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Tastes from Beyond: Persephone's Pomegranate and Otherworldly Consumption in Antiquity

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As this volume illustrates, the sense of taste serves a complex array of functions in antiquity. One specific way that taste works in literature is by allowing characters to access other realms by consuming some article of food from that foreign realm.[1] In some cases this allows mortal humans to breach the boundary between earth and heaven, and sometimes the boundaries are crossed by divine beings themselves. The latter is the case in the three texts examined here that detail the story of the so-called "Rape of Persephone": the anonymous *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, as well as Ovid's *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is an anonymous text probably composed between 650 and 550 BCE. Ovid lived and wrote *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* (among other texts) in and around[2] Rome in the first century CE under the reign of Augustus.[3] These three texts all narrate the myth of the abduction of Persephone, also called Proserpina, by the god of the underworld; while in Hades, the goddess ingests some pomegranate, rendering her sojourn in the underworld semi-permanent. Tasting the pomegranate results in a change of identity for Persephone; whereas before she belonged wholly to the cohort of Olympian deities, afterwards she is required to spend a portion of her year as Hades' consort. The ramifications of eating food from another realm are simply assumed by the author.[4] Using comparative texts from the Bible and from the Pseudepigrapha that showcase how humans cross the division between heaven and earth, I suggest that the *Hymn*, *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* illustrate how taste works to transport the taster across boundaries between realms, a ramification of taste that is shared across ancient

[1] On the senses generally in antiquity, see Smith (2007), Toner (2014); on angelic foods, see Niklas (2010), Goodman (1986); on other worlds and travel to them in antique literature, see Niklas et al. (2010), Sulzbach (2010); on hierophagy, see Warren (2006, 2015).

[2] Ovid spent some time in exile and wrote a portion of *Fasti* outside of Rome proper. See Hill (1992: 1–2).

[3] For further discussion of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, see Richardson (1974: 5–12) and Foley (1994: 28–31, 79–83); for further discussion of Ovid's historical, political and social context, see Hill (1992: 1–4).

[4] This is also the case in many modern examples of this kind of eating. Examples from our own era include the "eat me" cake (Carroll 1992: 13) and "drink me" beverage (which tastes like "cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast" [Carroll, 1992: 11], distinguishing it from something medicinal) from *Alice in Wonderland*, the sweet Turkish delight in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and two scenes from the 2001 Japanese film *Spirited Away*, among others. Although these characters are human, the pattern of crossing a boundary to another world persists.

cultures and the texts they have produced.[5] This argument represents a departure from, though not an opposition to, the vast body of scholarship that analyzes Persphone's pomegranate event as a sexual experience. Numerous scholars view the seed as either a symbol of fertility or as a metaphor for sexual intercourse, or both. The analysis presented here views the pomegranate as participating in the cross-cultural trope of hierophagy. The basic event of hierophagy[6] involves the eating of something otherworldly, which then associates the eater with another world; in antiquity this is often the divine realm. A hierophagic analysis does not exclude the sexual element of the seed's ingestion but rather seeks to explain why eating, and particularly tasting, would be used in this way so consistently. In other words, even if we accept that Hades' actions with the seed enable him to bind Persephone to the underworld, the question why she must ingest the seed in order for the magic to work is left unanswered by evaluations that simply take for granted the sexual metaphor of the act.

Rather, the changes undergone by Persephone/Proserpina are illuminated by other examples of this kind of tasting from antiquity, namely Genesis 3 and *4 Ezra* 14. Emerging from Jewish traditions, these texts, which can be dated, respectively, to the same time periods as the *Homeric Hymn* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, provide evidence that supports a new sensory analysis of Persphone's pomegranate experience. I have introduced the term "hierophagy" to describe this trope. Despite being a prevalent literary phenomenon, hierophagic eating is consistently overlooked.[7] Hierophagy occurs in texts composed across many time periods and represents a long-standing cultural understanding of the ritual ramifications of consuming otherworldly food. The trope of hierophagy is a literary

[5] Another example from Roman antiquity, which space prevents me from analysing in the present chapter, is from Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*; see below, and more completely, my forthcoming monograph, *Hierophagy: Transformational Eating in Ancient Literature*. Regarding the Persephone narrative, Suter (2002) discusses the *Hymn* from a psychoanalytical perspective as well as from an anthropological one. She rejects that the pomegranate episode represents a marriage (94–5) and instead favours an understanding of the pomegranate as inherently sexual (22, 83, 90, 97). Myres (1938) concludes that the pomegranate acts as a love charm in that Hades, in rubbing it on himself in some kind of magical act, binds Persephone to himself; Bonner (1939), responding to Myres, views the seed as a fertility charm (esp. p. 4) encapsulated in the seed by Hades' action of moving the seed around himself (as opposed to rubbing it on himself). Faraone (1990) outlines the use of sweet fruits in popular love charms (although at least half of the examples given involve throwing rather than ingesting the fruit; see esp. p. 238).

[6] Nicolae Roddy (personal communication, 2007) suggested "hierophagy," which I have since adopted. Desroches (1973: 40 n.18) mentions the neologism, crediting F. A. Isambert (n.d.: 184), but I have not been able to find the term in this citation. See also Pfister (1948: 262), who simply defines hierophagy as a "sacral meal [which] represents the eating of the god or of the holy entity". My use of the term here represents a significant development from these earlier brief allusions.

[7] For my complete definition of the category of hierophagy and a discussion of other texts which make use of the trope, see my forthcoming monograph on the subject, *Hierophagy: Transformational Eating in Ancient Literature.*

mechanism by which eaters gain access to divine knowledge, abilities and locations. Hierophagy is a type of eating found in literature that is transformative in that the participant in such an event becomes associated with another world in the process of the eating.

