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“Yet not past sense”: Walter Raleigh, Mary Wroth and the pleasure principles of the body

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“yet not past *sense*”: Walter Raleigh, Mary Wroth and the pleasure principles of the body

Abstract

This discussion considers both the poetic and prose writings of Walter Raleigh and Mary Wroth with specific reference to the figuration of the body and the deployment of the senses in their narratives. Initially, late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century views are reviewed concerning the senses and the extent to which these are developments of ideas inherited from antiquity. Subsequently, attention is paid to the evocations of sensory perceptions in Raleigh's and Wroth's writing with reference to accounts of rapture, seduction, illness and near-death experiences, querying whether the interrogation of early modern epistemological and senseate expectations are inevitably linked to specificities of gendered experience and writing. Indeed, in the findings ranged during the course of this discussion, it becomes increasingly apparent that even in writings with marked gendered perspectives, the relation of human experience regarding the senses and knowledge acquisition may return to strikingly analogous enquiries. The final phase of discussion reflects upon how Raleigh's and Wroth's accounts of the senses contribute to an ongoing early modern debate on the human condition.

Keywords

Raleigh, Wroth, five senses, pastoral romance, Petrarchan lyric, colonial literature.

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If then one and the very same thing to the eye seem red, to another pale, and white to another: If one and the same thing, seem not hot or cold, drie or moist, in the same degree to the several creatures which touch it [...] I may report how these things appear divers to several creatures, and seem to produce divers effects. But what they are in their own nature [...] I cannot tell. For why should I presume to proffer my conceit and imagination, in affirming that a thing is thus, or thus, in its own nature, because it seemeth to me to be so, before the conceit of other living creatures, who may as well think it to be otherwise in each one nature, because it appeareth otherwise to them than it doth to me?¹

By 1651, when *Sir Walter Raleigh's Sceptick* was published, Lady Mary Wroth's life was drawing to its very close and Raleigh's own demise had occurred over thirty years earlier. There is no reason to believe that the *Sceptick* was penned by the Devon knight himself.² However, what remains of interest for this discussion are the various ways in which Raleigh (1554?-1618) and his younger contemporary Wroth (1587?-1651?) were formulated and re-formulated for early modern audiences as figures who might warrant attention, testing social convention and given areas of received thinking to their very limits. Whether in terms of prevailing codes governing elite conduct, heroic expectation or artistic undertaking, Raleigh and Wroth repeatedly challenged, in their very different ways unsettled with their textual enquiries, the cultural values of those around them; and, as a consequence, they came to negotiate exceedingly strained relations with the court of James I / VI. The erotic careers of both figures and their interests in cultural critique, for example, could become sources of speculation and, sometimes, censure in early modern England. As will become apparent in the course of this discussion, as we delve further in the works and lives of both figures, the habitual divisions of human experience and knowledge acquisition linked to gender expectation may not inevitably obtain experientially or textually in either case. Indeed, in bringing these two writers together, this discussion proposes that one of the ways to consider fruitfully their significant *oeuvres* is to examine how their readers are urged again and again to reflect upon the human subject encountering revelatory affective and sensory experience. Beginning with an account of the

¹ *Sir Walter Raleigh's Sceptick*, London, W. Bentley, 1651, pp. 10-12.

² In this context, see, for example: Anna R. Beer, *Sir Walter Raleigh and his Readers in the Seventeenth Century*, Houndmills, Basingstoke/New York, MacMillan/St. Martin's Press, 1997, p. 157; Mark Nicholls & Penry Williams, *Sir Walter Raleigh in Life and Legend*, London, Continuum, 2011, p. 247

influential intellectual legacies regarding the senses which were inherited from antiquity, this discussion then proceeds to consider idealist figurations of the senses in Raleigh's and Wroth's narratives, then textual constructions of the limitations of sensual experience, the transgression of sensual expression, the privation and then the transcendence of sensual responses in new and unexpected environments.

In 1650, a year before the appearance of the *Sceptick*, another publication rolled from the presses in London entitled *Judicious and Select Essayes and Observations By that Renowned Knight Sir Walter Raleigh* – a collection of essays which the latter had indeed composed. Clearly, the attention that Raleigh might command among Interregnum audiences is demonstrated in the prefatory materials where it was affirmed that “*Raleighs* very Name is Proclamation enough for the *Stationers* advantage”.³ Here, instead of the buccaneer or sea pirate, the Elizabethan court favourite or perceived antagonist to the Crown imprisoned in the Tower, we are drawn primarily into the company of the historian, the military strategist, all too frequently sceptical of ideas which appear to have currency in the world around him.⁴ However, equally importantly, like Wroth, Raleigh might find himself the subject of remarkable interest *in his own lifetime*. If, for example, he gained access into the narratives of *The Faerie Queene* figured forth as Prince Arthur's squire Timias irrevocably enamoured of Belphoebe, he had also been introduced by Spenser in “Colin Clouts Come Home Againe” (1595) as one whose “song was all a lamentable lay, / Of great vnkindnesse, and of usage hard, / Of *Cynthia* the Ladie of the sea, / Which from her presence faultlesse him debard”.⁵ Conversely, in later years, Robert Naunton submitted in his *Fragmenta Regalia* (1641) “the truth is that [Elizabeth] took [Raleigh] for a kinde of oracle, which nettled them all, yea those he relied on, began to take this his suddain favour for an Allarum, and to be sensible of their own supplantation”.⁶

³ Sir Walter Raleigh, *Judicious and Select Essayes and Observations By that Renowned Knight Sir Walter Raleigh*, London, T.W. for Humphrey Moseley, 1650, A4^r.

⁴ For further discussion here, see Andrew Hiscock: “‘Most fond and fruitlesse warre’: Raleigh and the call to arms”, in Christopher M. Armitage (ed.), *Literary and Visual Raleigh*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 257-283; “‘whether the Macedonian, or the Roman, were the best Warriour’: Sir Walter Raleigh and the Conflicts of Antiquity”, in Marco Formisano & Hartmut Böhme (eds.), *War and Words. Transformations of War from Antiquity to Clausewitz*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2011, pp. 291-308; “‘Provide for the Future, and Times Succeeding’: Walter Raleigh and the Progress of Time”, in Andrea Brady & Emily Butterworth (eds.), *The Uses of the Future in Early Modern Europe*, London: Routledge, 2010, pp. 90-109; “Walter Raleigh and the Arts of Memory”, *Literature Compass*, vol. 4, issue 4, July 2007, 1030-1058.

⁵ Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouts come home againe*, London, Thomas Creede, 1595, B1^v.

⁶ Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta regalia, or, Observations on the late Queen Elizabeth, her times and favorites*, London, n. p., 1641, p. 31.

