

Anna Rebecca Lewis
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“Brined Highly with Satirical Salt”: Mock Receipts and Popular Print in the Late Seventeenth Century

My dissertation argues that the form of recipes—taken broadly to mean their textual forms, but also the materials and actions involved in recipe experimentation—influenced writers working in a variety of literary genres in early modern England. In particular, the twin processes of preservation and incorporation (or mixing) became important metaphorical conceits with which writers thought through political, social, and spiritual change. The terminology of cookery and medicine is especially prominent in public discourse about how the country was digesting the aftermath of the civil war and the Interregnum. My first chapter explores how food symbolism in popular print was weaponized to slander members of Cromwell’s government in the years immediately preceding and following the Restoration. Royalists wrestled with the idea of reincorporation: the restoration of the Stuart monarchy and the return of exiled royalists on the one hand, and the reintegration of disbanded Parliamentary soldiers and republican politicians into English society on the other. Mock recipes appeared on broadsides and ballad sheets that compared the constitution of the Commonwealth to that of a hodgepodge stew. Specific ingredients (noses, lips, bones) became synonymous with certain republican figures and factions. The trend of using food symbolism and mock recipes to lambaste Cromwell’s government can be read as a response to anxiety about the incorporation of radicals, heretics, and foreigners into the body politic. Royalists used a combination of recipe-speak, song, and cheap print to craft an image of the Commonwealth government as an ineffectual and infected governing body that must be expelled for good lest it permanently alter the constitution of the nation.

Pat Cahill
SAA 2025 Seminar
Early Modern Foodways: New Perspectives

Gingerbread and Economies of Whiteness in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*

This paper, which is part of a larger study of white womanhood and animality in Ben Jonson's comedy *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), investigates how gingerbread contributes to the play's racial meanings. I argue that gingerbread is a significant stage property in Jonson's fair-centered play, which features a gingerbread seller, Joan Trash, whose wares are mocked by a rival vender, attacked by a Puritan zealot, and sought after by the play's "fool," Bartholomew Cokes. Like other key stage properties, gingerbread is at once domestic -- a staple of medieval English fairs—and foreign, insofar as ginger was exported from Jamaica and suggests what Gitanjali Shahani calls the "taste of difference." More specifically, I argue that while the play as a whole is invested in the production of racialized whiteness—especially as embodied by the play's heroine Grace Wellborn— the scenes that feature the spiced gingerbread figures suggest the stress points on the play's celebration of whiteness and the fair, for as they show audiences this domestic economy they call attention to the allure of Caribbean geographies and racially marked bodies and –through their attention to the replicable figures produced by gingerbread moulds--they also invite reflection on how racial identity depends upon female reproduction.

Eating Out or Eating In: The Early Modern English Discourse of Cannibalism Reconsidered
Stephen Cohen
Central Connecticut State U.

The early modern rhetoric of cannibalism has long been associated with the European colonial enterprise, which used fear of the savage, man-eating Other to justify the conquest of the New World and the subjugation of its native inhabitants. Useful as this critical model has been, its neglect of national difference and chronological development has obscured the fuller functional range of cannibal discourse. By situating late 16th- and early 17th-century English anthropophagic rhetoric within the specifics of both the English colonial experience and the period's broader discourse of food, eating, identity and otherness, this paper argues that the cannibalism that haunted the English cultural imagination was less the exocannibalistic threat of the savage New World Other than a solipsistic, self-consuming endocannibalism. Rooted in classical anthropophagic narrative and in dialogue with contemporary metaphors of eating and/as intercultural encounter, endocannibalistic anxiety countered the culinary and cultural resistance to incorporating or being incorporated by the Other with the danger of isolation and inversion, of consuming the Same and preying on the Self. The paper concludes by briefly discussing the role of this dynamic in the "cannibal plays" that bracket Shakespeare's career, *Titus Andronicus* and *Pericles*.

Bethan Davies
University of Roehampton, London
SAA abstract
December 2024

‘Dainty Fare’: The sweetheart of John Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (1633)

This paper is concerned with the mutually constitutive relationship between sugar and femininity and how their material, rhetorical, and embodied intimacies are registered in early modern drama. Kim Hall’s ongoing scholarship on the intersections of race, status, aesthetics, colonialism and gender in the Anglo-Caribbean sugar trade has highlighted women’s association with sugar in the early modern period. Hall’s research demonstrates that middling and elite women’s saccharine domestic culture was ultimately fashioned to serve colonial and nationalist agendas. My research builds on this work, as I consider sugar’s affective enlargement within discourses of knowledge-making, art, erotic practices, social and economic mobility, international conflict, colonialism, race-making, and nationhood. This paper is particularly concerned with the ways in which sugar and its attendant affective life came to shape the feminized body in a reciprocally reaffirming cycle of signification. I am interested in how sugar enters the theatrical scene as a substance which attempts to refine or reduce women into a particular posture of femininity, and how sugar’s violent affective energies resurface and are mobilised in the theatres, directed towards the feminized body.