The significance of hierophagy in antiquity hinges on the porous-but-present boundary between worlds in the cultural expectation of the ancient Mediterranean.[9] Although the most prominent boundary is between the human and divine realms, in some stories involving hierophagy other boundaries are breached. For instance, both Ovid and the author of the *Hymn* treat the Chthonic and Olympian realms as distinct;[10] Hades rules one realm while Zeus rules another. Tasting food from another realm is one way in which such boundaries can be crossed.[11]

Tasting the Pomegranate

The myth of Persephone's capture by Hades illustrates how pervasive hierophagic tasting and its implications were in the culture and literature of the antique world. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is the earliest of the Persephone stories discussed here,[12] and it is likely that the later *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* were composed at least partly in response to the *Hymn*.[13] In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, we see Demeter mourning her daughter's kidnapping.[14] Those familiar with the story will recall how she allows nothing to grow on earth, no crops of any kind, in her grief and rage (*Hymn* 302–313). Each of the gods entreats Demeter to allow the

[9] By "cultural expectation" I mean knowledge passed down as part of the cultural heritage of ancient communities, knowledge that would have been commonly accepted among culturally literate participants in the ancient world. Here, I follow Richard Horsley's use of the term "cultural repertoire" (2007: esp. 128–129) and David Carr's discussion of how cultural-religious traditions are communicated in antiquity (2005: esp. 3–14).
[10] For a discussion of the use of these terms in cult practice, see Scullion (1994).
[11] In biblical texts, other examples of boundary crossing abound, for instance in texts which describe divinely-sent visions to prophets. Taste as a mechanism for boundary crossing is under examination here because this mechanism has been completely neglected to this point.
[12] See Richardson (1974, 74–86) for a full discussion of other literary versions of the myth. The myth of Persephone's capture is briefly mentioned in Hesiod, *Theogony* 9.14, and also appears in Pamphos, *Hymn to Demeter* (preserved in Pausanias 1.38.3, 8.37.9, 9.31.9); Orphic *Argonautika* 1191–96; Orphic hymns 18, 29, 41, 43; Euripides, *Helen* 1301–68; Isocrates, *Panegyrikos* 28–29; Callimachos, *Hymn 6*; Nicander,*Theriaca* 483–7, *Alexipharmaca* 129–32; Apollodorus, *Library* 1.5.1–3; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 5.3–5; Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.4; Vergil, *Georgics* 1.39; Lucan *Civil Wars* 6.698–700, 739–42; Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 5.347; Claudian, *On the Rape of Proserpina*; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 6.1–168; Second Vatican Mythographer 94–100. Of these, Apollodorus mentions the pomegranate, stating that Pluto gave the seed to the Maid and she, "not foreseeing the consequences," ate it.
[13] Hinds (1987: 51–98).
[14] Persephone falls to the underworld when reaching for a fragrant narcissus flower (*Hymn* 5–14). The sensory implications of this event of relocation are no doubt significant, but beyond the scope of this paper. For a brief discussion of tempting fragrances, see Hitch, this volume.

earth to be fertile again, but she refuses. Demeter is determined not to allow any crops to grow on the earth until her daughter is returned to her.

Zeus, complicit in his own daughter's abduction by his brother Hades (78–9), is held hostage by Demeter's actions and eventually has to send Hermes to negotiate with Hades (334–9). Hades seems to obey, and tells Persephone to return to her mother (360–9) but before she leaves, Hades "stealthily gave her a honey-sweet[15] pomegranate seed to eat, looking around, so that she might not stay there for all time with the venerable dark-robed Demeter."[16] The phrasing of this excerpt, which emphasizes in two places the intentional secrecy employed by Hades, suggests that Persephone's eating is not accidental; rather, it is Hades who, *knowing what the end result would be*, slips Persephone some seeds to eat in order to keep her as his wife in the underworld.[17] Indeed, the phrase "looking around" (*amphi e nōmēsas,* l. 373) may emphasize the furtiveness of Hades' behaviour,[18] describing how he looks around himself, hoping that he is not observed as he tricks his stolen bride into consuming the fruit.

That Persephone consumes pomegranate at all is peculiar. The ordinary food of divine beings is nectar and ambrosia. Greeks and Romans understood a division between divine and mortal foods—a division that reflects "the wider symbolic economy" that distinguishes gods from human beings in culinary terms.[19] Ambrosia and nectar are the food of the gods in

[15] The sweet taste is also a feature of other examples of hierophagy, such as in *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, *Joseph and Aseneth* and the Book of Revelation. For a discussion of its significance in these texts, see Warren (forthcoming).

[16] αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' αὐτὸς / ῥοιῆς κόκκον ἔδωκε φαγεῖν μελιηδέα λάθρῃ, / ἀμφὶ ἔ νωμήσας, ἵνα μὴ μένοι ἤματα πάντα / αὖθι παρ' αἰδοίῃ Δημήτερι κυανοπέπλῳ. Translation mine.

[17] For a discussion of the potential relationship between the pomegranate meal in the *Hymn* and actual Athenian marriage, see Foley (1994: 107–9). She notes that "the bride's acceptance of food was a form of acknowledging the groom's authority over her" (108) and that the ingestion of some ritual food (quince in Plutarch, *Life of Solon*, 89C or wedding cake in Aristophanes, *Peace*, 869) was part of the marriage rite. As has been noted by other scholars (see note 5 above) sexual experiences follow; see also Suter (2002), Sutton (1981: 153–4).

[18] Richardson (1974: 277). Foley (1994: 56) opts to interpret the phrase as referring to a magical rite by which Hades binds Persephone to himself through the movement of the pomegranate seed around his captive; this interpretation is unnecessary in light of my analysis, which proposes that the eating of otherworldly food is binding in and of itself, and does not require additional magical actions. See also Myers (1938) and Bonner (1939).

[19] Clements (2015: 52). The banquet of the Phaeacians (*Odyssey* 8), the banquet served by Tantalus (Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, 1.26–27), and the meal hosted by Baucis and Philemon (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.621–96) might seem like exceptions, where gods do consume human food. Tantalus attempts to serve a monstrous human sacrifice to the gods who attend his banquet; aside from human flesh being out of the realm of normal mortal food, only Demeter eats at the banquet, and she does so only because she is distracted by her grief at Persephone's absence. Baucis and Philemon do set out a table for their divine guests, and items of food, including eggs and cheese, are described, but the only reference to ingestion is to the wine jug, which mysteriously refills itself each time Baucis refills the cups; indeed, the gods actually prevent the host couple from serving them meat by revealing their divine identities. As for the banquet of the Phaeacians, the gods are lauded in song but do not attend the meal.