Neither was Wroth (née Sidney) neglected in this early modern fascination with the strategic myth-making of identities for public consumption. William Drummond of Hawthornden claimed in verse that her “spacious thoughts with choice inuentiones free, / Show passionnes power, affectiones seuerall straines”, adding that “Sprightes wanting bodyes are not barrd from loue, / But feele, not tuching; see, though wanting eyes; / Aboue grosse senses reach true vertue flies, / And doth by sympathye effectuall proue”.⁷ Elsewhere, in a prefatory verse to his 1616 *Works of Homer*, George Chapman unveiled an heroic Wroth, able to “take the soules part, and her sauing Light, / While others blinde and burie both in Sense”.⁸ Strikingly, with regard to both of these figures of very differing intellectual complexions, the emphasis in such accounts remains upon their perceivedly acute sensibilities, quite independent of the gendered and social expectations which may accompany them as notable figures centrally connected with the nation’s elite. Both provoking perplexity and censure frequently in their own social milieux of early modern England, Raleigh and Wroth equally sought to evoke the possibility in both poetry and prose narrative of male and female characters accessing superlative forms of sensory and cerebral experience.

Bereft of all knowledge concerning her origins at the opening of Wroth’s pastoral romance *Urania* (1621), the heroine seeks to shuffle off “the vnhappinesse of being ignorant” for her ambition “now flies it to a knowledge”: Urania concludes, “then was I contented, now perplexed”.⁹ Perplexity appears to have been an all too common response for those deprived of or greeted with inhabital routes to further knowledge. Allegedly, James I / VI concluded that the commitment to a new form of epistemology by one of his leading public servants, Sir Francis Bacon, was “like the peace of God, which passeth understanding”.¹⁰ This jurist and natural philosopher notably proposed for the age a wholly new investigation into the material world with the critical apparatus of observation, experimentation, data analysis and storage, and empirically-based hypothesis. In his *History of the World* (1614, IV.2.xxiii.) Raleigh acknowledged the scholarship of *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) where Bacon remained at pains in his commitment to the “proficiency” of knowledge to distinguish between the senses

⁷ “To my ladye Mary Wroath” (ll. 5-6, 13-14), in William Drummond of Hawthornden, *The Poetical Works of William Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. L. E. Kastner, vol. II, rep. New York, Haskell House Publishers, 1968, 1st pub. 1856, II.277.

⁸ “TO THE HAPPY STARRE, discovered in our Sydneian Asterisme; comfort of learning, Sphere of all the vertues, the Lady WROTTE” (ll. 7-8), in Homer, *The Iliads of Homer prince of poets [...] donne according to the Greeke by Geo: Chapman*, London, Richard Field for Nathaniell Butter, 1611, Gg5^v.

⁹ Lady Mary Wroth, *The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania*, London, John Marriot & John Grismand, 1621, p. 1.

¹⁰ Cited in Charles Whitney, *Francis Bacon and Modernity*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986, p. 17.

and between their discrete operations which could communicate only partial understanding: “the senses are but Reporters”.¹¹ Interestingly, in the *History*, Raleigh himself elects to explore such a distinction in markedly theological terms, asserting that “this working power, which we call Nature, the beginning of motion and rest [...] is nothing else, but the strength and faculty, which God hath infused into every creature [...] we attribute sight to the eye, and hearing to the eares, &c. and yet it is the minde only, that giueth abilitie, life, and motion to all these his instruments and Organs; so God worketh by Angels, by the Sunne, by the Starres, by Nature, or infused properties, and by men”.¹² In these years, such an emphasis would be maintained notably at the close of Richard Braithwaite’s *Essaies vpon the Five Senses [...] purposely composed for the zealously-disposed* (1620), where poetic speaker makes the appeal, “Let eye, eare, touch, tast, smell, let every Sence, / Employ it selfe to praise his prouidence, / [...] If our fiue Sences thus employed be, / We may our Sauour smell, tast, touch, heare, see”.¹³

Nonetheless, markedly refraining from any reliance upon celestial intervention (“We [should] not presume by the contemplation of Nature, to attaine to the misteries of God”¹⁴), Bacon looked forward in *The Advancement of Learning* to the very convergence of reflective and sensory operations:

For as the Psalmes and other Scriptures doe often inuite vs to consider, and magnifie the great and wonderfull workes of God so if we should rest onely in the contemplation of the exterior of them, as they first offer themselues to our senses; we should do a like iniurie vnto the Maiestie of God, as if wee should iudge or construe of the store of some excellent Jeweller, by that onely which is set out toward the streete in his shoppe.¹⁵

Remaining thus suspicious of the body’s perceptual powers alone, the natural philosopher sought to harness the senses for the improvement of scientific thinking within regulated schemes of, what has been variously termed critically as, an inductive, hypothetico-inductive, or theoretico-inductive method.¹⁶ However, he was clearly not alone in his anxieties concerning

¹¹ Sir Francis Bacon, *The two bookes of Francis Bacon. Of the proficience and aduancement of learning, diuine and humane*, London, for Henrie Tomos, 1605, 4^r.

¹² Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World*, London, William Stansby for Walter Burre, 1614, li.10.13 (Book, chapter, section, page). For further discussion concerning early modern understandings of the faculty of sight, see Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye. Vision in Early Modern European Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹³ “The heauenly Exercise of the *fiue Sences* couched in a diuine Poem”, in Richard Braithwaite, *Essaies vpon the Five*, London, E.G. for Richard Whittaker, 1620, p. 116.

¹⁴ Bacon, *aduancement of learning*, B2^v.

¹⁵ Bacon, *aduancement of learning*, 31^v.

¹⁶ For critical discussion in this context, see, for example: Perez Zagorin, *Francis Bacon*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 103; Michel Malherbe, “Bacon’s Method of Science”, in Markku Peltonen (ed.), *The*

the senses' reliable engagement with the material world. His contemporary, the essayist Sir William Cornwallis exclaimed, "Fie vpon these ingrossing senses of ours, that make all fare the worse for the satisfaction of one, and yet limit their obiects, and carry leuell but certaine distances. The minde, the minde is the Magazin of contentment".¹⁷ Nor was there relief to be secured on the nether side of the Channel in these opening decades of the seventeenth century. In his *Harmonie universelle, contenant la théorie et la pratique de la musique* (1636-1637), Marin Mersenne highlighted that "l'vne des plus grandes difficultez de la Physique consiste à sçauoir comme se font les operations des sens, & de quelle maniere procede l'esprit pour connoistre les obiets qui luy sont presentez".¹⁸ In the event, both kingdoms remained profoundly influenced by the scepticism of earlier generations of writers, a scepticism renewed for attention by the scholarship of Lipsius and the compilation of the works of Sextus Empiricus by Henri Estienne, for example, and communicated even more widely to European audiences in the *Essais* of Michel de Montaigne: "Nous auons formé vne verité par la consultation & concurrence de nos cinq sens: mais à l'aduanture falloit-il l'accord de huict, ou de dix sens, & leur contribution pour l'appercevoir certainement & en son essence".¹⁹

Conversely, in the domain of artistic creativity, the potential of the senses to enrich the powers of apprehension continued to be widely appreciated. Indeed, the authorities of sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing were widely thought to complement and educate each other, thus accompanying all kinds of achievement in literature and the visual arts. At the very beginning of his career as a poet in his dedicatory verse to George Gascoigne's *The Steel of Glass* (1562), for example, Raleigh rehearsed a lyric mode that was to remain dear to him for years to come, drawing upon a format whereby the evocation of a common experience led to the exposition in unadorned diction of a more proverbial truth: "Sweet were the sauce, would please ech kind of tast, / The life likewise, were pure that never swerved, / For spyteful tongs, in cancred stomackes plaste, / Deeme worst of things, which best (percase) deserved".²⁰

Cambridge Companion to Bacon, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 76; Ian Box, *The Social Thought of Francis Bacon*, Lampeter, Edwin Mellen Press, 1989, p. 94.

