

“Noe dish whose tast, or dressing, is unknown / Unto or natives” (ll. 54-55): an examination of local and global material cultures in the food rituals of Thomas Salusbury’s 1634 “Chirk Castle Entertainment”.

Abstract (187 words)

In August 1634, Sir Thomas Salusbury 2nd's “Chirk Castle Entertainment” was staged by Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd to welcome John Egerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater and Lord President of the Council of Wales and the Marches. The “Entertainment” acted as a scaffold for a feast which showcased a golden world of Edenic plenty at Chirk. Salusbury’s verse emphasised the food’s “native” (l. 55) qualities. Yet, when read against contemporary recipes and the feast’s sensory experience, the presence of worldwide trade networks is evident on Chirk’s provincial banqueting tables. This intersectionality of the local and global befitted the Myddelton family who amassed their astonishing wealth through Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's mercantile ventures in the East Indies and the New World. Such multiplicity was crafted into the fabric of Chirk Castle and displayed in the feast’s food cultures. Yet, Salusbury’s verse elides these cross-cultural encounters, suggesting a difficulty in integrating London merchant culture into 1630s Denbighshire. This essay moves between the local focus of Salusbury’s verse and the global traces inherent in Myddelton’s feast to recreate a glimpse at Chirk Castle of a global whole, underpinned by colonial oppression.

Essay

In 1634 an “Entertainment” was put on at Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd’s family home, Chirk Castle in Denbighshire, North Wales, to welcome John Egerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater, on his first progress as Lord President of the Council of Wales and the Marches.¹ The “Entertainment” was written by Sir Thomas Salusbury 2nd, Myddelton’s nephew, who lived thirty-five miles away at his own considerable estate of Lleweni, North Wales. The “Entertainment” consisted of an opulent banquet, directed by the figures of Genius and Orpheus, who presented Chirk as an Edenic golden world.² As this essay will argue, Salusbury’s verse stressed the “native” quality of the food served at this Welsh feast. Yet, when read against contemporary recipe books, and by unpacking the sensory experience of the “Entertainment”, the presence of worldwide trade networks is evident on Chirk Castle’s provincial banqueting tables. Global flavours – from sugar and cinnamon to nutmeg and cloves – would inevitably have been liberally sprinkled across such a ceremonial banquet, viscerally reminding guests of the Myddeltons’ access to luxury and wealth.³ This intersectionality of the

¹ Cedric C. Brown, “The Chirk Castle Entertainment of 1634”, *Milton Quarterly* 11 (1977), 76-86. All quotations are from Brown’s transcription (83-86) from BL Egerton MS 2623. This rich article unpicks John Payne Collier’s forgery whereby Collier erased the details regarding the presentation of the “Entertainment” at Chirk Castle to misleadingly suggest that it was presented to King James I before 1612 and was associated with Inigo Jones.

² For discussion of the Salusbury family and Thomas Salusbury’s work see Rebecca A. Bailey “‘Your name shall live / In the new yeare as in the age of gold’: Sir Thomas Salusbury’s ‘Twelfth Night Masque, Performed at Knowsley Hall in 1641’ and its Contexts”, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 38, no. 3 (2020), 465-487; Rebecca A. Bailey “Sir Thomas Salusbury 2nd’s (1612-1643) manuscripts and fragments”, *Early Modern Literary Studies* (forthcoming); W. R. Glair, “The Salusbury Circle at Lleweni”, *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 11 (1969), 73-9; S. Harper, “An Elizabethan Tune List from Lleweni Hall, North Wales.”, *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 38 (2005), 45-98; D. Klausner, “Family entertainments among the Salusburys of Lleweni”, *Welsh Music History* 6 (2004), 129-142; Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 75-76, 123-126; Martin Wiggins, *Drama & the Transfer of Power in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 106-7, 134-41.

³ For discussions of the introduction of “strange” foodstuffs to Europe see Kim F. Hall, “Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: the Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century” in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, eds. Valerie Traub, M.

local and global particularly fitted the Myddelton family who had amassed their astonishing wealth through Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's mercantile ventures in the East Indies and the New World. This is evident from the playwright, Thomas Middleton's, spectacular Lord Mayor's Show, *The Triumphs of Truth*, staged in London in 1613, which celebrated Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's global links.⁴ The Myddeltons' pride in these worldwide connections is apparent in the material fabric of Chirk Castle. Bought with the profits from Myddelton commerce in 1597, Chirk Castle demonstrates how the lucrative gains from the bleakest side of the Renaissance – colonial oppression – stretched even into remote corners of North Wales. An ambitious building programme at Chirk Castle highlights this colonial framework: for instance, in the 1670s, the staircase to the castle's most luxurious apartments was adorned with life size "figures" of a "Turke and blackeymore".⁵

Ayesha Ramachandran reminds us how in the Renaissance the discovery of new worlds led to an imaginative shift in comprehending the world: "the question of how to integrate local detail with the global whole had become a fundamental intellectual and cultural preoccupation".⁶ As Ramachandran argues, "comprehending the whole required deft oscillation between local details and global frameworks".⁷ The "Chirk Castle Entertainment" offers a unique perspective on this debate. The Myddelton family was originally from Denbighshire and had returned to their roots at Chirk. But the family was now imbued with the

Lindsay Kaplan, Dymrna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 168-190; Kate Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Gitanjali G. Shahani, *Tasting Difference: Food, Race and Cultural Encounters in Early Modern Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2020).

⁴ Thomas Middleton, *The Triumphs of Truth* (Printed by Nicholas Okes, London, 1613). Subsequent references are in the body of the essay.

⁵ V. H. Myddelton Gunyon, *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1666-1753* (Hornchurch: W. K. Morton & Sons, 1932), 102.

⁶ Ayesha Ramachandran, "How to Theorize the 'World': An Early Modern Manifesto", *New Literary History* 2017, 48, 655-684, 657.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 658. See also, Ayesha Ramachandran, *The Worldmakers: Global Imaginings in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 7.

values of London merchant culture, as is evident from the cross-cultural encounters visible in the fabric of the castle and in the food cultures served at the “Entertainment”. Notably, these global traces are absent from Salusbury’s verse which instead positions Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd as a landowner heavily embedded in the local environs of Chirk. This elision suggests the difficulty of integrating London merchant, cosmopolitan culture into Denbighshire.⁸ Salusbury himself remarked in a letter to his uncle, Sir John Maynard, how he had refused the opportunity to travel abroad upon the sudden death of his father in 1632. Instead, Salusbury immediately assumed the responsibility of running his own Denbighshire estates at Lleweni because: “our countrymen ... are a crafty kind of people, and ... beare an internal hate to such as make themselves strangers unto them”.⁹ Salusbury’s insistence on the “native” quality of the food eaten at this “Entertainment” artfully situates Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd at the heart of his Denbighshire estate at Chirk and acts as a reminder to his “countrymen” of the Myddelton family’s Welsh origins. But as Tamar Herzog points out, “individuals could hold multiple affiliations”.¹⁰ Whilst the scaffold of the entertainment – the castle and the foodstuffs – bristles with allusions to the Myddelton family’s cross-cultural, global encounters, the verse celebrates Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd’s rootedness in Chirk and his essential role in ensuring the harmonious government of Wales and the Marches under the leadership of the Earl of Bridgewater. As this essay argues, Salusbury’s “Entertainment” is a fascinating alternative to London-centric entertainments and offers valuable insight into how both local and global material cultures shaped the early modern cultural landscape of North Wales.