Greek traditions.[20] This divine food is reserved for the gods and seems to be the source of immortality.[21] This food is ordinarily kept away from mortal people; for instance, when the goddess Calypso dines together with Odysseus, "the nymph set before him every kind of food and drink that mortal men will take. Calypso sat down face-to-face with the king and the women served her nectar and ambrosia".[22] When human beings do interact with ambrosia or nectar, they do not eat it,[23] but rather it is poured on or into their bodies in order to prevent, for example, the corruption of a corpse[24], or in the case of Achilles, to preserve his body through divine nourishment.[25] It seems that ambrosia must be consumed through the mouth to have its full effect.[26] Above all, ambrosia as divine food is always contrasted with mortal food.[27]

When gods do consume human foods in literature, it is usually in the context of hospitality, the gods having taken on mortal disguises.[28] However, this is not the case in the Persephone myth. This is not a case of hospitality, where tables are heaped with good foods described using rich language. The tiny pomegranate seed is out of place here for two reasons: it is marked as an unusual food for a goddess to consume, in that it is *not* ambrosia, and it is unusual in the context of the absence of banquet. These two aspects then serve to highlight the potential for transformation that its ingestion will bring about. Persephone's food is marked;[29] the pomegranate is out of place here, foreshadowing that this ingestion—and its ramifications—are out of the ordinary.

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[20] See, in this volume, Gowers, on ambrosia as a metaphor for sweet kisses, and Hitch on wine so tasty that it is compared to this divine food. Hitch also addresses the dining event between Calypso and Odysseus in *Odyssey* 5.194-9 (see also below, this chapter). There, Hitch observes, the divine and mortal share space, allowing human proximity to the divine, but not food, marking their distinct natures.

[21] Ambrosia literally means immortality (*LSJ* s.v. "ἀμβροσία"; *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v. "Ambrosia"). On the gods' consumption of ambrosia and nectar as opposed to mortal food, see Homer, *Iliad* 5.342. At *Odyssey* 5.135, Calypso indicates that she would have made Odysseus immortal but for Zeus' command through Hermes.

[22] Homer, *Odyssey* 5.217–20, trans. Fagles (1996).

[23] Tantalus, a son of Zeus (and therefore half divine), was invited to share the gods' table and their immortal food, but squandered his opportunity when he stole ambrosia to bring back to his drinking companions (Euripides, *Orestes* 10; Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 1.95).

[24] For example, Patroclus' preservation in Homer, *Iliad* 19:37–39 or Sarpedon's in *Iliad* 16.670, 680.

[25] Homer, *Iliad* 19.352–4. See also Bradley (2015: 4).

[26] Apollonius*, Argonautica* 4.869–72 implies that had Thetis been successful in completely anointing Achilles with ambrosia, he would have become immortal and ageless, which contradicts this idea. Later tradition (e.g. Statius, *Achilleid* 1.122–3; 269–70; 480–1) replaces ambrosia as the mechanism of Achilles' potential immortality with the river Styx.

[27] Clements (2015: 50)

[28] See Homer, *Odyssey* 1.105–49; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.616–724. The cultic practice of *theoxenia* is a separate matter; see Ekroth (2011).

[29] I use the term "marked" to refer to the cultural encoding of certain terms, items and/or behaviours as unusual and therefore informative in the context of the familiar or ordinary ("unmarked") categories of meaning accepted by a culture. In this use I follow, for example, Battistella (1996, 1990) and Waugh, (1982: 299–318).

The sweet taste that the seeds have is likewise marked. Even present-day pomegranates, bred for their sweetness, are still better described as tart; in contrast, wild pomegranates are described as "extremely acidic."[30] The food of the gods in the Greek tradition is also associated with honey and sweet tastes.[31] In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 559–562 this is made explicit, and Porphyry, writing much later, also associates the food of the gods with honey.[32] This sweet taste operates as a symbol by which the eater interprets his or her experience. Sweetness is representative[33] and participates in culturally-governed expectations of meaning. The fact that these pomegranate seeds are explicitly described as "honey sweet" (*meliēdēs*) may highlight the special nature of this food as opposed to an ordinary, often sour, pomegranate seed.

When Demeter finally sees her daughter and embraces her, her first emotion is not relief but anxiety, as if Demeter can tell that Persephone is changed in some way:

τῇ δὲ [φίλην ἔτι παῖδα ἑῇς μετὰ χερσὶν ἐχούσῃ]
α[ἶψα δόλον θυμός τιν᾽ ὀίσατο, τρέσσε δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ αἰνῶς]
πα[υ]ομ[ένη φιλότητος, ἄφαρ δ᾽ ἐρεείνετο μύθῳ·]
τέκνον, μή ῥά τι μοι σ[ύ γε πάσσαο νέρθεν ἐοῦσα]
βρώμης; ἐξαύδα, [μὴ κεῦθ᾽, ἵνα εἴδομεν ἄμφω·]
ὣς μὲν γάρ κεν ἐοῦσα π[αρὰ στυγεροῦ Ἀίδαο] 395
καὶ παρ᾽ ἐμοὶ καὶ πατρὶ κελ[αινεφέϊ Κρονίωνι]
ναιετάοις πάντεσσι τετιμ[ένη ἀθανάτοι]σιν.
εἰ δέ, πτᾶσα πάλιν <σύ γ‘> ἰοῦσ᾽ ὑπ[ὸ κεύθεσι γαίης]
οἰκήσεις ὡρέων τρίτατον μέρ[ος εἰς ἐνιαυτόν,]
τὰς δὲ δύω παρ᾽ ἐμοί τε καὶ [ἄλλοις ἀθανά]τοισιν.

[While holding her dear child in her arms], her [heart
suddenly sensed a trick. Fearful she] drew back
from [her embrace and at once inquired:]
"My child, tell me, you [did not taste] food [while below?]
Speak out [and hide nothing, so we both may know.]