¹⁷ Sir William Cornwallis, *Essayes*, London, S. Stafford and R. Read, 1600-1601, C4^v.

¹⁸ Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle, contenant la théorie et la pratique de la musique*, Paris, Sebastien Cramoisy, 1636, I.v.1, prop. LI, p. 79.

¹⁹ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, Paris, Abel Langelier, 1588, Ttt3^v (II.xii).

²⁰ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Raleigh's poetry are taken from the following: Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh. A Historical Edition*, ed. Michael Rudick, Tempe AR, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies/Renaissance English Text Society, 1999. In this instance, see Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, p. 1.

More generally, down the centuries, the sensory faculties had not only been identified and individuated, but also hierarchized. The ocularcentrism, for example, of Aristotelian thinking (“we prefer sight to almost everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things”²¹) continued to shape ongoing debate both in the medieval and early modern periods concerning the undertaking of the writer. In *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), Thomas Peacham acknowledged Aristotelian constructions of mind-body coordinations in sensory knowledge acquisition and might be seen as reaching forward for the kinds of perceptual distinctions which Bacon sought in the next century: “we translate a word from the senses of the body, to the things of the mind”. However Peacham harboured little of the Jacobean philosopher’s discomfort concerning the potential accomplishments of each faculty: “as the sighte decearneth thinges, by their fourmes, and colloures, and see what they be, so likewise the mind, by the power intellectuie, doth vnderstand truth from falsehood, right from wrong [...] the sight is a sure sence, and sildome deceyued”.²² In the event, there was little consensus among rhetoricians in the period. Earlier, Thomas Wilson in his *Art of Rhetorique* (1553) had recognized the privileged status accorded to sight, but sought out a less absolute order of precedence for the senses. He drew in the course of his discussion notably upon the authority of Quintilian who

likeneth the coloures of Rhetorique to a mannes eye sighte. And nowe (quod he) I woulde not haue all the bodye to be full of eyes, or nothings but eyes: for then the other partes should wante their due place and proporcion [...] the eye sight is most quicke, & containeth the impression of thinges more assuredly, then any of the other senses do.²³

²¹ *Metaphysics* I 980 a25. See W. D. Ross’s translation of the *Metaphysics*, in Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, rev. Oxford translation, Bollingen Series LXXI 2, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, II.1552. Aristotle inherited the concept of the five senses from the Pre-Socratics, but his works (notably *De Anima* and *De Sensu et Sensibilibus* (part of *Parva Naturalia*) were key in establishing the concept of subsequent generations: e.g., “there is no senses in addition to the five – sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch”. See *De Anima* III.i.425a22-23 and J. A. Smith’s translation in vol. I of Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, rev. Oxford translation, Bollingen Series LXXI 2, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 675. For further critical discussion here, see: Mark Bradley (ed.), *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, London, Routledge, 2015; Annick Le Guéer, *Les Pouvoirs de l’Odeur*, Paris, Editions Odile Jacob, 1998; Matthew Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2011; Herman Roodenburg (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014; Louise Vinge, *The Five Senses. Studies in a Literary Tradition*, Lund, Sweden, LiberLäromedel, 1975.

²² Thomas Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, London, H. Jackson, 1577, B2^v.

²³ Thomas Wilson *The Art of Rhetorique*, London, s. p., 1553, Z1^v, Ff4^r.

“al the rare delights”: Idealist settings and the Senses

Drawing upon a Platonic querying of the status and achievement of sensory perception, amongst the Fathers of the Church, Augustine in the *Confessions* declared influentially for subsequent Christian audiences that the love of God might not be evaluated according to the readings of these faculties:

So what is it that I love when I love you? Not the beauty of outward appearance, nor the splendour of time, not the fairness of light (and look how pleasing that is to our eyes), not the dulcet melodies of all kinds of song, not the sweet scent of flowers and salves and perfumes, not manna and honey, not limbs which are fit for bodily embraces. It is not these things that I love when I love my God [...] [but] something that no place can contain shines brightly before my soul, and there sound is heard that time does not carry away, and there scent is inhaled that no wind can disperse, and there taste is savored that greed cannot diminish.²⁴

While paying due homage to the status and function of the senses' engagement with the material world, Augustine thus continued to emphasise a higher experience in terms of spiritual transcendence where the soul deployed its own repertoire of acutely tuned responses to its new-found realm. Similarly, in the early modern period, Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (1469) sought out a host of different settings in which to strike the similar notes: “every love begins with sight. But the love of the contemplative man ascends from sight to intellect. That of the voluptuous man descends from sight to touch”.²⁵

Nevertheless, there were other, rival traditions of thinking pressing for attention among the intellectual legacies from antiquity. Notably, in early modern England, for example, Ovid the sensualist, rather than *Ovide moralisé*, was being responded to with rich sensitivity, most especially in the wake of Golding's translations of the *Metamorphoses*, initially books I-IV, and then a complete translation in 1567. Four further editions of this work had rolled from the presses by 1612, but even Golding felt compelled to voice his disquiet lest such narratives wield adverse effects upon the reader: “Some naughtie persone seeing vyce shewd lyvely in his hew [might] take occasion by and by like vices too ensew [...] / That men [...] should not

²⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, books 9-13, ed. & trans. Carolyn J.-B. Hammond, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press (Loeb), 2016, p. 81 (10.8).

²⁵ Qtd. in Joe Moshenska, *Feeling Pleasures. The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 113.

let their lewd affections have the head [...] / For under feyned names of Goddes it was the Poets guyse / The vice and faultes of all estates too taunt in covert wyse”.²⁶

George Chapman’s *Ovids banquet of sence* (1595), for example, has the Roman poet as protagonist. Here, Ovid is discovered in raptures as his senses and (poetic) imagination luxuriate in the spectacle of Corinna bathing, exciting the possibilities of both erotic and poetic achievement: “Then with a kisse (deare life) adorne thy feast / And let (as Banquets should) the last be best”.²⁷ In an analogous evocation of sensual plenitude a few years later, Drayton’s sonnet “To the Sences” from his collection *Idea* (1599) has the speaker negotiating “conqu’ring loue” and discovering “My hearing bribde with her tongues harmonie, / My taste by her sweete lippes drawne with delight, / My smelling wonne with her breaths spicerie”.²⁸ If, in his own dedicatory sonnet to *The Faerie Queene*, Raleigh chose to foreground the raptures of the spirit, rather than those of the body, as the speaker encounters a most beguiling “vision” (“All suddainly I saw the Faery Queene: / [...] And from thenceforth those graces were not seene / For they this Queene attended”²⁹), in *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana* (1596) dating from the same period, he envisaged a much more tangible environment for the narrator (and the reader) to traverse. Here, the geographical distances which are covered in the exploration of the New World are often associated with recursive motions through time for these travellers apparently in search of a new Eden. Indeed, on occasions, we can find ourselves in a landscape resembling that an aristocratic Great House, wending our way through an English country park of sensual delights:

On both sides of this riuier, we passed the most beautifull country that euer mine eies beheld: and whereas all that we had seen before was nothing but woods, prickles, bushes, and thornes, heere we beheld plaines of twentie miles in length, the grasse short and greene, and in diuers parts groues of trees by themselues, as if they had been by all the art and labour in the world so made of purpose: and stil as we rowed, the Deere came downe feeding by the waters side, as if they had beene vsed to a keepers cal. Vpon this riuier there were great store of fowle, and of many sorts³⁰

²⁶ “To the Reader”, in Ovid, *The xv. bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter*, by Arthur Golding Gentleman, London, William Seres, 1567, A3^r.