1: The occasion and conceit of Salusbury’s “Chirk Castle Entertainment”

⁸ For a full discussion of the term “cosmopolitan” see Ramachandran, “Theorize”, 659-661.

⁹ W. J. Smith, *Calendar of Salusbury Correspondence 1553-c.1700* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), Letter 154, 78.

¹⁰ Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 10-11.

Salisbury's "Chirk Castle Entertainment" of 1634 was written, as Cedric Brown originally deduced, to celebrate the Earl and Countess of Bridgewater's first official visit as Lord President of the Council in the Marches and Wales¹¹ King Charles 1st had appointed Bridgewater to this position on 26 June 1631. But it was not until 5 July 1634 that the Earl and his entourage first arrived at his official residence at Ludlow Castle, Shropshire. As scholars such as Cedric Brown, Julie Sanders, Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns have documented, in August 1634, the Bridgewaters embarked on a progress through these territories.¹² Campbell and Corns note "the families that Bridgewater visited on this tour were either holders of posts related to his official duties (members of the Council in the Marches and Wales or deputy Lords Lieutenant) or powerful families to which he was related".¹³ Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd fulfilled both these criteria and Chirk Castle was the second stop on Bridgewater's progress through Shropshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Cheshire, and the Peak District.¹⁴ Bridgewater returned to Ludlow Castle on 17 September 1634 where his installation as Lord President was immortalised, on 29 September, by John Milton's "Masque presented at Ludlow Castle".¹⁵

¹¹ Brown, "The Chirk Castle Entertainment", 76-77.

¹² Ibid.; Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns, *John Milton: Life Work, and Thought*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Julie Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, 76-77. Although, contrary to Campbell's and Corns' suggestion, there is no evidence that the Bridgewaters performed at Salisbury's "Entertainment", *Milton*, 77-78.

¹³ Campbell and Corns, *Milton*, 77-78.

¹⁴ In 1633, Bridgewater's daughter, Penelope, had married Robert Napier, the elder brother of Myddelton's second wife, Mary. A defined and ongoing family relationship can be traced between the Myddeltons and the Napiers. Amongst the mass of Chirk Castle papers deposited at the National Library of Wales is Robert Napier's astrological chart (NLW, Chirk Deposit, A13). Additionally, on 24 February 1627, Myddelton's fourth daughter, Anne, was born at the Napier family seat at Luton Hoo (*Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 29). In 1650, Anne married Edward, third Lord Herbert of Chirbury and Castle Island at Chirk Castle. Edward Herbert was the eldest son of Lady Mary Herbert, another daughter of the Bridgewaters, and a prime example of this Myddelton / Napier / Bridgewater network.

¹⁵ See Brown, "The Chirk Castle Entertainment", 81; Brown "Presidential travels and instructive augury in Milton's Ludlow Masque", *Milton Quarterly* 21 (1987), 1-12; Campbell and Corns, *Milton*, 77-78; Susan Bennett and Julie Sanders, "Rehearsing Across Space and Place: Rethinking A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle" in *Performing Site-Specific Theatre: Politics, Place, Practice*, eds. Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 37-53, 38-40.

Much scholarly attention has been given to Milton's "Masque". In a fascinating, site-specific analysis, Annette Bennett and Julie Sanders unlock Milton's "Masque" as a "vital tool" in the "ongoing jurisdictional negotiations with the region and its inhabitants".¹⁶ As Penry Williams has noted, persistent rumours circulated in the 1630s of "disorder" in the borderlands and of a Council that had been overly ruthless towards the Welsh.¹⁷ However, Milton's "Masque" was not the only theatrical staged for Bridgewater's progress. Salusbury's "Entertainment" is part of this same nexus of diplomacy. Moreover, it sheds fresh light on Milton's "Masque" by engaging with a key theme that Milton would stage at Ludlow Castle: the importance of godly governance. In Milton's "Masque", the Lady admonishes Comus:

...none
But such as are good men can give good things,
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.¹⁸

Salusbury's verse records how Bridgewater was received at Chirk Castle with this exact penumbra of values: "good things", embodied by a generous banquet, which accentuated Myddelton's wise governance at Chirk. Salusbury's "Entertainment" served as a visible reminder to Bridgewater – King Charles 1st's judicial representative in Wales and the Marches – of the value of individuals like Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd. Those whose ancestors had lived in Wales when it had been an independent country but who now actively supported the union of Wales with England and were integral in maintaining order in far-flung areas of the kingdom.

For, as Matthew Johnson has observed, castles are "active and complex pieces of landscape and material cultures": they can be considered as "stage-settings", as "backdrops in

¹⁶ Bennett and Sanders, "Rehearsing", 38.

¹⁷ Penry Williams, "The Attack on the Council in the Marches, 1603-1642", *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1961), 1-22.

¹⁸ John Milton, "A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634 [Comus]" in John Carey, *Milton: Complete Shorter Poems* (Harlow: Longman, 1971, eighth impression 1992), 168-229, 211, ll. 701-4.

front of which and through which the identities of men and women were played out”.¹⁹ Undoubtedly, Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd was welcoming his social superior to Chirk Castle. However, Bridgewater would have instantly appraised Myddelton’s own considerable stature and power in the borderlands from the moment he approached Chirk Castle, with its forbidding donjons, working dungeon, and the repetition on multiple surfaces of the Myddelton coat of arms, comprising three wolf heads.²⁰ Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd was a leading member of Denbighshire and North Wales society. Myddelton acted as Justice of the Peace for Denbigh from 1618 to 1666, was the Deputy Lieutenant for Denbigh from 1623 to 1642 and was a member of the Council of Wales and the Marches from 1633 to 1641.²¹ Likewise, Myddelton’s father, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st, despite his immersion in London life, had been the county’s “custos rotulorum” (principle Justice of the Peace) for twenty years. Additionally, this office comprised custodian of the county’s legal records and principal crown servant of the county; a role which Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd was either already undertaking or would assume in 1646.²²

As Jeanette Dillon reminds us, at ceremonial events (such as entertaining the Lord President of the Marches) there was a “heightened concern for establishing and reaffirming the

¹⁹ Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2002), 3.

²⁰ The symbol of the wolf was central to the Myddelton family crest as they claimed maternal descent from Rodhri, King of Wales, and Beli Mawr, King of all Britain, via Blaidd Rhudd (Bloody Wolf) and Ririd Blaidd (Young Wolf). <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chirk-castle/features/the-myddelton-wolf>. In 1684, a wolf was kept in “part of ye dry ditch of Chirk Castle”. This may well have been the case in 1634. *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1666-1753*, 75, footnote 389.