[30] Stover (2007: 1088); the chart found in Stover (2007: 1091) outlines the range of sweetness and acidity expected in the variety of modern cultivars.
[31] See Hitch (this volume) for the poetics of sweetness in Greek literature, and Totelin (this volume) for sweetness in medical and scientific texts.
[32] Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs* (*De Antro Nymphorum*) 7; Scheinberg (1979: 5); Cf. Roscher (1883: 25); Kraemer (1998: 169–71).
[33] Korsmeyer (1999: 115–8).

> [For if not], ascending [from miserable Hades],
> you will dwell with me and your father, the
> dark-clouded [son of Kronos], honoured by all the gods.
> But if [you tasted food], returning beneath [the earth,]
> you will stay a third part of the seasons [each year,]
> but two parts with myself and the other immortals."[34]

Demeter is concerned with whether Persephone has "tasted" food while she was in Hades—the verb *pateomai* (398) connotes not just the ingestion of food but also the tasting of it.[35] The implications of this verb are important, given the usual silence in Greek literature about how food tastes. As Hitch explores in her chapter, abundance is usually emphasized over aesthetic quality, and when taste is an operative descriptor, it is usually used metaphorically. Using this verb, as opposed to an unmarked verb of eating such as *esthiō*, especially when the object consumed also has the aesthetic descriptor "sweet" implies that taste is a significant factor in Persephone's experience.

When pressed, Persephone admits that Hades forced her to eat something sweet: "but he stealthily put in my mouth a food honey-sweet, a pomegranate seed, and compelled me against my will and by force to taste it" (411–3).[36] Persephone's words here are almost identical to those in 371–4 when the narrator describes Hades giving her the seed. In this section, Persephone is emphatic that she has *tasted* (*pateomai*) the honey-sweet pomegranate.[37] The implications of this experience are clear to Demeter, who, like Hades, is fully aware of the rules: Persephone is bound to the underworld if she has tasted food there.[38] The potential danger of tasting food was acknowledged in the ancient world; as Hitch, this volume, observes, "once food is consumed, it cannot return to its previous state, and by extension, in Greek thought the irreversible change brought about by ingestion can affect the eater too." Zeus, too, is cognizant of the law governing otherworldly tasting, for he proclaims that Persephone, as Demeter feared and Hades hoped, "would spend one-third of the

[34] *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 390–400, trans. and text Foley (1994).
[35] A Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. πατέομαι; cf. Iliad 24.642.
[36] αὐτὰρ ὁ λάθρῃ / ἔμβαλέ μοι ῥοιῆς κόκκον, μελιηδέ ἐδωδήν, / ἄκουσαν δὲ βίῃ με προσηνάγκασσε πάσασθαι. Suter (2002: 58) argues that Persephone willingly ingested the pomegranate and here lies to her mother in order to prevent Demeter's anger; I rather prefer to believe the survivor's own account and posit an unreliable narrator. I am grateful to Megan Goodwin for her input.
[37] This verb is also used in line 50: "In her grief [Demeter] did not once **taste** ambrosia or nectar sweet-to-drink, nor bathed her skin." Οὐδέ ποτ' ἀμβροσίης καὶ νέκταρος ἡδυπότοιο **πάσσατ'** ἀκηχεμένη, οὐδὲ χρόα βάλλετο λουτροῖς. Trans. Foley (1994).
[38] Suter (2002: 90–7) convincingly problematizes the assumption that a marriage takes place in Hades; thus the binding that occurs through the pomegranate event is more complex than a simple marriage ritual.

revolving year in the misty dark and two-thirds with her mother and the other immortals" (446–8).[39] The seasonality of pomegranate may also be significant; while other fruit is harvested at the end of summer, pomegranates become ripe during the winter months, precisely when Persephone resides in Hades, corresponding with the bleak mourning period observed by Demeter. The type of fruit ingested by the goddess therefore seems to indicate the temporal restrictions imposed on her; a winter fruit points to a winter in Hades. Here (and again in 463–6) Zeus uses the same phrasing that Demeter does in 390–400; the repetition drives home the ramifications of eating the pomegranate. The *Homeric Hymn* expresses not only the significance of tasting food from another realm but also the idea that this kind of tasting is governed by cosmic law.

A significant reinterpretation of the Persephone myth is found in Latin, in a poem composed by Ovid under the reign of Augustus, some half a millennium after the *Homeric Hymn*. In Ovid's version of the myth in *Metamorphoses*, Proserpina, as she is called in the Latin tradition, unintentionally binds herself to Hades when she happens to pluck a pomegranate. Proserpina is transformed by the pomegranate, in keeping with the series of other transformations detailed by Ovid throughout the *Metamorphoses*.[40] In contrast to the *Homeric Hymn*, Ovid does not describe Pluto (Hades, in Greek) as having a direct role in feeding Proserpina the food. We read that by the time she is returned to her mother,

...quoniam ieiunia uirgo
soluerat et, cultis dum simplex errat in hortis,
puniceum curua decerpserat arbore pomum
sumptaque pallenti septem de cortice grana
presserat ore suo

…the maiden had broken
her fast and, while wandering innocently in the well-kept gardens,
had plucked a crimson fruit from a bending tree
and taken seven seeds from its pale rind

[39] νεῦσε δέ οἱ κούρην ἔτεος περιτελλομένοιο / τὴν τριτάτην μὲν μοῖραν ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα, / τὰς δὲ δύω παρὰ μητρὶ καὶ ἄλλοις ἀθανάτοισιν. / ὣς ἔφατ': οὐδ' ἀπίθησε θεὰ Διὸς ἀγγελιάων.
[40] Hill (1992: 2).

and pressed them to her mouth.[41]

In *Metamorphoses*, Proserpina takes the food of her own accord,[48] perhaps not aware of the ramifications. When she is discovered, and as the gods determine the right course of action, Jupiter as judge invokes a certain cosmic law pertaining to this issue, namely that Proserpina may leave the underworld only if she has not eaten any food from that place: "Proserpina will return to heaven, / but on this clear condition, that she has not touched any food / there with her mouth; for so it was decided by the compact of the Fates".[49] Both Jupiter, and Ascalaphus, the underworld's gardener, in describing what he saw, use a curious phrase to describe Proserpina's interaction with the pomegranate. Ascalaphus says that she "pressed them to her mouth" while Jupiter's condition is that she has not "touched any food there with her mouth." Thus, as in *Homeric Hymn*, the language used to describe Proserpina's ingestion of the seeds is unusual. Given the close relationship between the texts, it would not be surprising if Ovid used this curious phrase to evoke the "tasting" made explicit in the *Hymn*, especially since lips, as much as tongues, were considered organs of taste in antiquity.[50]

In the end, Jupiter compromises; Ceres (Demeter, in Greek) must share custody of Proserpina with her daughter's abductor-turned-husband as a result of her tasting of the fruit.