²⁷ George Chapman, *Ovids banquet of sence*, London, I. R. for Richard Smith, 1595, D4^v.

²⁸ Michael Drayton, *Poems*, London, Nicholas Ling, 1605, Bb8^r.

²⁹ “Me thought I saw the grave, where Laura lay” (ll. 6, 8-9), See Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, p. 2.

³⁰ Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana, with a relation of the great and Golden Citie of Manoa (which the spanyards call El Dorado) And the Prouinces of Emeria, Arromaia, Amapaia, and other Countries, with their riuers, adioyning. Performed in the yeare 1595*, London, Robert Robinson, 1596, p. 48. However, Raleigh does acknowledge that even this Edenic landscape has its own serpents: “I had a *Negro* a very proper yoong fellow, that leaping out of the *Galley* to swim in the mouth of this riuier, was in all our sights taken and deuoured with one of those *Lagartos*” (Raleigh, *Discoverie*, p. 48).

Here, in Raleigh's evocation of a New World environment, the eyes feast upon the unceasingly fertile profuseness of the vista. Subsequently, like the travellers, we traverse the landscape, invited to marvel constantly at new sources of delight. Interestingly, similar kinds of idealised terrain are regularly in evidence in Wroth's pastoral romance. Her uncle, Sir Philip Sidney, had contended in his *Apologie for Poesie* (1595) that the exercise of the faculties in the consumption of the arts (notably, in this instance, of sight) might initiate a process of ethical transformation: "Truely, I haue knowen men, that euen with reading *Amadis de Gaule*, (which God knoweth wanteth much of a perfect Poesie,) haue found their harts mooued to the exercise of courtesie, liberalitie, and especially courage".³¹ Here, Sidney is urging his audience to consider the ways in which reading may bring about social and moral change. However, Wroth's *Urania* focuses again and again upon how reading may extend and enrich the reader's senseate experience. In her complexly unfolding narratives of (frequently thwarted) erotic attraction, political inheritance and self-interest, we are drawn into the company of nobles inhabiting a seemingly horizonless pastoral environment. Moreover, in keeping with the expectations of early modern romance, the *Urania* relates not only the tribulations of the aristocratic protagonists, but also their superlative experiences and temptations.³² In this feudalised fictional world where narration is shaped by the trials of errant members of royal dynasties, much has justly been made of the ways in which Wroth privileges the details of female experience and the values of constancy, rather than chastity, for many, if not all of the major characters.³³ The plate of *Urania*'s 1621 titlepage indicates one of the key events of the first part of the romance, the

³¹ Sir Philip Sidney, *An apologie for poetrie*, London, for Henry Olney, 1595, E4^v-F1^r.

³² Equally importantly in the development of the genre, as Nandini Das underlines, "The allegation that romance valorises personal ties of love and desire over public duty at the expense of both social expectations and moral considerations was one that Renaissance readers and writers of romance had to face frequently". See *Renaissance Romance. The Transformation of English Prose Fiction 1570-1620*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2011, p. 20. For an equally stimulating critical account of the European evolution of the prose romance into the early modern period, see also Victor Skretkovicz, *European Erotic Romance. Philhellene Protestantism, Renaissance translation and English literary politics*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010.

³³ In this context, see, for example: Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; Gwynne Kennedy, *Just Anger. Representing Women's Anger in Early Modern England*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2000; Akiko Kusunoki, "Female Selfhood and Male Violence in English Renaissance Drama: A View from Mary Wroth's *Urania*", in Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler (eds.), *Women, Violence and English Renaissance Literature*, Tempe AR, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003, pp. 125-148; Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (eds.), *Reading Mary Wroth. Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991; Shannon Miller, "Constructing the Female Self. Architectural Structures in Mary Wroth's *Urania*", in Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (eds.), *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp. 139-161; Melissa E. Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects. The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011; Carolyn Ruth Swift, "Feminine Identity in Lady Mary Wroth's Romance *Urania*", *English Literary Renaissance*, 14.3 (Autumn 1984), 328-346.

drawing of a privileged group of figures to the symbolic landscape of the Throne of Love. However, more generally, *Urania*, like its counterparts in early modern romance fictions, stresses how extreme forms of experience are reserved for its aristocratic heroines and heroes, offering an education for characters (and, at one remove, for the reader) in the exercise and potency of the senses. Such experiences can take place within specific architectural structures, such as the Castle of Love, or within significantly idealised pastoral landscapes. Unsurprisingly, the accounts of erotic attraction are frequently related with reference to the senses, as in this instance of Urania's narration of her first encounter with Steriamus:

when I first saw him rudely, yet innocently clad, like a Lamb in wool for colour and softnesse to the eye, or touch his face blushing like modesty [...] The language he did speake, was milde, so were his lookes, loue shadding all himself within his eyes, or in his face³⁴

Here, the narrative explores the senseate repertoire of the speaker (and the intra / extradiegetic auditor) in order to anticipate a communion which may ultimately transcend the realm of the senses. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that the exertions of the faculties are not only reserved for moments of romantic attachment in *Urania*. The remorseless accounts of alienation and jealousy in Wroth's narrative are also frequently communicated in terms of sensory perception, as in the instance of Antissia's outrage at the fickleness of Amphilanthus:

Could not I (blinde foole that I was) haue markt his often frequenting *Pamphilia's* Chamber? [...] his stolne lookes? his fearefull but amorous touching her hand? his kissing his owne hand, rather comming from hers, then going to hers? Louing it more for hauing touch'd that beloued hand, then for being his. Oft would hee doe this, and looke on mee³⁵

More generally, as Sheila T. Cavanagh argued persuasively, "Geography serves as a prominent source of characterological information in the *Urania*".³⁶ The preludes to scenes of amorous encounters or of temptation are figured forth often in terms of seemingly irresistible, fecund landscapes. In such an environment presenting all kinds of sensory ravishment, Parselius and his companions find themselves walking

³⁴ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 276.

³⁵ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 93.

