, no. 2 (2017).

[18] Thomas Manton, *A second volume of sermons* (London, 1684), 245; Henry Crosse, *Vertues common-wealth: or The high-way to honour* (London, 1603), N4^{v}. My italics.

19 McKitterick, *Invention of Rare Books*, 69.

[20] Richard W. Oram and Edward L. Bishop, 'The sweet smell of provenance', *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 52, no. 6 (2005): B18-9.

[21] John Taylor, *The praise of hemp-seed* (London, 1623), 20.

[22] J. C. T. Oates, 'Cambridge books of congratulatory verses, 1603-1640, and their binders', *The Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 1 (1953): 403-4.

[23] David Pearson, 'A Binding Presented to Queen Elizabeth I by Cambridge University, 1578', *The Book Collector* 49 (2000): 547. The book now resides in Queen's College, Oxford, as Sel.d.21.

[24] Seneca, *Moral Letters* 84.5, trans. Richard M. Gummere (London: Heinemann, 1920). Ben Jonson, *Timber: or discoveries made upon men and matter*, ed. Ian Donaldson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 2491-8. For Jonson and digestion, see Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *The Fury of Men's Gullets Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). For models of imitation, see G. W. Pigman III, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1980): 1-32.

[25] Elizabeth L. Swann, '"To dream to eat Books": Bibliophagy, bees and literary taste in early modern commonplace culture', in *Text, Food and the Early Modern Reader: Eating Words*, ed. Jason Scott-Warren and Andrew Zurcher (London: Routledge, 2019), 71, 77.

[26] Ibid., 78.

[27] Ibid., 82.

[28] See also Jeremiah 15:16 ('Thy words were found, and I did eat them').

[29] Peter Stallybrass, 'Eating the book, or why we need to digest what we read', in *Text, Food*, ed. Scott-Warren and Zurcher, 178-9.

[30] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970-83), VII.326. Loveman, *Pepys*, 180.

[31] Pepys, *Diary*, Tuesday 10 June 1662.

[32] Ibid., Wednesday 27 November 1667.

[33] Loveman, *Pepys*, 27.

[34] Ibid., p. 26. Pepys, *Diary*, I. 35, III.7.

[35] Henry Van Etten, *Mathematicall Recreations* (London, 1633), 157-8, quoted in Loveman, *Pepys*, 26.

[36] *OED*, 'sort *v.1*', II.9.a.

[37] Pepys, *Diary*, 10 August 1663.

[38] Bembibre and Strlič, 'Smell of heritage'.

[39] *Sensible Objects*, ed. Edwards, Gosden, and Philips, 8.

[40] SOLO, copy-specific notes, at https://solo-aleph.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/?func=direct&doc_number=006708083&format=999&local_base=HOL60.

[41] For a related attempt to describe *Venus and Adonis*, see Smith, *Phenomenal*, 87-93.

[42] For an audio recording of the pages turning, visit https://clyp.it/fj2mpni4, or email the author.

[43] John Frith, *Vox piscis: or, The book-fish contayning three treatises which were found in the belly of a cod-fish in Cambridge Market, on Midsummer Eue last, anno Domini 1626* (Cambridge, 1627), 9-14.

[44] Alexandra Walsham, 'Vox Piscis: Or The Book-Fish: Providence and the Uses of the Reformation past in Caroline', *The English Historical Review* 114, no. 457 (1999): 577, 585. The book-fish is also discussed in Kathleen Lynch, 'Vox Piscis: Dead Men Shall Ryse Agayne', *Shakespeare Studies* 28 (2000): 154-9.