But, mediating between his brother and his grieving sister,
Jupiter, divided the revolving year equally:
now the goddess, a deity common to the two realms,

[41] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.534–7, trans. Hill (1992). The number seven is significant in antiquity, occurring in important foundational contexts, such as the seven hills of Rome, the seven kings of Rome, the seven wonders of the ancient world, and in literature, such as *Seven Against Thebes*. The significance in Ovid is, however, contested. Persephone ingests seven pomegranate seeds, a departure from the single seed in the *Homeric Hymn* and the three seeds in *Fasti* (4.607–8), where, as Fantham observes (1998: 207), the number of seeds is equivalent to the months spent in Hades. Cf. Hinds (1987: 89 n.39) who suggests the three seeds in *Fasti* represent the "twice three months" Proserpina spends out of the underworld (4.614). See also Richardson (1974: 276–7, 285). Seven seeds in the *Metamorphoses* may be a generally powerful (potentially magical) symbol, rather than a specific one.

[48] It is possible, and would be in line with Ovid's characterization of women, that Persephone's agency in plucking the fruit participates in what some scholars have suggested is an overarching metaphor of sex and sexuality in the myth of Persephone.

[49] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.530–3, trans. Hill (1992): *…repetet Proserpina caelum, lege tamen certa, si nullos contigit illic ore cibos; nam sic Parcarum foedere cautum est.*

[50] As Gowers (this volume) points out, particularly as regards potentially dangerous ingestion. The absence of explicit language in Ovid, aside from the general absence of tasting language in ancient literature, can also result from the fact that in neither case is Proserpina's point of view made apparent.

is with her mother for as many months as the months she is with her husband.[51]

The division between realms—that of the upper realm and that of the lower—is explicitly negotiated in the *Metamorphoses* through the ingestion of pomegranate. This underworld meal redefines Proserpina's relationship with her original realm where the other Olympian deities dwell and associates her instead with the gods of the underworld. She is, in effect, transformed by her experience, from a goddess of the upper realm to one who straddles the two; this metamorphosis is brought about by those seven seeds and confirmed by Jupiter when he hears what she has done. Jupiter's pronouncement does not bring about this change—Proserpina's reaction to his decree, the brightening of her disposition recounted in 5.568–571, rather reflects her relief at being returned at least part time to her mother.[52] The identity change Proserpina undergoes has already taken place by the time Jupiter makes his judgement, since it is dependent, as he articulates in 5.530–2, on her having consumed underworldly food.

Ovid gives a similar version of the myth in *Fasti*. As in other renditions, in this account, when Proserpina is abducted to Dis's own realm (4.445–6), Ceres searches the entire realm to which she has access. Here, the normally strict division between worlds is made explicit in the emphasis placed on Ceres searching the *entire* upper world for her daughter:

> For at one time she looks down on incense-gathering Arabs, at another on Indians; next Libya is below, next Meroe and the parched land. Now she approaches the Hesperians—the Rhine, the Rhone, the Po, and you, Thybris, destined to be the parent of a powerful water. Where am I being carried? It's a huge task to tell the lands she roamed. No place in the world is omitted by Ceres. She roams in heaven too, and speaks to the constellations nearest to the icy pole, which are immune from the watery ocean.[53]

Ceres is only capable of searching the upper realm, including the earth and sky, and must eventually be told where Proserpina is. Ceres's quest is also found in *Metamorphoses* 5.438–59; the goddess searches for her daughter on land and in the sea (5.434; cf. 5.462–3, *Hymn*

[51] Ovid, Metamorphoses 5.564–7, trans. Hill (1992): *at medius fratrisque sui maestaeque sororis / Iuppiter ex aequo uoluentem diuidit annum: / nunc dea, regnorum numen commune duorum, / cum matre est totidem, totidem cum coniuge menses.*
[52] Ceres likewise appears relieved in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.572.
[53] Ovid, *Fasti* 4.569–76, trans. Wiseman & Wiseman (2011); Latin from Goold (2003): *Nam modo turilegos Arabas, modo despicit Indos, / hinc Libys, hinc Meroë siccaque terra subest; / nunc adit Hesperios Rhenum Rhodanumque Padumque / teque, future parens, Thybri, potentis aquae. / quo feror? Inmensum est erratas dicere terras: / praeteritus Cereri nullus in orbe locus. / errat et in caelo liquidique inmunia ponti / adloquitur gelido proxima signa polo….*

2.43–4). In all three texts, the authors emphasize the breadth and depth of Ceres/Demeter's search. Proserpina/Persephone remains hidden not for lack of trying—her mother has searched in every possible location available to her, while the underworld exists on a different plane, inaccessible to the gods of the upper realm. Ceres's limited search thus illustrates that Proserpina, Ceres and Jupiter exist in one realm, while the King of the Underworld exists in another.