²¹ www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/myddelton-sir-thomas-ii-1586-1666. Date of access 7 June 2021. Moreover, Myddelton’s brother, Charles, together with his father, grandfather and great grandfather all served as Constables of Denbigh Castle.

²² Corns and Campbell, following the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, state that Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd was already “custos rotulorum” in 1634 (*Milton*, 76) whereas Myddelton’s parliamentary biography suggests this occurred in 1646.

www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/myddelton-sir-thomas-ii-1586-1666.

place of each individual within a structure of both bonds and boundaries”.²³ Salusbury’s verse crystallises this delicate balance with a deceptively simple conceit of an extended conversation between the figures of Genius and Orpheus who introduce the food served at the banquet by seasonal course. Genius is described as “y^e Countryes better Angell” (SD l. 0), and represents the guardian spirit of Chirk. Indeed, the word “Countryes” emphasises this sense of place as it is used in rare contemporary letters home by Denbighshire men, who had moved away to Oxford or London, to specifically refer to their place of birth.²⁴ Salusbury’s “Entertainment” opens with Genius “wrapt in amazement at some happy changes hee / Observes in his Soyle, & Clymate” (SD l. 0).²⁵ Genius’ ignorance as to the source of these “changes” is solved by Orpheus, the legendary musician and poet from Greek mythology, and another familiar masquing figure. Orpheus’ central role in Salusbury’s “Entertainment” is particularly fitting as it chimed with the musical milieu known to exist at Chirk Castle in the 1630s.²⁶ Genius’ pun in the opening line “What means these preparations in y^e Ayre” (l. 1) – referring to both the

²³ Jeanette Dillon, *The Language of Space in Court Performance, 1400-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 10.

²⁴ See Jonathan Edwardes’ letters to his mother and his kinsman, Wat Kyffin: “All our friends in London are well, ... I could wish they would pilgrimage there where all there fathers did, in our Countrey”. Edwardes also begs Kyffin to write as “I am heere as strange to the Countrey as if were forgotten”, May 30 1636, NLW, Chirk Castle Deposit, E3319; Jonathan Edwardes to Wat Kyffin “I am glad I have yet some friends in the Countrey” Oxford, August 5 1639, NLW, Chirk Castle Deposit, E3319; Jonathan Edwardes to his Mother “If John Lewis has not paid in his moneys, let my brother Jones see him in London, or Mr Humfray Lloyd in ye Countrey”, October 19 1635, NLW, Chirk Castle Deposit, E3322.

²⁵ The figure of Genius was a commonplace in provincial masques. See Martin Butler, “A Provincial Masque of *Comus*, 1636”, *Renaissance Drama* 17 (1986), 149-173, 162. A useful parallel can be drawn with Genius of the Woods in Milton’s “Arcades”. This was performed at Harefield House on 4 May 1634 in celebration of Alice Spencer, Countess Dowager of Derby’s, seventy-fifth birthday. Alice Spencer was both step-mother and mother-in-law to the Earl of Bridgewater and related to Salusbury through his grandmother, Ursula Salusbury. The Bridgewaters, at least, would likely have been present at Lady Alice’s celebrations. Bearing in mind the early August 1634 staging of the Chirk Castle “Entertainment”, a delightful resonance exists between performances.

²⁶ In 1632, Myddelton had installed in the castle chapel a new organ by John Burford which cost £150 whilst the Chirk Castle part books which date to this period suggest an extensive repertoire. See William Reynolds, “Middleton’s Household Chapel”, *Welsh Music History* 4 (2000), 111-124. In 2008, the Brabant Ensemble recorded this music for Hyperion.

busy preparations for the Bridgewater's visit and a song accompanied by musical instrument such as the crwth or lyre – establishes the “Entertainment's” gently comic tone. Salusbury sets up an initial clash of cultures between Genius and Orpheus which hints at the wider continued complex dynamics between the provinces and Whitehall and, by extension, Wales and England. Thus, when Genius mistakes the Earl and Countess of Bridgewater for Mars and Venus, Orpheus, singing to his “well tun'd lyre” (SD 24), guides Genius to his “Sences” (ll. 41).²⁷ Orpheus chides Genius' lack of discernment:

Canst thou in judgement bee soe slowe
As these ritche beautyes not to knowe?
Looke on those Eys, & sure theyr shine
Will give more cleareness unto thine. (ll. 25-28)

Orpheus' suggestion that the “Eys” of the Bridgewater's will enlighten Genius points to the benefits of this visitation.²⁸ Bruce Smith argues how “progress entertainments are an exercise in ‘choroloquy’, in *speaking* the land”.²⁹ Drawing on the Bardic tradition, which is so fundamental to Welsh culture, Salusbury's “choroloquy” seems particularly apposite for this opening conversation between Genius and Orpheus where any dissonance is deftly dispelled.³⁰ Rather, Orpheus' song at Chirk Castle is of a golden world synthesis of these cultural spaces:

See how the heaunes smile on o^r land,
& plenty stretch her opened hand,
Enriching us with hearts content,

²⁷ We do not know who performed these roles but it would seem plausible from a staging perspective that Genius, the guardian of Chirk, could have spoken with an audible Welsh lilt. For a discussion of early modern Welsh soundscapes see Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O Factor* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 298.

²⁸ Intriguingly, Salusbury's employment of the neoplatonic trope of the reforming power of eyes was especially associated with Queen Henrietta Maria's roles in the Whitehall court masques. This neatly demonstrates the two-way dynamic or what Julie Sanders has termed “flow” between “amateur / household and metropolitan sites of performance”. Julie Sanders, “Geographies of Performance in the Early Modern Midlands”, in *Performing Environments: Site Specificity in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama*, eds. Susan Bennett & Mary Polito. (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 119-137, 134.

²⁹ Smith, *Acoustic World*, 33.

³⁰ For a discussion of the bardic tradition in Wales see Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing*, 54-55.

Civility, & government.

Wee in o^r Country, that in us
Both happy are, & prosperous (ll. 33-39).

3: The Myddeltons: a Denbighshire family with global connections

Curiously, however, this all-encompassing vision of “plenty” (l. 34) at Chirk Castle which is so central to Salusbury’s “Entertainment” omits any reference to the astonishing global financial framework that underpinned this occasion. A. H. Dodd documents how Myddelton’s father, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st (1550-1631) had achieved incredible success as both a merchant and a merchant banker with multiple business interests.³¹ After leaving Denbighshire for London, by 1582, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st had become a freeman of the Grocer’s Company and, by 1585, had set up a sugar house in Mincing Lane, London, whilst simultaneously exporting cloth to Germany.³² Recognising the extraordinary profits that could be made both from Elizabethan privateering and from the private joint stock companies beginning to trade globally, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st became a member of the Merchant Adventurer’s Company (by 1585), the Guinea Company (from 1594), the Virginia Company (in 1609) and played a founding role in the East India Company (1599) in which, with his brother, Robert, he invested £500.³³ With these worldwide trading connections, and his lucrative support of now-infamous Elizabethan explorers, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis

³¹ A. H. Dodd, “Mr Myddelton the Merchant of Tower Street” in *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale*, eds. S. T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield, C. H. Williams (London: The Athlone Press, 1961), 249-281. See also [MYDDELTON, Sir Thomas I \(c.1556-1631\), of The Bear, Tower Street, London; Stansted Mountfichet, Essex and Chirk Castle, Denb. | History of Parliament Online](#)

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. For details of Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st’s involvement in the East India Company see George Birdwood, *The Register of Letters & C of the Governour and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies, 1600-1619* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), 46; Henry Stevens, *The Dawn of British Trade to the East Indies As Recorded in the Court Minutes of the East India Company, 1599-1603* (London: Henry Stevens & Son, 1886), 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 28, 39.