³⁶ Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Cherished Torment. The Emotional Geography of Lady Mary Wroth's Urania*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 2001, p. 19.

to a most curious and dainty Garden, where all manner of sweets were ready in their kind to entertaine them; Flowers of all sorts for smell and colour; Trees of all kinds of fruits, and walkes diuided for most delight, many Birds singing, and with their notes welcomming them to that place³⁷

Elsewhere, the smitten Amphilanthus converses with his newly encountered mistress:

desirous to heare that discourse, especially louing to heare loue described, and related by a woman, out of whose lipps those sweet passions more sweetely proceeded, hee gaue occasion for it, as they walked along a dainty pleasant brooke, the bankes whereof were of such sweetnesse, as the plenty of the most delicate smelling flowers could yeeld vnto them, being shadowed from the Sunnes parching by Mirtle, and that Mirtle preserued by high, and braue trees, whose breadth and large boughs spread to giue content to those, who vnder them would submit to solitarinesse. This place (said *Amphilanthus*) were fitter much for louers, then such free Princes as liue here. Is there any free from that passion my Lord, said she?³⁸

These proliferating landscapes, teeming with lush abundance, synecdochically communicate the ripeness of Wroth's juvenile company, Urania, Pamphilia, Amphilanthus, Perissus and so on, for fulfilment in the aristocratic world of adult sexuality. Indeed, in this constant movement between geographical profusion and erotic human potential, the lexical parameters of pastoral romance can invite Wroth's reader to establish relationships of reification whereby the characters themselves become extensions of Nature's bounty. In an instance of this, Amphilanthus and his male companion travel a part of their journey alone and encounter "three fine young Maides, apparreld after the Greeke manner, carrying each of them a basket, wherein were seuerall delicate fruites". Subsequently, we learn that the maids reply to enquiries "with much sweetnes" and that the island is ruled over by a tyrant who plots "the destruction of braue Knights, and delicate Ladies".³⁹ In this way, we can identify occasions when the human body itself is firmly integrated into a sensory identity attributed to an entire landscape, revealing a panorama in which all animate life is drawn into a single cycle of experience.

As has been witnessed earlier, both Raleigh and Wroth query how the body might respond to the earthly delights on offer to their fictional creations. To take one of the most famous examples of the lyrics attributed to Raleigh, the Nymph's reply to Marlowe's

³⁷ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 104. In this context, see also, for example, Amphilanthus' subsequent entry into "a rare meadow, and in the midst [...] a delicate Fountaine circled about with Orenges, and Pomgranet trees [...] about the Fountaine (as next adioyning) was a hedge of *Iesamnis* mingled with Roses and Woodbines, and within that, paved with pauements of diuers colours, plac'd for shew and pleasure" (Wroth, *Urania*, p. 112).

³⁸ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 242.

³⁹ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 106.

Shepherd's appeal to "come live with me and be my love" proposes the possibility of stiff resistance through the exercise of reason, reflection and negotiation: "If all the world, and Love were Yonge, / And Truth in evry shepperds tongue: / Those prettie thinges my mynde might move".⁴⁰ In the context of this discussion, that celebrated poetic exchange between Marlowe and Raleigh might be placed usefully in dialogue with that of Wroth's in the *Urania* where Pamphilia composes poetic queries and responses between a shepherd and a "dainty louing Lasse":

Shepherd. Deare, how doe thy winning eyes my senses wholly tye?

She. Sense of sight wherein most lyes change, and Variety.

Shepherd. Change in me?

She. Choice in thee some new delights to try.

Shepherd. When I change or choose but thee then changed be mine eyes.

She. When you absent, see not me, will you not breake these tyes?⁴¹

Raleigh's Nymph remains mindful, like, for example, the scientists of Bacon's *New Atlantis* of "all Delusions and Deceits of the Sight", of the constant potential for sensory misapprehension and material delusions.⁴² However, the poetic voices of Wroth in this dialogue offer the possibility of a more cohesive querying whereby the risks of mis-understanding rooted wholly in the senses are framed within a broader logic of romantic attraction.

Nonetheless, elsewhere in his lyric writing, Raleigh's evocations of amorous union can approach those envisaged in the *Urania*. If the Petrarchan *donna angelicata* makes her presence felt regularly in his poetic canon, in the poem "Her Face, her Tonge, her Wytte" attributed to him⁴³, the figure of the defenceless lover and his all-conquering mistress are expressed markedly in terms of sensory exertion:

Her Face, her Tonge, her Wytte
So fayre, so sweete, so sharpe,
First bent, then drew, then hytte,
Myne Eye, mine Eare, my Hartt. [...]

Her face, her Tongue, her Wytt,
With Beames, with Sound, with Arte
Doth bynde, doth Charme, doth Rule,

⁴⁰ "If all the world, and Love were yonge" (ll. 1-3). See Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, p. 117.

⁴¹ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 143.

⁴² Sir Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis a work unfinished*, London, Thomas Newcomb, 1659, p. 28.

⁴³ See Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, pp. xxxvi, 144.

myne eye, myne eare, my harte. [...]

This Eye, this Eare, this Harte,
 Shall joy, shall bynd, shall sweare,
 Yowr Face, yowr Tonge, your Wytte
 To Serve, to Love, to Feare.⁴⁴

Such verse showcases Raleigh's abiding poetic interests in pared-down diction, masculine terminal rhyme schemes, anaphora, parallelism and lyrical narrative governed by caesuric rhythms. If, in addition to these, techniques of personification and the blazon are deployed, the poetic whole is modulated throughout by the converging motions of the senses. Here, we discover both Raleigh and Wroth once again engaged in analogous enquiries, teasing out the ways in which the sensual arts of seduction and bodily knowledge may lead to growth in self-knowledge and epiphanic acts of cognition.

As becomes evident throughout Wroth's *Urania*, the prose and poetic interventions serve to complement each other, developing and nuancing thematic emphasis, psychological detail and the evolution of the intrigue as the reader is guided from one narration to the next. However, perhaps more surprisingly, this mechanism is in evidence across Raleigh's *oeuvre*, which ranges from the genres of the lyric, pastoral, translation to the chronicle, essay and pamphleteering. In the *Discouerie*, for example, finely detailed attention is often devoted to the presentation of the body. In the account of native feasts, Raleigh's narrator takes particular care to rehearse the meticulous preparations preceding these revelries. We learn that the Emperor's followers are

first stripped naked, & their bodies annointed al ouer with a kind of white *Balsamum* [...] when they are annointed all ouer, certaine seruants of the Emperor hauing prepared gold made into fine powder blow it thorow holow canes vpon their naked bodies, vntil they be al shining from the foote to the head, & in this sort they sit drinking by twenties & hundreds & continue in drunkennes sometimes six or seven daies together⁴⁵

⁴⁴ "Her Face, her Tonge, her Wytte" (ll. 1-4, 9-12, 21-4). See Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁵ Raleigh, *Discouerie*, pp. 16-17. Despite Raleigh's contention that they are "marueylous great drunkards, in which vice I thinke no nation can compare with them", his subsequent reflections upon his own crew members on the voyages suggest that the Guianians would have had robust competition in this respect from their Old World neighbours (Raleigh, *Discouerie*, p. 16). Here once, again, we discover an example of Raleigh (like Wroth) querying radically uninspected prejudices of gender expectation and cultural priority which often enjoyed common currency in early modern society.

More generally, the kind of fetishisation of the body witnessed in the above extract is not only reproduced in the *Discouerie* to relate the unexpected nature of Guiana's mores, but to excite wonder and expectation in the reader (and potential investor). The latter would hopefully find themselves stimulated by the textual evocations of exoticised spectacle, signifying a foretaste of a society in which dreams of extravagant wealth and excess might be all too easily indulged - all this, by way of assessing an environment, so unlike that of early modern Europe, where gold might yield itself up into the service of all kinds of appetite. In addition, the relation of such rituals may also have had a persuasive effect upon Elizabethan readers in search, like Lear, of a familiar but long-lost "kind nursery" – a return to an earlier, Golden Age existence of unending fruitfulness and solace. We are thus transported into an environment where the senses are all too susceptible to ravishment, to extravagant sensual surfeiting, but which are all too frequently accompanied by more material speculations and consequences.