Eventually Ceres discovers that her daughter has been taken to the "third kingdom" (*tertia regna*)—the underworld (*Fasti* 4.584). This same location is singled out by *Metamorphoses* as well as the *Hymn* as distinct from the upper realms of the earth and the heavens. In the *Hymn*, Demeter warns her daughter that remaining in the depths of the earth[54] is the consequence of breaking her fast. In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid likewise depicts the underworld as a foreign realm, ordinarily inaccessible to the gods of the upper realm (5.492; 501–8). Ceres then begs Jupiter to annul the marriage-by-capture; he is willing, but sets certain, by now familiar, conditions. "If it happens that your heart cannot be moved, and is set to break the bonds of a marriage once joined, then let us try to do just that" Jupiter tells Ceres, "if only she has remained fasting. If not she will be the wife of an underworld husband".[55] To Ceres' dismay, in this version as well, her daughter has broken her fast on some pomegranate seeds (4.607–8). As in *Metamorphoses*, Ceres immediately understands the ramifications of this tiny taste, and further explains her grief by declaring that just as Proserpina no longer calls heaven home, neither will Ceres (4.610–4). This statement, though hyperbolic on the part of Ceres, highlights the very real change that Proserpina has undergone: just as Ceres was unable to access the underworld by her nature as a goddess of the upper realm, now Proserpina properly belongs to the "third kingdom." Proserpina's hierophagy therefore amounts to more than a simple marriage-by-capture, where the bride now resides in her husband's home; rather, the abduction would have been ineffective by itself to bring about Proserpina's bond to the underworld. Tasting the pomegranate effects a change that renders her association with the underworld semi-permanent, even if she does return to her mother for half the year. She is now a goddess of that third kingdom and can only visit her former home.

Proserpina/Persephone's experience with these seeds hardly constitutes a meal—no one in antiquity would recognize it as such, since it lacks the two major components of wine

[54] *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 398–400: ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης.
[55] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.601–4, trans. Wiseman & Wiseman (2011); Latin from Goold (2003): *sed si forte tibi non est mutabile pectus, / statque semel iuncti rumpere vincla tori, / hoc quoque temptemus, siquidem ieiuna remansit; / si minus, inferni coniugis uxor erit.*

and bread. Further, in viewing it in contrast to other examples of deities-in-disguise eating non-ambrosial foods, the seeds seem even more insignificant—the plentiful banquet depicted in *Metamorphoses* 8.616–724 contains multiple courses of rich and abundant food.[56] That Persephone consumes such a small unit of food signals the event as distinct from ordinary ingestion.

Two things are made apparent through this analysis of the Persephone stories: first, Ovid and the author of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* share ideas about food-transformation both with each other and with other texts from the ancient Mediterranean, as I will illustrate shortly. Whether Hades or Heaven, the same cultural rules apply: food from another world, when eaten, binds the eater to that place. Second, in *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti* and the *Homeric Hymn* the gods, at the very least, know that these gustatory regulations exist. Jupiter is bound by this rule in Ovid's versions, and is unable to completely return Persephone to her mother; in the *Homeric Hymns* Hades takes advantage of this restriction and purposely feeds Persephone the food which binds her to himself and his world.

Sensory Intimacy, Social Intimacy

One of the reasons why taste brings about Persephone's identity transformation is because sharing tastes with others establishes a bond among the eaters. Thus, the binding effect of the pomegranate's taste can be elucidated by looking at the sociology of taste. A bond is accomplished through the intimacy of taste when compared with other senses.[57] If smells evoke the presence of the gods in public,[58] then taste, in the mouth and on the lips and tongue, represents interaction with another realm in a very private way. In the act of eating and tasting, the sense-object is actually internalized by the eater. For this reason, this form of interaction with another world has more profound repercussions than, for example, discourse with a being from a foreign realm, or in the case of Persephone, even being in the physical location of that other realm: tasting otherworldly foods brings about a bond between the eater and the realm to which the ingested food belongs. Taste accomplishes this transformation because of its intimacy.[59] The privacy of the sense of taste (as opposed to the shared,

[56] See Hitch, this volume, for a discussion of descriptions of banquets; ancient texts tend to emphasize the quantity of food and its surplus rather than specific taste experiences at feasts.
[57] See Rudolph, "Introduction" (this volume).
[58] Clements (2015).
[59] Potter (2014: 24).

"objective" senses of sight or hearing) suggests that hierophagy exploits the intimacy of taste to express its meaning.

The social implications of sharing this intimate sense in antiquity supports the idea that tasting food from another realm metamorphoses the eater.[60] A key social aspect of the sense of taste resides in how it signifies and effects community formation—common meals promote group formation and cohesion, and are frequently used in initiatory contexts to establish or renew community membership.[61] While community is not an explicit concern of the myths, the social implications of taste illuminate the literary role of the pomegranate; in the social world, sharing a meal creates a bond not just between co-eaters of a meal, but also between the provider of the food and the consumer of it, as in the case of Hades and Persephone.[62] While host and guest bond through shared tasting of a meal, as Hitch points out, providing food to guests also established the power of the host; thus by accepting the host's food, the guest concomitantly accepts his power.[63] So Hades, in providing the few seeds, might be seen as asserting his authority over Persephone. Meals were shared among members of a group that was already established, for example a family or a guild, but they could also create new associations. Ancient writers, like modern scholars, were conscious of how meals established and reinforced social bonds. Plutarch considers the common meal a place where friendship is forged. He remarks upon this quality most memorably when he writes, "A guest comes to share not only meat, wine and dessert, but conversation, fun and the amiability that leads to friendship."[64] Sharing a meal does more than fill the stomach; it also forges relationships among diners. Modern anthropologists argue that food also creates a bond between the eater and the provider of food through its incorporation into the

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[60] The important role of meals in community formation in ancient communities is well established. Dennis Smith goes so far as to declare that "the idea that sharing a meal together creates a sense of social bonding appears to be a universal symbol." Smith (2003:14); it is not just sharing a meal at the same table which produces this community, but also *sharing tastes with a community even at a great distance*. Lalonde (1992: 82–83).

[61] Korsmeyer (1999: 187); Smith (2003: 14, 80); e.g. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.24.

[62] Hierophagic eating creates a bond between the eater of the food and the giver of the food, even when the provider of the food resides in a different world. It is important to remember that hosts and guests (providers and receivers) might not eat the same food even when dining together. Smith (2003: 11, 45). Thus, the fact that Hades does not share the pomegranate does not negate the binding effects of Persephone's taste experience. Of course, the bond created between Hades and Persephone through this small taste of underworldly food can be, and has been, viewed as representative of the relationship between husband and wife (see above, note 17) and/or of a sexual bond formed between two lovers (see above, note 5).

[63] See further Hitch, this volume.