Drake, and Sir John Hawkins, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's fortune amassed.³⁴ As Simon Healy documents, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st became chief adviser to Queen Elizabeth 1st regarding:

the sale of the queen's share of captured cargoes, a delicate task if the markets were not to be glutted, and, perhaps inevitably, some of the best bargains wound up in his own hands. It is likely that these transactions ... were the single most important factor in the rapid growth of Myddelton's personal fortune.³⁵

Such riches are evident when the jewel in the crown of the Portuguese fleet, *Madre de Dios*, was captured, in 1592, laden with treasure from the East Indies. The inventory of goods included "spices, drugs, silks, calicos, quilts, carpets and colors, &c. The spices were pepper, cloves, maces, nutmegs, cinnamon, greene ginger".³⁶ Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st oversaw Queen Elizabeth 1st's enormous return on her investment: £80,000 from an investment of £3,000.³⁷

Myddelton's role in Elizabethan privateering was not merely passive. Myddelton sent out his own ships, such as *Riall*, in 1590 under the command of his kinsman, William Myddelton, which as K. R. Andrews notes: "shared in the spoil of two very rich prizes carrying pepper, cloves, mace, sugar, ivory, brazilwood and many precious stones ... with a total value of some £25,000".³⁸ By 1613, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st was appointed Lord Mayor of London and his web of global connections became the focus of dramatist Thomas Middleton's Lord

³⁴ See Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's Account Book at NLW, Chirk Deposit, F 12540 for references to Francis Drake, especially 163, 180, 191; Walter Raleigh, 128; Queen Elizabeth I, 141, 160, 202. See also G. M. Griffiths, "Deposited Collections: The Chirk Castle MSS. And Documents", *The National Library of Wales Journal* (1954), 335-348; G. M. Griffiths, "An Account Book of Raleigh's Voyage, 1592", *The National Library of Wales Journal* (1952), 347-353.

³⁵ [MYDDELTON, Sir Thomas I \(c.1556-1631\), of The Bear, Tower Street, London; Stansted Mountfichet, Essex and Chirk Castle, Denb. | History of Parliament Online](#)

³⁶ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598), 570.

³⁷ Cited by B. Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120-128, 186, footnote 51.

³⁸ Kenneth R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 115.

Mayor's Show, *The Triumphs of Truth*.³⁹ As Tracey Hill has argued the Lord Mayors' Shows were "high profile and very lavish entertainments at the centre of the cultural life of the City of London".⁴⁰ *The Triumphs of Truth* was an astonishing pyrotechnic spectacle of civic pageantry. Performed before an audience of thousands, *The Triumphs of Truth* specifically celebrated Myddleton's global mercantile ventures through the spectacular appearance on London's River Thames of five islands "artfully garnished with all manner of Indian Fruite-Trees, Drugges, Spiceries & a Castle", together with a "strange Ship" on which stood "a King of the Moores, his Queene & 2 attendants of their owne colour" (sig. B4). Myddelton was celebrated as a "Man of Worth" (sig. D1) who had experienced "many great and insident dangers, especially in forraine Countries in the time of [his] Youth" (sig. A2) and who had, as the King of the Moores remarked, converted "Infidels" to Christianity (sig. C1).

Such symbols of the Myddelton family's global connections were actively translated into the very fabric of Chirk Castle when it was renovated both in the early 1630s and 1670s. The 1630 alterations aimed to visibly stamp Chirk Castle as a family home of culture and sophistication rather than a primarily defensive and administrative structure.⁴¹ The Myddeltons built the North Range with its impressive suite of entertaining rooms and constructed a stylish Italianate loggia on the East Range to combine new and old identities.⁴² Fortunately, an

³⁹ See footnote 4. For a full discussion of *The Triumphs of Truth* see David M. Bergeron's edition in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 963-979 and Edmond Smith, *Merchants: The Community that Shaped England's Trade and Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 96-98.

⁴⁰ Tracey Hill, *Pageantry and Power: A Cultural History of the Early Modern Lord Mayor's Show, 1585-1639* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 1.

⁴¹ There was a craze for modernising elite homes in 1620/30s North Wales. The powerful Wynn family of Gwydir Castle redesigned their upper entertaining room in the 1620s to include an oriel window which bears a striking resemblance to the style implemented in the North Range at Chirk Castle. Sir Roger Mostyn made similar wholesale changes to Mostyn Hall, Flint, creating light and airy receiving rooms on the first floor, complete with oriel windows. Several fireplaces at Mostyn Hall have the date 1634 emblazoned on the chimneybreasts suggesting that this work was completed in time for Bridgewater's visit.

⁴² *Chirk Castle Guidebook* (London: Centurion Press Ltd for National Trust Enterprises Ltd, 2003), pp. 4-5. No author is given but it draws on Richard Dean's guide of 1983, p. 49.

example of the 1630s frieze work has been preserved, offering clear evidence that Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's global ventures were deliberately crafted into the material structure of Chirk Castle. Within Adam's Tower, where Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st had rooms until his death in



Figure 1 a-c: details from the frieze in Adam's Tower

1631, the frieze in the chamber known as the “Magistrate’s Court” specifically references Myddelton family preoccupations. The figure of a blind and barefoot magistrate holding a pair of scales and a sword of justice depicts the Myddelton family’s role in maintaining order in the Marches and North Wales, the emblem of the wolf represents the Myddelton family crest, whilst the distinctive model of a monkey symbolises the Myddeltons’ global reach.⁴³ Today, the Myddelton family still has in their possession one of the beautifully carved “blackeymore” figures, that stands at nearly a metre high, dates to the 1670s’ renovations and makes uncomfortable viewing for current visitors to the castle. Commissioned in October 1673 to adorn the reconfigured grand staircase, Nicholas Needham “carver in woode and stone”, charged £1 15 shillings “for makeinge” these figures for “the staircase”.⁴⁴ According to furniture expert, Megan Wheeler, this figure was originally conceived as a proud African

⁴³ Myddelton associations with the East India Company after the death of Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st are evident from a letter by Edward Roberts in November 1632 to his mother in Denbighshire. Roberts was “bound for a voyage to East India” and makes specific reference to Thomas Myddelton 2nd, NLW, Chirk Deposit, F2392. Traces of the Myddeltons’ global links are suggested in a gift of 1 shilling from Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd to his grandson, Richard Myddelton’s, “footeboy” called “Black Harry” on 5 January 1664, in *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 166.