Violent Passions, Violent Senses

In the *De Symptomatum*, Galen had insisted to his Roman audiences that, "Pleasure and pain are inherent in all the senses, although clearly not to an equal degree, being least in that of vision, and most in that of touch and that of taste, whilst next to these in smell, and after these in hearing".⁴⁶ Apart from the concern with the customary hierarchization of the senses, the tract from antiquity remained anxious to stress that to differing degrees the senses may endure harmful encounters and develop in response to the experience of injury. Certainly, unwarranted exercise of the senses driven by the promptings of appetite is repeatedly censured in Wroth's *Urania*: subject to the insistences of Allanus, for example, the distressed Liana thunders, "Villaine [...] touch me not, nor dishonor my habits with thy rude handling them, struggling with all her power to get loose from him [...] Thou dost offend me sayd shee".⁴⁷ Interestingly, elsewhere, hostile realities are frequently communicated specifically under the terms of sensory perception. Depicting sovereignty in a manner all too familiar, for example, from the practices of the Jacobean monarch, Wroth's reader learns that when the King and Queen of Bulgaria leave Morea and arrive in their kingdom, the queen "could not indure [the] rudenes [of the

⁴⁶ See Galen, *On Diseases and Symptoms*, trans. & ed. Ian Johnston, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 220 (*De symptomatum causis* VI.I). For further discussion here, see Laurence Totelin, "Smell as Sign and Cure in Ancient Medicine", in Mark Bradley (ed.), *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, London, Routledge, 2015, pp. 17-29.

⁴⁷ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 166.

inhabitants] in pressing, which she said made her hot, and the smell of the folkes troubled her, whose daintines could not brooke any sauour but perfumes”.⁴⁸

However, the distressed body can be deployed in a much more sustained and spectacular fashion in Wroth’s narratives. In Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* (pub. 1590) Pyrocles discovers “a gentle-man bound (with many garters) hand & foot [...] Each of [the nine ladies] helde bodkins in their handes, wherewith they continually pricked him, hauing bene beforehand vnarmed of any defence from the wast vpward, but onely of his shirte: so as the poore man wept and bled, cryed and prayed, while they sported themselues in his paine”.⁴⁹ Conversely, in *Urania*, Wroth resolves to submit one of the heroines, Limena (“a Lady, or rather a Goddess for incomparable beautie, and matchles vertues [...] daughter to a Duke, but Princesse of all hearts”⁵⁰), to an analogous fate. Furthermore, this fate is developed in her intrigue with particular attention to details of grotesque torture. Married against her will to the nobleman Philargus, Limena is hounded by the enraged husband who believes that she continues to harbour affections for Perissus even as a married woman. Crazed by jealousy, Philargus determines to have his own psychological torments writ large upon the body of his wife with a remorseless regime of maiming and disfigurement. Nonetheless, the heroine’s body refuses to yield under the brute force of her humiliations to the confession of any form of inconstancy:

Prepare then quickly, this shall be your last; My Lord said shee, behold before your eyes the most distress’d of women, who if you will thus murder, is here ready: then vntying a daintie embrodered wast coate; see here, said she, the breast, (and a most heauenly breast it was) which you so dearely loued, or made me thinke so, calling it purest warme snow; yet neuer was the colour purer then my loue to you, but now 'tis ready to receiue that stroake.⁵¹

In this, one of the most skilfully wrought, quasi-operatic narratives in the whole of *Urania*, Wroth juxtaposes the travails of the torture victim Limena with the rage of her husband and, equally significantly, with the multiplying reactions of newly-arrived Parselius (and those of

⁴⁸ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 469. Subsequently, Wroth’s narrator reassures the reader that the Queen “with little patience therefore she sufferd this hearty welcome. To their great citie they came, there they were againe met with the chief, and people, but she was now vsed to it, and so a little the easelier boare it”. (Wroth, *Urania*, p. 469)

⁴⁹ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia. Written by Sir Philip Sidney*, London, John Windet for William Ponsonbie, 1593, 182^r.

⁵⁰ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 5.

⁵¹ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 11. For a broader discussion of how this episode approximates Christian hagiographic narration, see Skretkowicz, *European Erotic Romance*, p. 315ff.

the reader). This Prince of Morea lands on the island, “his mind as vnrestingly running on *Vrania*, as a hurt bird, that neuer leaues flying till he falls downe”. However, we swiftly learn that he

staid to behold, & beholding did admire the exquisitenes of that sad beautie, but more then that did the cruelty of the armed man seeme wonderful, for leading her to a pillar which stood on the sand (a fit place that the sea might stil wash away the memorie of such inhumanity) he tied her to it by the haire, which was of great length, and Sun-like brightnesse. Then pulled hee off a mantle which she wore, leauing her from the girdle vpwards al naked, her soft, daintie white hands hee fastened behind her, with a cord about both wrists, in manner of a crosse, as testimony of her cruelllest Martyrdome. When shee was thus miserably bound to his vnmercifull liking, with whippes hee was about to torment her: but *Parselius* with this sight was quickly put out of his admiration, hasting to reuenge her wrong⁵²

While Wroth’s narrator is rapidly inscribing the heroine within a markedly Christianized discourse of saintly tribulation and submission, and the wildly ungoverned Philargus is shown to oscillate between verbal and physical violence, the beholder Parselius is initially transfixed, beguiled, overwrought at the prospect before him of a spectacularly unfolding drama. As so often in this pastoral romance, an account of suffering, nay any encounter with acute sensory stimuli, engenders a complex meditation on the human propensities for resistance, self-government, devotion and gratification. After the delayed intervention of Parselius, Limena’s safety is at last secured and Philargus is vanquished by the combined efforts of the Morean Prince and yet another unexpected arrival, Perissus. Strikingly, however, Wroth’s narration refuses to squander the erotic tensions and sensory conflicts already generated in the intrigue. With marked animation, Limena reprises her story, exciting further attention as detailed account is punctuated with the promptings of her own conscience to refrain and quell her narrative energies: “daily whippings, and such other tortures, as pinching with irons, and many more so terrible, as for your sake (seeing your grieffe my deerest Lord) I wil omit [...] Once euery day hee brought mee to this pillar”.⁵³ In the event, it seems, Limena allows no detail to exceed the grasp of her memory or slip the perceivedly tender attentions of her auditors:

[Philargus] made mee vndresse my selfe [...] preparing my selfe to be the poore offering [...] When I had put off all my apparell but one little Petticote, he opened my breast, and gaue me many wounds, the markes you may here yet discern, (letting the Mantle fall againe a little lower, to shew the cruell remembrance of his crueltie) which although

⁵² Wroth, *Urania*, p. 68.