[64] Plutarch, *Table-Talk* 660b. Paul likewise recognizes this quality of sharing food. As he explains in 1 Corinthians 10:17, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." Paul also believes that a bond can be created not only between people but also between divine forces and those who share ritually marked food. He famously warns the Corinthians that they might find themselves "partners with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20) if they share in food offered to the gods of the "pagans."

consumer.[65] In eating food, the eater brings into him or herself the qualities imbued in the food, including the social (or other) stratification implied in the meal, the culturally loaded symbolism of the food itself and the memory of previous meals consumed in similar or different ways. The fact that Persephone tastes food which, for her, is out of the ordinary creates tension within the existing Olympian-Chthonic narrative structure.[66] In tasting the honey-sweet pomegranate, Persephone gains privileged access to the other realm—Hades—which necessitates her participation in it.

Hierophagy in a Broader Context

In order to understand the pattern into which Persephone's taste experience fits, it is useful to examine other examples of this kind of eating, even examples from other cultural traditions that may have interacted in antiquity. In this section, I offer two examples from Jewish antiquity—Genesis and *Fourth Ezra*—to help contextualize hierophagy and its role in the Persephone story. That neither comparator emerges from the geographical areas which produced the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* serves to illustrate the pervasiveness of the use of taste to depict boundary crossing in literature, whether poetry or narrative. These texts participate, like the *Homeric Hymn, Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*, in the common cultural imagination of the ancient Mediterranean and therefore shed light on the societal expectations about how distinct realms interact. The common use of hierophagy as a means by which foreign realms are entered into rather reflects a shared ancient expectation about the ramifications of ingesting otherworldly food.[67] Genesis 3 depicts the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after they disobey God and consume fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This story has also been interpreted as a "simple metaphor for intercourse" whereby ancient authors euphemistically describe the first sexual contact and the subsequent "carnal knowledge".[68] However, I propose that the use of ingestion as a metaphor for carnal knowledge functions precisely because of taste's role in hierophagy: that it transmits knowledge from one realm to

[65] Weichart & van Eeuwijk (2007: 3); Douglas (1972); Farb & Armelagos (1980: 4). The penetration of the eater by the food also has implications for understanding Persephone and the pomegranate as a sexual metaphor.
[66] While pomegranates might grow abundantly in the underworld, they are not normal food for Olympian deities, as I have established above.
[67] Another example, which I do not have the space to examine here, is found in a Latin romance, Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, where Lucius is transformed back into his human form by consuming roses. Thus, the concept of hierophagy is not unique to the Persephone stories, nor to Jewish lore, but is found throughout the ancient Mediterranean.
[68] Veenker (1999–2000); Speiser (1964: 26).

another. It is in this capacity that I analyse the fruit here. Dating to before the sixth century BCE,[69] Genesis 3 represents a world-view roughly contemporaneous with that preserved in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.[70] *Fourth Ezra* is a late first-century CE Jewish apocalypse in which the main character, Ezra, asks God a series of questions about the destruction of Israel and God's responsibility for his chosen people; there is no sexual element in this example of hierophagy. In both comparators, the main characters are transported to another realm as a result of consuming otherworldly food. Adam and Eve consume "the forbidden fruit" and are expelled from Paradise, while Ezra receives a cup of fiery liquid from God, and is soon thereafter taken up to heaven. The boundary between heaven and earth is breached in each text by the tasting of an item from that other realm.

The Genesis story narrates Adam and Eve's eviction from Eden. Eden contains two named trees: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Their removal from Paradise occurs as a direct result of their ingestion of the fruit of the former tree and is in order to prevent their tasting of the latter. Their hierophagic experience is truncated by God, who expels them from Eden before they are able to accomplish their full transformation.

Eve examines the fruit and determines that it is "good for food," among other things:

> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.[71]

In other words, Eve experiences the fruit synaesthetically and understands through seeing the fruit that it will taste good.[72] She eats some and gives some to Adam to eat. The couple then experiences an awakening of sorts in that they become "wise," as the text puts it, and realize that they are naked. However, God's experience of their hierophagic experience is different; Adam and Eve have not just seized knowledge, but have brought about a transformation: "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (3:22). In tasting this fruit, Eve and Adam have become closer to the divine realm. God fears that ingesting the

[69] Coogan (2006: 56); Collins (2004: 75).
[70] Richardson (1974: 5–11).
[71] Genesis 3:6–7. All translations of the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version.
[72] Hitch, this volume, notes that "if any sense provides pleasure associated with food, it is vision."

fruit of the Tree of Life (3:22) would render Adam and Eve fully divine, and so ejects them from the garden "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever— therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden" (3:22–3).[73] As in the *Homeric Hymn* and Ovid, then, the god of Genesis also understands the ramifications of consuming food from another realm. The curses that God imposes on the humans and their subsequent expulsion from Eden in Genesis 3:22–4 are the results of tasting the "good to eat" fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, the Eden narrative reflects the tension typical of hierophagic events, wherein the boundaries between realms are breached.

This kind of boundary-crossing is also depicted in *4 Ezra*, a Jewish apocalypse written in Palestine around 100 CE.[74] *4 Ezra* clearly espouses a divide between the heavenly and earthly realms, in particular because the text makes use of an angelic interlocutor to bridge the division between the two regions.[75] Throughout the narrative, Ezra's divine revelations become more sensually intimate: first Ezra only hears and speaks with the angelic mediator (3:1–9:25), then he receives visions (9:26–13:58), and finally, at the climax, Ezra tastes a heavenly substance (14:38–41).[76] The final revelation changes the way Ezra interacts with the divine realm: after tasting the fire-coloured liquid, Ezra not only gains unmediated access to divine wisdom,[77] but is also physically taken up into heaven.