⁴⁴ See footnote 5.



Figure 2: carved “blackeymore” figure at Chirk Castle, 1673

chieftain and the slave shackle which now sits on the left ankle is a later addition to the statue.⁴⁵ Perhaps the figure of the African chieftain is a reimagining of the “King of the Moores” who made such a striking appearance in Middleton’s Lord Mayor’s Show, *The Triumphs of Truth*. What is undeniable, however, is that although the Myddelton family was keen to highlight its global connections both in repeated renovations to the material fabric of Chirk Castle and before all of London in Middleton’s *The Triumphs of Truth*, Salusbury’s “Entertainment” makes no mention of these colonial underpinnings. Instead, Salusbury’s verse vividly focuses on the “native” (l. 55) qualities of this Chirk Castle feast. Salusbury deliberately positions Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd as a Denbighshire man, omits any reference to the London merchant culture into which Myddelton was born and specifically spotlights the “lilly hands” (l. 115) of Myddelton’s guests.

The feast: “Noe dish whose tast, or dressing, is unknown / Unto o^r natives” (ll. 54-55)

Salusbury’s celebration of “plenty” (l. 34) at Chirk Castle is achieved, as in Ben Jonson’s country house poem “To Penshurst”, through an evocation of the providential riches

⁴⁵ Megan Wheeler, *Chirk Castle Furniture Report* (2019), 7. I am grateful to Karen George, House and Collections Manager at Chirk Castle, for her generous welcome to Chirk Castle, granting me access to unseen parts of the Castle, and allowing me to read Wheeler’s report.

of the castle's orchards, deer parks, and fields.⁴⁶ But where Jonson creates a visual vista of Edenic plenty at Penshurst, Salusbury's verse offering lawns of venison, fields of sheep, and burgeoning summer fruits is tangibly translated into the banqueting feast itself. Although the banquet is in honour of the Earl of Bridgewater, this lens of abundance firmly transfers the focus of the entertainment towards the host, Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson note how, in the 1630s, "flashy" cookery books were becoming fashionable, flaunting discordant flavours and virtuosity.⁴⁷ This makes Salusbury's verse with its ostentatious display of the natural order of the locale all the more remarkable. Genius' language is rich with what John Gillies has termed "poetic geography".⁴⁸ Salusbury's verse deftly maps Chirk's culinary distinctiveness to assert Myddelton's own power within the complex landscape of the borderlands. Genius insists how the dishes are "all o^r own" (l. 53). In a prescient homage to today's fascination with food provenance, Genius draws on his identity as the spirit of Chirk to trace the path the food has taken:

... neighbouring Mountaines yealds
 Us goats, & in y^e next adjoining feilds
 Pasture o^r muttons, if there bee a Bucke
 Turn'd into venison, y^t was likewise struck
 On o^r own lawnes, (ll. 55-60)

Thus, the fields, forests and mountain ranges through which the Earl of Bridgewater would have traversed to reach Chirk now yield up goats, sheep, and deer for the sustenance of Myddelton and his guests. The employment of adjectives "neighbouring" (l. 55) and

⁴⁶ Ben Jonson, "To Penshurst" in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* eds. Stephen Greenblatt and M. H. Abrams, eighth edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 1434-1436. Salusbury clearly self-identified as a son of Ben Jonson, composing in 1637 "An Elegie meant upon the death of Ben Jonson". See "The Salusburies of Lleweni Manuscript", NLW, MS 5390D, 293-294.

⁴⁷ Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017), 87.

⁴⁸ John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6. See also Smith, *Acoustic World*, 288.

“adjoining” (l. 56) neatly demarcates Myddelton’s lands into a culinary map, winding down from the mountains into the grazing fields and deer lawns.

Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell argue how food in the early modern period acted as a “palimpsest” of “the self and communities ‘in conversation’”.⁴⁹ Although this banquet was given in honour of Bridgewater, the verse’s unremitting focus on “native” (l. 55) ingredients successfully positions Myddelton as rooted in his Chirk Castle estates. Moreover, Salusbury’s vision of a golden world nestled in the borderlands creates a paradigm of wise governance that extends to Myddelton’s key role as Justice on the Council of Wales and the Marches. However, as this essay argues, a sensory examination of the “Entertainment”, together with close reading of recipes from this period, releases the traces of the global flavours that were essential to this “palimpsest” at Chirk Castle. Like the monkeys emblazoned onto the plaster frieze work of Adam’s Tower, the sugar and spices inherent at such a feast originated from far beyond the confines of Chirk Castle. Priscilla Ferguson employs the phrase “taste act” to pinpoint how “individuals perform their connections to a taste community”.⁵⁰ Salusbury’s elision in his verse of all vestiges of cross-cultural encounters hints at the difficulty in this Chirk Castle “taste act” of integrating cosmopolitan merchant culture into Denbighshire. Moving between these local and global frameworks enables the glimpse of a new global whole that simultaneously exposes how the tentacles of oppressive, worldwide trade networks actually underpinned Chirk Castle’s “native” (l. 55) feast.

We know from Salusbury’s verse that venison was served at the banquet as part of Winter’s first course of “rugged” (l. 51) dishes. A contemporary recipe found in John Murrell’s

⁴⁹ Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell, *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 10.

⁵⁰ Priscilla Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 17. See also, Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 20.

cook-book, *Murrel's Two Books of Cookerie and Carving* (2nd edition, London: 1641), suggests the sort of ingredients used “to bake a red deere”.⁵¹ The red deer is seasoned with “pepper, salt, cloves, mace, nutmegg and ginger”.⁵² As Genius makes clear, the venison served at this “Entertainment” came from the deer parks that are marked on the Chirk Castle estate maps of the time.⁵³ An examination of the surviving Myddelton account books enables us to tease out the array of global ingredients commonly used in the Chirk Castle kitchens. In the full accounts for Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd's funeral in 1666, there are payments to “Roger Brereton of Chester grocer” comprising: “for 6li of ginger vs; for one pound of Sinamond xs vjd, for one pound of cloves xvjs, ... for a pound of nutmegs vijjs iiijd”.⁵⁴ It would seem entirely plausible that Myddelton's 1634 accounts, should they have survived, would have included these distinctive, fragrant spices and that this rich smell-scape would be a tangible link in forging and remembering the “taste act” of the Chirk Castle banquet which, as Orpheus trills, finds “y^e Court eu'n at o^r dore” (l. 40).

In the early modern period, sight was perceived as the most important sense. Orpheus draws attention to the guests' sense of sight in his song for Autumn. He begins by addressing the beauty of the ladies at the banquet: “far more bright / & sweet then Phoebus clearest light” (ll. 67-68). Here, rather comically, such courtly light from the ladies serves only to illuminate the produce of Autumn who “presents a bakemeat in one hand & wyne in y^e other” (SD 66):

And being come I hold it scorne

⁵¹ John Murrell, *Murrel's Two Books of Cookerie and Carving* (2nd edition, London: 1641), 34.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Matthew Johnson notes how ancient deer parks were yet another stage setting to emphasise the wealth and power of a landowner. This is evident at Chirk from the tythes and account book records which demonstrate how Myddelton sent gifts of deer to friends and retainers from his deer-grazing parks “including all manner of deer in Yollyn Park, *alias* Park Yollyn, and in Brinkinallt Park, otherwise called Black Park”, *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 4 and Johnson, *Castle Gate*, 159. For discussion of food as a crucial part of the local gift economy see Elaine Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science and the Household in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 53-54.