⁵³ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 72.

they were whole, yet made they newe hurts in the louing heart of *Perissus*, suffering more paine for them, then he had done for all those himselfe had receiued in his former aduentures⁵⁴

As so often in *Urania*, intrigues such as these (figuring heroines who seek out romantic fulfilment and the restoration to their customary place among a society's elite) underline the imperative nature of male intervention to confirm or thwart the female's desire for completion. The reader is invited on repeated occasions to attend to male characters who may be less acutely drawn in psychological terms in the narrative but who claim their place in the *vita activa* of this textual world and command powers of intervention not afforded the heroines.

Raleigh is also able to conjure up narratives in which the speaking subject encounters hostile realities, however the Raleighan subject is most frequently located in resolutely masculinized accounts of trauma and conflict. In the unfinished "Ocean's Love to Scinthia", for example, he takes his lead from earlier generations of Petrarchan poets, such as Wyatt and Surrey, to summon up an antagonistic setting in which the lover's insurmountable passions may be most fully articulated: "I seeke faire floures amidd the brinish sand, / [...] under thos healthless trees I sytt a lone / wher joyfull byrdds singe neather lovely layes / nor phillomen recounts her direfull mone, / No feedinge flockes, no sheapherds cumpanye / that might renew my dollorus consayte".⁵⁵ Here, the finely tuned senses of the lover find their appeals unrequited in a passionless, disjunctive environment subject to the impermanent attractions of the moon – thus, delivering what Robert E. Stillman terms, "a sobering awareness of the inevitability of frustrated desire and linguistic failure".⁵⁶

Elsewhere, in the *Discouerie*, Raleigh's narrative can choose to indulge in Mandevilian grotesque, scrambling our understanding of how the human body might be configured. We learn of:

a nation of people, whose heades appeare not aboue their shoulders, which though it may be thought a meere fable, yet for mine owne part I am resolued it is true [...] they are called *Ewaipanoma*: they are reported to haue their eyes in their shoulders, and their

⁵⁴ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 71.

⁵⁵ "The 21st and last booke of the Ocean to Scinthia" (ll. 24, 26-30). Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, p. 49.

⁵⁶ Robert E. Stillman, "'Words Cannot Knytt': Language and Desire in Raleigh's *The Ocean to Cynthia*", *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 27.1 (Winter 1987), 35-51 (p. 42). See also: A. D. Cousins, "The Coming of Mannerism: the Later Raleigh and the Early Donne", *English Literary Renaissance* 9.1. (Winter 1979) 86-107.

mouths in the middle of their breasts, & that a long train of hair groweth backward between their shoulders.”⁵⁷

In this manner, the seemingly chaotic or monstrous arrangement of the human form invites the reader / spectator to re-examine how the body processes the data received from sensual experience and how such departures from customary expectations may excite the desires and anticipations of those witnessing such visions. Elsewhere, it is related that Raleigh’s company arrived at the settlement of *Toparimaca* inhabited by a “very aged people, that we might perceiue all their sinewes and veines without any flesh, and but euen as a case couered onely with skin”.⁵⁸ Apart from the potential for curiosity, titillation, horror and alienation which such narratives might engender, it is evident that Raleigh was all too aware of the *pathos* which the seemingly unruly or incomplete body might stimulate for the onlooker, operating as a stimulus for more nuanced forms of sense perception and knowledge acquisition.

Interestingly, in this context, in Raleigh’s own acts of textual self-display among the prefatory materials to the *Discouerie*, the ailing explorer argued that he undertook the first Guiana voyage “in the winter of my life” which was “fitter for bodies lesse blasted with misfortunes”, and yet he nevertheless sought “to hold fast my soule in my teeth, til [the undertaking] were performed.”⁵⁹ An ongoing concern with the various kinds of corruption to which the body succumbs constitutes a leitmotif throughout Raleigh’s writing as a whole; and in the Guiana writings, this becomes significant as a theme leading the reader to interrogate radically the expectations surrounding the cultural performance of barbarism and civilization. Disease, for example, becomes increasingly significant as a symbolic indication of the uncleanness and alienation of a given company; and strikingly, in the initial phases of both voyages to South America, it is the *Europeans* who are perceived as dis-located and brutalised by sickness and death. They often arrive on these foreign shores beleaguered and in need not

⁵⁷ Raleigh, *Discouerie*, pp. 69-70. Keenly aware of the scepticism with which such age-old claims were greeted by some of his fellow countrymen, he laments that if circumstances had been different during his voyage, “I might haue brought one of them with me to put the matter out of doubt. Such a nation was written of by *Maundeuille*, whose reportes was holden for fables many yeres, and yet since the East *Indies* were discovered, wee finde his relations true of such things as heeretofore were held incredible: whether it be true or no the matter is not greate, neither can there be any profit in the imagination, for mine owne part I saw them not, but I am resolued that so many people did not all combine, or forthinke to make the report” (Raleigh, *Discouerie*, p. 70).

⁵⁸ Raleigh, *Discouerie*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ “TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE MY singular good Lord and kinsman, *Charles Howard*, knight of the Garter, Barron, and Counciller, and of the Admiralls of England the most renowned: And to the Right Honorable S^r *Robert Cecyll* Knight, Counciller in her Highnes priuie Councils”, in Raleigh, *Discouerie*, A2^v-A3^r.

only of native assistance, but also native knowledge as is witnessed in Raleigh's account of his arrival on the Guianan coast in 1617:

Thence I sent my barge ashore to enquire for my servant Harry the Indian, who [sent] his brother unto me with two other caciques [...] These Indians stayed with me that night, offering their service and all they had. Mine own weakness, which still continued, and the desire I had to be carried ashore to change the air, and out of an unsavoury ship pestered with many sick men which being unable to move poisoned us with a most filthy stench, persuaded me to adventure my ship over a bar where never any vessel of burden had passed⁶⁰

In this context, it is interesting to note that years earlier in *The History of the World*, he had affirmed that *even* “the Turkes themselves are so confident [in divine providence], as they refuse not to accompany and visit each other, in the most pestilent diseases, nor shun any peril whatsoever though death therein do manifestly present it selfe.”⁶¹ The disordered or diseased body thus not only becomes a source of fear and loathing, it appears no longer to warrant gendered or socially marked identities: it can no longer operate as a site of knowledge acquisition and its form and environment must be necessarily fled.

Later, in June 1618 when he was being taken as prisoner by ship from Plymouth to London in the custody of Sir Lewis Stukeley, Raleigh deftly exploited the customary responses accorded to the culturally abject body and gave an accomplished performance. It was reported to the ship's company by “a seruant of the saide Sir *Walter* named *Robine* [...] that his Master was out of his wittes, and that hee was naked in his shirt vpon all foure, scratching and biting the rushes vpon the Plankes”.⁶² The ailing body is thus seen to negotiate a traumatic separation in its cerebral and sensual domains of potential; and in his ailing state Raleigh is radically infantilized, perceived as reverting to a creaturely existence. Beset initially with convulsions, his limbs began to produce all manner of boils. However, it appears that the desperate Raleigh had taken medicaments prepared by a French physician and the isolation that the perceivedly “sick” patient was subsequently afforded gave him just enough time before his arrival in London to pen a formal *Apology* for his past conduct.⁶³

⁶⁰ Entries for 14th and 17th November, 1617. See Philip Edwards (ed.), *Last Voyages. Cavendish, Hudson, Raleigh. The Original Narratives*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 211, 212.