> A voice called me, saying, 'Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink.' Then I opened my mouth and behold, a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its colour was like fire. And I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast, for my spirit retained its memory; and my mouth was opened, and was no longer closed.[78]

This liquid, and indeed, this pattern, evokes the memory of a biblical scene in which the

[73] The serpent suggests this in Genesis 3:5; it is also supported by various commentaries on the expulsion narrative. See, for example, Whybray (2001: 44).
[74] Davila (2005: 138–9).
[75] For a full discussion of *4 Ezra* and its use of hierophagy, and specifically the transmission of knowledge through this process, see Warren (2015).
[76] This sensory escalation represents a progression from public communication to more intimate interaction with the divine. Warren (2015).
[77] The notion of gaining knowledge through ingestion is widespread in folklore and in other biblical texts, although it attracts very little scholarly attention. For folklore, see Nagy (1985–6); for biblical texts, see Muir & Tappenden (unpublished); for ancient Greek and Roman examples, see Rudolph (this volume), and Liebert (2010).
[78] *4 Ezra* 14:38–41. All translations of *4 Ezra* are from Stone (1990).

prophet Ezekiel ingests a sweet-tasting scroll from Heaven (Ezekiel 2:8–3:3; cf. Revelation 10:2–11). Ezekiel (and Revelation later) describes the scroll he tastes as "like honey," reminiscent of the sweet-tasting ambrosia consumed by the Greek and Roman gods, and associating the scroll with the realm of the God of Israel (cf. Psalms 19:11). After consuming the contents of the cup, Ezra is assumed into heaven—God tells Ezra that he will be taken up like others before him, "until the times are ended" (14:50). Although verses 49–50 do not occur in the later Latin version of *4 Ezra*, the verses were in fact part of the original text.[79] The original narrative, then, includes repercussions for Ezra when he tastes the divine beverage. Whatever heavenly liquid Ezra has tasted in ingesting his beverage, it has confirmed his divine association in his transportation to the heavenly realm. These changes in Ezra—his wisdom and his divine association—come about because of his privileged and intimate access to God, which is only brought about through the intimacy of taste.

The ramifications of Persephone's taste of underworldly fruit participate in the expectations held in antiquity about eating and drinking food from other realms.[80] That tasting food is transformative is clearly seen in the anxiety displayed by divine creatures in *4 Ezra* and Genesis, as it is in depictions of ambrosia in ancient literature. Calypso, for example, sets her table with two distinct meals: one of sweet ambrosia for herself, and one of ordinary mortal food for Odysseus.[81] This division between the members of each realm is articulated in what each category of beings consumes. Even though Persephone and Hades are both deities—and are even related—they initially belong to different realms; Hades belongs to the Chthonic realm and Persephone to the Olympian. Tasting food from another realm, however, creates a bridge to the underworld and brings about the metamorphosis of a deity from a being of one realm to another, as Ovid and the author of the *Hymn* are both aware.

Conclusions

Tasting food from another world allows the eater to cross the semi-permeable boundary between heaven and earth, or in the case of Persephone, between the Chthonic and Olympian

[79] The two lines were lost with the addition of *6 Ezra* to the text. Stone (1990: 442); Zurawski (2014: 12 n.40).
[80] Richardson notes a few places where the belief that eating the food of the dead requires the eater to reside with the dead (1974: 276); cf. Allen & Halliday (1936). Richardson also confirms my argument above that shared meals solidify bonds among community members.
[81] Homer, *Odyssey* 5.195–9; see further Hitch, this volume.

realms. Not only are these boundaries breached, they are irrevocably so. When Persephone consumes the pomegranate seeds she is bound to Hades just as Ezra's cup of heavenly liquid enables him to be assumed into heaven; likewise Adam and Eve are also expelled from Paradise lest they become divine like God. The various renditions of the Persephone story also illustrate the extent to which the ancient world takes for granted the ramifications of consuming other-worldly food. In both the *Homeric Hymn* and Ovid, the gods are fully aware of the cosmic requirements to which they are bound, just as, in *4 Ezra* and Genesis, the mechanism by which Ezra and the first humans are rendered (partially) divine is not explained to the reader; rules governing hierophagy are simply assumed to be common knowledge among characters and the audience alike. In other words, the trope is assumed to be understood widely. It is accepted without question in each of these texts that boundaries between different realms are permeable.

When Persephone tastes the pomegranate seeds,[82] her abduction to Hades is rendered semi-permanent. The discussion held by the gods indicates that her visit to the underworld might have been temporary but for her ingestion of some food from that realm. The intent of Hades himself does not alter the fact that Persephone is bound to his realm by this meal; whether he stealthily feeds her the seeds as in the *Hymn* or whether their ingestion is unintentional as in *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*, the outcome is the same.

Although the examples treated in the comparative texts, Genesis 3 and *4 Ezra* 14, involve men, and Persephone is female, this gender difference is not significant. Hierophagy occurs equally across genders. Aseneth (*Joseph and Aseneth*) and Perpetua (*The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*) are both female subjects of hierophagic events, while Lucius (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*), Ezra (*4 Ezra*) and John (the Book of Revelation) are male. As such, gender analysis has not featured in this discussion; however, the fact that this trope occurs with both male and female subjects might suggest that the sexual element observed in the Persephone accounts by some scholars[83] is rendered less prominent when viewed in the context of this cross-gender approach—after all, there is nothing sexual about Ezra's experience, nor is there any sexual element in other hierophagic events experienced by the aforementioned female subjects.[84]

The effectiveness of hierophagy in narrative corresponds to the role of taste in historical antiquity; hierophagy participates in accepted conventions governing the social and

[82] The pomegranate's centrality to Persephone's story of abduction is also illustrated by its prominent use as a symbol of Persephone and Hades in art. Richardson (1974: 276).
[83] See note 5, above.
[84] Persephone's divine status prior to her experience appears to be unique, however.

sensory intimacy of shared tasting. Even though Hades does not share in the meal, as host and provider of food, he participates in the binding of the eater by means of taste, just as historical meals are understood to create a social bond among mortal and/or divine diners. Likewise, although Persephone is physically already in Hades, the permanence of her visit is only realized when she internalizes some element of that realm, namely the seeds. The intimacy of the sweet taste, marked as extraordinary in the text, effects Persephone's metamorphosis. Persephone's bond with the underworld (Hades) and with its god (Hades) is transformed when she tastes the pomegranate: the intimacy and power of the sense of taste forever associates her with that realm.[85]

[85] I am grateful to the Fonds de Recherche—Societé et Culture for their support of this research.