⁵⁴ *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 137.

To welcome you with meer bare Corne,
Here's Ceres in a new attire
And ripned with a second fire
 Cut up and find
 How she is lind
For to entertaine you. (ll. 76-83)

Orpheus' verse reveals visual clues regarding the food served for Autumn's course. For a banquet of this sophistication, despite Genius' earlier assertion of Winter's "rugged" (l. 51) dishes, there would be an element of spectacle, especially in those dishes introduced by the courtly, Orpheus. As Wall reminds us, the words "receipt" and "conceit" were often used interchangeably in this period.⁵⁵ The early modern cook was capable of great ingenuity as is evident from Lickfinger's praise of the "Master-Cooke" in Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News*:

 He designs, he draws,
He paints, he carves, he builds, he fortifies,
Makes citadels of curious fowl and fish: ...
He raiseth ramparts of immortal crust.⁵⁶

The importance of the cook at Chirk Castle is documented in records from 1636 pertaining to Lady Mary Myddelton's search for a new cook and to the drafting in of additional cooks for important family events ranging from weddings to funerals.⁵⁷ Salusbury, as a poetic son of Ben Jonson, is gesturing towards a similar conceit / receipt conflation created by the "Master-Cooke" behind the "Chirk Castle Entertainment". Orpheus' command, that the guests "Cut up and find" (l. 76) how the pie "is lind" (l. 77), suggests the intricacies of an "Extraordinary Pie", described in Robert May's *The Accomplisht Cook* (1660) as being "Several Distinct Pies on

⁵⁵ Wall, *Recipes*, 66-69.

⁵⁶ Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*, ed., Joseph Loewenstein, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds. David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson, 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.2.20-22.

⁵⁷ For the drafting in of cooks for Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd's funeral, including a "one eyed Cooke", and for Ann Myddelton's wedding in February 1650 see *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 137, 30. For the importance of the cook within the Chirk Castle community see Thomas Mathews' and Wat Kyffin's correspondence in November 1636 regarding the need for a new cook, NLW, Chirk Castle Deposit, E599. See also Myddelton's payment in December 1650 of "19 shillings" for the "cooke's & his wife's burial", *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 29.

One Bottom”.⁵⁸ Such a concoction of individual pies contained within one overall structure aimed to delight the guests. Wall states how in such pies, there “was often a surprise element” in the bottom layer of the pie ranging, as May notes, from “live birds to a snake which will

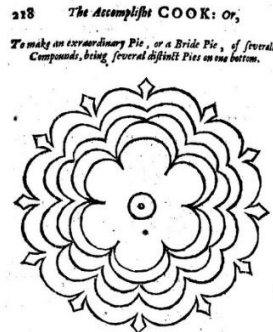


Figure 7: “An Extraordinary Pie”, within Robert May, *The Accomplisht Cook* (London 1660), 218

seem strange to the beholders”.⁵⁹ Again, such a conceit fits with Orpheus’ suggestion that the pie will “entertain” (l. 78) the diners which in turn emphasises the theatrical, courtly nature of the Chirk Castle feast.⁶⁰

An examination of the ingredients for an “Extraordinary Pie” once more suggests a blending of “strange” and homegrown flavours. May advises seasoning the “cocke stones and combs or lamb stones and sweet breads” of the veal pie with “nutmeg and some large mace”; the oyster pie is seasoned with “large mace, pepper, some beaten ginger”; the prawn and cockle pie with “slic’t nutmeg”; the lark pie with “nutmeg and pepper” and the “outward” egg pies as well as having twenty eggs and “twice the weight of them of beef-suet fine minced” is seasoned

⁵⁸ Robert May, *The Accomplisht Cook or the Art and Mystery of Cookery* (London: 1660), 235.

⁵⁹ Ibid. See also Wall, *Recipes*, 83.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the banquet as theatre see Sara Mueller, “Early Modern Banquet Recipes and Women’s Theatre”, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 24 (2011), 106-130. The theatrical element of the banquet served at the “Chirk Castle Entertainment” is evident in the unusually precise stage direction that accompanies Winter’s entrance: “This [Genius’] Speech ended Winter ushers in y^e first Course / wth having ordered upon y^e Table turns to y^e Company” (SD 60). There is an inherent sense of ceremony to this direction as Winter only turns to welcome the guests once the food has been ushered in and correctly placed on the banqueting table.

with “half an ounce of cinnamon fine beaten, and a little cloves and mace fine beaten”.⁶¹ Again, a liberal use of mace, pepper, ginger and nutmeg – objects of conspicuous consumption at the heart of the spice trade – would have been evident at the Chirk Castle feast. This chimes with the Myddelton family’s global connections as depicted in the fabric of the castle and acts as a tangible reminder of their ongoing links with the East India Company. As Kim F. Hall and Gitanjali G. Shahani have argued, during the seventeenth century, spices transitioned from an exotic to a more familiar commodity.⁶² In turn, these accepted and accessible symbols of otherness allow, as Jyotsna G. Singh argues, “the period traditionally designated as the European Renaissance” to be “increasingly re-configured as the Global Renaissance”.⁶³ Salusbury’s insistence on the use of “native” (l. 55) ingredients at Chirk Castle, however, and his omission of any reference to spices from the East Indies suggests that there was still resistance to these “strange” flavourings and indeed to cosmopolitan merchant culture in more distant corners of the kingdom.⁶⁴

This elision of the global from the local in Salusbury’s verse is even more stark when we consider Orpheus’ introduction of the third course “Summer & ye fruites of her Season” (SD 85).⁶⁵ This stanza addresses the sense of taste which as Lucy Munro reminds us was associated with “bodily pleasure and fleshly desire”.⁶⁶ In a strikingly sensuous image, Orpheus sings how Summer’s “cherryes heer / Take sweetnes & theyr colour clear” (ll. 94-95) from the

⁶¹ May, *Accomplisht Cook*, 235-236.

⁶² Hall, “Culinary Spaces”, 169; Shahani, *Tasting Difference*, chapter 1.

⁶³ Jyotsna G. Singh, *Shakespeare and Postcolonial Theory* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 36.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the “corruption of the English body” by “strange” foodstuffs see Kim F. Hall “Extravagant Viciousness: Slavery and Gluttony in the Works of Thomas Tryon” in *Writing Race Across the Atlantic World: Medieval to Modern*, eds. Philip Beidler and Gary Taylor (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 93-112.

⁶⁵ As Carina L. Johnson and Ayesha Ramachandran argue “the inclusivity of ‘global’ must not elide – or paper-over – critical differences that emerge from local intersectionalities”. See “The Jaguar’s Beer: Critical Approaches to Multiplicity and the Early Modern World”, *Modern Philology* 119 (2021), 1-12, 7.