⁶¹ Raleigh, *History*, 1.1.13.16.

⁶² Sir Francis Bacon, *A declaration of the demeanor and cariage of Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight, as well in his voyage*, London, Bonham Norton and John Bill, 1618, p. 48.

⁶³ See Sir Walter Raleigh, *Sir Walter Rawleigh his apologie for his voyage to Guiana*, London, T.W. for Humphrey Moseley, 1650.

Conclusion

In Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, we hear “What warre so cruell, or what siege so sore, / As that, which strong affections do apply / Against the forst of reason euermore / To bring the soule into captiuitie” in the House of Alma (II.xi.i.). The identities of the antagonists (“wicked band of villeins” II.xi.5.) are many and various. Against the faculty of Sight, for example, is matched a band of beasts “Headed like Owles, with beκες vncomely bent / Others like Dogs, others like Gryphons dreare” (II.xi.i.8), whereas against Hearing there appear monsters, “heads like Harts, some like Snakes, / Some like wild Bores” (II.xi.i.10). The battle which ensues is part of a wider debate in early modern Europe of the senses in which, as we have seen, both Raleigh and Wroth participate. In both their writings, we find a recurring questioning of the habitual parameters customarily attributed to senseate experience and encouragement for their readers to attend to the *varietas* of the body’s responses which may not be limited to the repertoire of the five senses. Indeed, we discover their creations being drawn regularly both towards the agonies of sensual inertia and elsewhere towards transcendent encounters bringing with them unexpected strains of knowledge: the former condition may bring with it lasting injury, the second remains transformational and yields access to a deeply precious fund of more nuanced understanding.

As has been witnessed in the course of this discussion, both Raleigh and Wroth can depict the human subject revelling in sensory pleasures as well submitting to extreme sensory trauma. In the “Ocean’s Love to Scinthia”, the lover bemoans, “Shee gave, shee tooke, shee wounded, shee appeased”, while in his own correspondence Raleigh (then banished from the court on account of his clandestine marriage) wrote to Robert Cecil in July 1592 that he was “in a dark prison all alone [...] yeven now my hart is cast into the deapth of all misery [...] Behold the sorrow of this worlde”⁶⁴ Analogous depictions of affective victimization are equally widely in evidence in the *Urania*. Wroth’s knight Rosindy, for example, grieves “was any soule tortur’d like mine, or so vniustly condemned to death? [...] Why was sweet and dainty *Philistella* depriued mine eyes, and all my sense of hearing of her”, and elsewhere, Antonarus discovers the mortally afflicted “Lady” at court, “where he found her ready to depart, yet not past sense, but that shee knew him; or rather hauing only sense of loue”.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See respectively: “Ocean to Scinthia” (l. 56). Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, p. 50; Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, edited Agnes Latham and Joyce Youings, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1999, p. 70.

⁶⁵ Wroth, *Urania*, pp. 352, 232.

However, there is one final, extreme example, the (in)sensate condition, that needs to be highlighted in the writing of both figures. In the desperate affective circumstances of the “Ocean’s Love to Scinthia”, a lover is discovered who is “Alone, forsaken, frindless onn the shore / with many wounds, with deaths cold pangns inebrased / writes in the dust as onn that could no more / whom love, and tyme, and fortune had defaced”.⁶⁶ In this, the most sustained poetic evocation of amatory suffering in Raleigh’s *oeuvre*, his reader is invited figuratively to view the disfigured body and spirit of the ailing lover, seemingly inching their way to a realm where the senses have no claim. Such depictions also regularly recur in the Wroth’s pastoral romance. The Queen of Naples, for example, composes an analogous form of abject suffering in verse: “O That I might but now as senselesse bee / Of my felt paines, as is that pleasant Tree, / Of the sweet musique, thou deare Byrd dost make, / Who I imagine doth my woes partake”.⁶⁷ Indeed, the *Urania* returns to the portrayal of the human subject who has been forsaken by all sensory perception. In the very opening phases of the romance, Urania encounters, “a man lying, depriued of outward sense, as she thought, and of life, as she at first did feare [...] his armes foulded on his brest, haire long, and beard disordered, manifesting all care; but care it selfe had left him [...] the most exact peece of miserie” and later, she reasons with “the loue-kill’d *Perissus*”.⁶⁸ Elsewhere, when Antissius sees his kingdom of Romania in ruins, he is so “afflicted” that he remains, “amazed with grieffe, speechlesse, and senselesse of sense, but sorrow: till sorrow being pleasd to make me haue more feeling of her power, gaue me leaue to let these words come from me. O *Antissius*, hath life beene lent me to see this day!”⁶⁹ Ultimately, when the body is placed in extreme states either of senseate privation or ravishment, we may indeed find both Raleigh and Wroth questioning gender as an organizing principle for reading strategies: we appear repeatedly to move into a realm of remarkably unified expectations of human experience, whoever the subject in question may be.

Thus, in an endeavour to communicate the superlative sensibilities of her characters, Wroth’s romance seeks repeatedly to unfix the bounds of human experience and to place a whole series of these characters in insensate, death-like conditions of existence. More broadly, as was proposed at the outset of this discussion, all of these many and various depictions of

⁶⁶ “Ocean to Scinthia” (ll. 89-92). Raleigh, *Poems*, ed. Rudick, pp. 51-52.

⁶⁷ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 416.

⁶⁸ Wroth, *Urania*, pp. 3, 12.

⁶⁹ Wroth, *Urania*, p. 42.

sensory engagement can invite early modern (and late modern) eyes to engage in more perplexing, ontological enquiries. Persuasively, as Martin Jay has argued, “‘Sense’, we have come increasingly to appreciate, refers not only to the natural corporeal endowments that provide access to the world, but also to the meanings we attribute to the results”.⁷⁰

By way of conclusion, it should be stressed that in repeatedly broaching the subjects of luxuriant sensory experiences, flawed sensory perception, gross violation of the faculties and the condition of insensation, both Raleigh and Wroth are not only negotiating enquiries pursued by a host of their contemporaries in the early modern period, they are shown to interrogate what it means to be human - as Raleigh is shown dolefully, extravagantly to exemplify in the closing Book of his *History of the World*:

For we haue now greater Giants, for vice and injustice, than the World had in those daies [when there were giants], for bodily strength; for cottages, and houses of clay and timber, we haue raised Palaces of stone; we carue them, we paint them, and adorne them with gold; insomuch as men are rather knowne by their houses, than their houses are known by them; we are fallen from two dishes, to two hundred; from water, to wine and drunkennesse; from the couering of our bodies with skinned beasts, not only to silke and gold, but to the very skinned of men.⁷¹

As we have seen in the course of this discussion, both Raleigh and Wroth can attend to the gendered subject engaging in scenes of trauma, savagery, degradation and violation as well as those of heroic endeavour, attraction, seduction and amatory communion. However, in each case, readers of their narratives are called upon to interrogate their received thinking regarding the sensory powers of the body and to reflect how these might be radically tested in the quest for higher forms of knowledge.

⁷⁰ Martin Jay, “In the Realm of the Senses: An Introduction”, *The American Historical Review* 116.2 (April 2011), 307-15 (pp. 307, 309).

⁷¹ Raleigh, *History*, V.1.4.324