⁶⁶ Lucy Munro, “Staging Taste” within *Senses*, 19-38, 24.

lips of the female banqueteers. Drawing on the Myth of Cockaigne, Orpheus once more emphasises the sense of plenty at Chirk where the cherries “present themselves to you” (l. 97) as “y^or due” (l. 96) and “all other fruites his Season yealds / Are yo^rs” (ll. 98-99).⁶⁷ Again, Summer’s provision for the banquet is heavily rooted in place. The Chirk Castle account books have multiple references to Myddelton buying fruit trees for his estates and proffering gifts of fruit, as with venison, to his neighbours.⁶⁸ For instance, on the 24 December 1651, when Myddelton was creating his garden at Black Park, he paid “Rich. Griffith ... for damasine and red currance and red gusberies plants at Shrewsbury xxxd” whilst, in September 1664, amongst a swathe of plants bought by “George Shipster the gardiner” for 1 pound 5 shillings and 6 pence were “twoe red roman nectoroond” and “two apricocks”.⁶⁹ In the 1630s, Myddelton’s main estates at Chirk would have had similar fruit stocks. If they lacked any produce, local growers would supply additional fruit as is evident from an undated, early seventeenth-century page of accounts for August which details payment for figs, plums, and pears.⁷⁰

Once again, there are clues within Salusbury’s verse regarding the presentation of Summer’s course. In an image of opulent plenty, Orpheus sings how: “all other fruites his Season yealds / Are yo^rs himself, his trees, his fields” (ll. 88-89). In the seventeenth century there was a craze for creating realistic culinary landscapes. John Murrell’s *Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1608) offers recipes for recreating “marigolds, roses, gillyflowers”.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Salusbury’s use of the verb “yealds” resonates with Jonson’s “To Penshurst” where a key image of abundance is conjured by the phrase “each bank doth yield thee conies”, (l. 25).

⁶⁸ For examples of Myddelton gifts of fruit see *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 40-41 and the only surviving letter from Magdalen Mytton, sister of Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd, where she thanks Lady Mary for a gift of strawberries, July 1629, NLW, Chirk Castle Deposit, E6369.

⁶⁹ *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 34, 118.

⁷⁰ Sir Thomas Myddelton, Chirk Castle Account Book, NLW, Chirk Castle Deposit, F12903.

⁷¹ John Murrell, *A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlemen: whereby they may learne and practise the whole art of making pastes, preserves, marmalades, conserves, tartstuffles, jellies, breads, sucket-candles, cordiall waters, conceits in sugar-workes of several kindes...* (London: 1617), table of contents, unpaginated.

The practice of this art in the Chirk Castle kitchens is evident from an account book entry for 1666 which specifically mentions purchasing from “Mr Eustace Crewe of Wrexham”: “3 ounces of Gum Dragon xvjd, 6 graines of musk ijs, 3 lookes [books] of gould [gold] for the Cookes, vijs, vjd ... saffron xvijjd, & 3 booke of large silver xxxd”.⁷² The exotic sounding Gum Dragon or “tragacanth” is a natural gum found in the sap of legumes from the Middle East. On an occasion such as the banquet for the “Chirk Castle Entertainment”, Gum Dragon would have been used in fine sugar-craft work to make a paste to create life-like flowers.⁷³ The gold and silver leaf would have served as decoration to give sparkle and texture whilst the musk grains and saffron would have provided distinctive colours and perfume. Thus, the “Master-Cooke” would have been able to recreate the flowers, trees and fields of the Chirk Castle estate and, through what Wall terms “sophisticated food wit and food play”, visually stage Chirk’s golden world space of civility and plenty.⁷⁴

Indeed, Summer’s course of “sweetnes” (l. 95) would have been a favourite course for the Myddeltons. The account books document that the Myddelton family clearly had a sweet tooth.⁷⁵ Moreover, this course would have added an additional layer of elegance to the feast. As the Bridgwaters would have appreciated, it was popular in elite dining to have a separate course at the end of the meal specifically known as “the banquet” and purely devoted to sugar.⁷⁶ Salusbury’s verse, with its continuous focus on the local nature of the fruits proffered may have made the opulent sugar work more palatable to Myddelton’s Denbighshire “countrymen”.

⁷² *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 136.

⁷³ On the uses of Gum Dragon see Wall, *Recipes*, 74.

⁷⁴ Wall, *Recipes*, 85.

⁷⁵ See, for example, an entry paying “Roger Brereton of Chester grocer” for “50li of best powder sugar 1s, for 74 of vjd browne sugar xxxvijs”, *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, 137. See also Lady Mary’s accounts for the wedding of her granddaughter, Sydney Grosvenor, in 1671 where over £6 was spent on different qualities of sugar, *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1666-1753*, 50-51.

⁷⁶ See C. Anne Wilson “*Banqueting Stuffe*”: *The Fare and Social Background of the Tudor and Stuart Banquet* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991).

However, it is specifically in this course that what Ramachandran terms “the darker side of the Renaissance” is apparent for such a display of “sweetnes” (l. 95) was only made possible by the Atlantic sugar trade.⁷⁷ During the seventeenth century, with sugar coming into England in increasing quantities, Sidney Mintz reminds us how sugar had been “*transformed* from a luxury of kings into the kingly luxury of commoners”.⁷⁸ Indeed, Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st had been fundamental to this trade as he had run a “leading” sugar house in Mincing Lane, London in the early 1580s.⁷⁹ Sugar was of course also increasingly linked with the sickening use of African slave labour. As Hugh Thomas notes, the Reverend George Downing recorded how on the English sugar island of Barbados, as early as 1645, they bought “no less than a thousand negroes and, the more they buy, the better able are they to buy for, in a year and a half, they will earn (with God’s blessing) as much as they cost”.⁸⁰ This marked change from indentured labour on Barbados to slavery is visibly pinpointed at Chirk Castle today through the (undated) addition of a slave shackle to the troubling figure of the “blackeymore” who once decorated the Myddelton family’s specially designed, grand staircase.⁸¹ In 1634, on the provincial banqueting tables of Chirk Castle, through Summer’s display of “sweetnes” (l. 95), the Myddeltons performed their own conspicuous display of power in a communal “taste act” that ostentatiously celebrated Chirk Castle and its locale but which was in fact reliant on the emergent system of global trade and colonial oppression.⁸²

⁷⁷ Ramachandran, *Worldmakers*, 16.

⁷⁸ Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 97. See also Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar & Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), Hall “Culinary Spaces”, Shahani, *Tasting Difference*, and Wilson, “*Banqueting Stuffe*”.

⁷⁹ Myddelton was a partner with Nicholas Farrar and Erasmus Harby in “one of the two leading London sugar refineries”. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, 114.

⁸⁰ Cited by Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (London: Picador, 1997), 196.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 177-178; Mintz, *Sweetness*, 52-61; footnote 5.

⁸² Ferguson, *Taste*, 17. For discussion on the colonial history of National Trust properties including Chirk Castle, see: [Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and](#)

The feast concludes with Orpheus introducing the season of Spring who enters with a “Bason and Ewer” to dispense distilled waters to cleanse the hands: “Shee not presents you heer wth simple flowers also / But with sweet distilled showres” (ll. 110-111). In courtly terms, the proffering of distilled waters was fundamental to the ceremony of such a lavish feast.⁸³ Randle Holme described how the ewer was “a vessell of much honor ... used at all great feasts to wash withal, after eating tyme is finished”.⁸⁴ Once again, Salusbury artfully roots the “Entertainment” precisely within its locale. Chirk Castle’s North West Tower is still known today as the Distil Room Tower; a reference to its function as the space where the still was housed and the art of distillation took place. This ability to capture the “quintessence” (l. 112) of a flower and thereby recapture the fragrance of a past season – to bring “back heer / Ye Spring tide [of] ye year” (ll. 117-118) – gestures towards an alchemy which was grounded in Chirk’s own “land” (l. 119). Spring’s verse is the only course entirely reliant on Chirk’s verdancy alone. Moreover, through the figure of Spring, Salusbury deftly refocuses attention to the sense of touch which has been implicit throughout the masque but is now made explicit: “Add Sweet to sweet & wash you lilly hands” (l. 115). However, the allusion to washing the guests’ “lilly hands” simultaneously complicates the purity of such a ritual. Through what Kim F. Hall has termed the “politics of colour”, where blackness is a site for the “interplay ... of cultural and racial difference”, such specific praise of the whiteness of the guests’ skin colour accentuates the ruthless trade practices that both underpinned and enabled such an opulent feast.⁸⁵

[Properties now in the Care of the National Trust Including Links with Historic Slavery](#). Date of access 5/03/2022.

⁸³ Dillon, *Space*, 86.

⁸⁴ Cited by Hamling and Richardson, *Home*, 134. The importance of these vessels at Chirk is apparent from the inventory of Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's plate in 1631 where a “basin and ewer” head the list of valuables amounting to £64 1 shilling, NLW, Chirk Deposit, F7373.

⁸⁵ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 73. See also Farah Karim Cooper,

It is also in Spring's stanza of distillation that what Johnson terms "the gendered castle" emerges more fully.⁸⁶ We have already noted, as Shahani explains, the "implicit link between the female domain and emergent systems of global trade"; how through the liberal use of spices and sugar in early modern kitchens once "strange" flavours were made familiar.⁸⁷ Karen Britland reminds us that in the early modern period conviviality itself was dependent upon women, "and yet she is that which it invariably pretends it functions without".⁸⁸ The very ability to produce distilled water and magically recreate the fragrance of spring in high summer draws attention to Lady Mary Myddelton's well-ordered household, and what Hamling and Richardson have denoted as the sophistication of "female domestic temporality".⁸⁹ For alongside the physical cleansing of the hands, the fragrance of distilled waters – the "very quintessence" (l. 112) of Spring's "simple flowers" (l. 110) – would awaken the olfactory sense. We do not have the precise distillation recipes used for Chirk's "Entertainment" but the most popular distillation was the rose.⁹⁰ Holly Dugan reminds us it might "take upwards of five hundred pounds of roses to produce one pound of rosewater".⁹¹ John Partridge proffers a list of eighteen points for a successful distillation, with a significant number highlighting the importance of the distiller planning ahead; of practising "Diligence in looking to all things".⁹² Such precision and artfulness – as with making familiar once "strange" foodstuffs – lay within

Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2nd edition, 2019).

⁸⁶ Johnson, *Castle Gate*, 8.

⁸⁷ Shahani, *Tasting Difference*, 40.

⁸⁸ Karen Britland, "Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama" in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Adam Smyth (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 109-126, 125.

⁸⁹ Hamling and Richardson, *Home*, 87.

⁹⁰ See Hugh Plat, *Delightes for Ladies* (London: 1608).

⁹¹ Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011), 120.

⁹² John Partridge, *The Treasurie of Hidden Secrets* (1633), sig., D1v.

Lady Mary's realm.⁹³ On this occasion, the "sweet distilled showres" (l. 111) of the final course are quite literally rooted in the "fayr blessings" (l. 119) of Chirk's "land" (119), enabling Orpheus (with the help of Lady Mary's well-run household) to bring back to Myddelton's guests, through the combined sense of touch and smell, "ye Spring tide [of] ye year" (l. 118).

Conclusion

The "Entertainment" put on, in 1634, at Chirk Castle to welcome the Earl of Bridgewater to his official role as Lord President of the Council of Wales and the Marches reveals a nuanced "taste act".⁹⁴ On one level, Salusbury's verse was part of an ongoing progress display of cordiality and diplomacy which celebrated the harmonious government of Wales and the Marches under the leadership of Bridgewater, and culminated in Milton's "Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle". However, Salusbury's vision of a golden world at Chirk Castle also served to spotlight his uncle and patron, Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd's, dominant role in the culture and politics of North Wales. A similar sleight of hand is evident from an examination of the food cultures on display at this "Entertainment". Salusbury repeatedly praises the local provenance of the food: the dishes are "all o^r own" (l. 53). Yet, when Salusbury's verse is read against contemporary recipes, and the sensory experience of the "Entertainment" is untangled, it is abundantly clear that the produce derived from Myddelton's Chirk Castle estates (from Winter's course of "venison" to Summer's offering of "cherryes") would have been flavoured by spices from the Indies and sugar from the Atlantic. These vestiges of global trade networks gain a special significance in a castle bought with the extraordinary gains from Sir Thomas Myddelton 1st's colonial ventures overseas: a family home which visibly commemorated these

⁹³ Lady Mary's keen interest in household matters is apparent from a rare letter from Wat Kyffin to Lady Mary dated to November 1647 where she desires to know "all passages within this house" from the selling of cattle to the storage "of butter & cheese". Wat Kyffin to Lady Mary Myddelton, 20 November 1647, NLW, Chirk Castle Deposit, E3335.

⁹⁴ Ferguson, *Taste*, 17.

connections in the fabric of the castle and marked its power through edible consumption. As Johnson observes, castles can be considered as “stage-settings”, as “backdrops in front of which and through which the identities of men and women were played out”.⁹⁵ In 1634, Chirk Castle served as an opulent “stage setting” for Sir Thomas Myddelton 2nd to perform his identity at this feast which despite an insistence on local provenance was only made possible through cross-cultural global encounters. Salusbury’s “Entertainment”, which so delightfully celebrates the Edenic qualities of Chirk, actually reminds us, through the traces of this synthesis of local and global foodstuffs, how the contours of this much vaunted, “native” (l. 55) feast were in fact made possible by oppressive, worldwide trade networks. Moreover, the dissonance created by Salusbury’s insistence on the “native” (l. 55) qualities of the food cultures displayed on Chirk Castle’s banqueting tables, illuminates brilliantly both the global nature of the Renaissance and the challenge of integrating such multiplicity into a remote corner of North Wales.

⁹⁵ Johnson, *Castle Gate*, 3.

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