Attending to John Ford’s city tragedy *’Tis Pity She’s A Whore* (1633), this paper argues that Annabella’s heart is presented as a sugar confection in the final banquet scene. The saccharine rhetoric woven into the play constitutes the feminized body within discourses of art, beauty, eroticism, artifice, and decay. Ford invites an interpretation of Annabella’s heart as a sugar subtlety, before exposing it as an impossible attribution, parodying the sugared discourses that have coalesced around both her body and specifically her heart up to this climactic moment in the play. In this moment of violent rupture, the interpretative disjunction between signifier and signified, sugary confection and raw flesh, idealised and real feminized bodies, is reiterated through the visual spectacle of a bleeding heart. Risking a kind of horrid comedy at this moment, Ford reveals that the sugary linguistic centre of veneration, violation, venery, and violence cannot hold. In Ford’s play, it must dissolve, allowing the consequences of such sugared abstractions to be made gruesomely evident, encouraging an interpretation of the feminized body which prioritises contingency, unknowability, and mutability, and resists a fixity of interpretation.

“Sweetest nut hath sourest rind”: Nuts and Identity

Prof. Jennifer Forsyth, Kutztown University

Despite being one of the most familiar foods, nuts—especially the so-called “English walnut,” also called the “Persian walnut”—hold an ambiguous status in the early modern English home and imagination. Simultaneously a valued, ubiquitous source of food, medicine, firewood, timber, oil, shade, and protection sometimes associated with Jupiter, and an exile often relegated to outlying areas due to its noxious effect on neighboring plants, the walnut tree represents a dichotomy; likewise, the walnut itself appears in many recipes and is prized as an ingredient in multiple medicines while also epitomizing the idea of subsistence eating, or eating rough, to preserve oneself from famine. Ironically, due to their very abundance as well as their association with animals and rural life, nuts could be perceived as an uncultured if often necessary form of nutrition.

Beginning with books of husbandry such as Gervase Markham’s *The Country Farm* along with *The Accomplish’d Lady’s Delight*, *The English Hus-wife*, *The Queen’s Closet Opened* and other receipt books, and drawing upon the insights of scholars of English domestic and intellectual life such as Wendy Wall, Elaine Leong, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, this paper will begin to sketch out an analysis of the significance of the walnut, survey its role in early modern English homes and in the New World, and explore its symbolic value in the literature of the time. Ultimately, this paper will argue that the English walnut functions as an ambivalent index of English identity that William Shakespeare exploits in *As You Like It*.

SAA Abstract 2025:

Seminar, Early Modern Foodways: New Perspectives:

Ian Frederick Moulton
Arizona State University

December 16, 2024

Title: Objects for the History of Early Modern Foodways

Abstract:

My paper for the seminar will discuss three objects chosen for their significance in the material history of food in the early modern period. This paper is an excerpt from the book project, *Encounters: Food in Renaissance Europe in 50 Objects*, under contract with Routledge. The book is being co-authored by myself and Juliann Vitullo, Associate Professor of Italian at Arizona State University. The three objects I will analyze for our seminar are:

1). Ballock Knife, used for eating, as a tool, and as a weapon, England? c. 1450-1500
Metropolitan Museum of Art 26.145.7

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/32648>

2) Two-pronged Fork, Italy, 15th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art
The fork developed as an important utensil for consuming food at the table during the early modern period. The tool was first identified with Italian culture and then more generally with European dining habits.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/469726>

3) Andiron, tongs, and cooking pots (c1590-1596) Rijksmuseum NG-NM-7653.
Cooking utensils left by Dutch explorers on Nova Zembla, an island off the north coast of Russia.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.372141>

All these objects are rare surviving examples of common, everyday utensils from early modern Europe—things that would have been a familiar part of the material world of Shakespeare and his audience. My analysis will explore their importance as data for understanding the history of early modern food preparation and consumption, as well as their larger significance in early modern culture.

Kara Northway
Kansas State University
Boston 2024
SAA Abstract

“Come, give us a taste of your quality” and “Go, here’s a taste of *ours*”?:
Food and Wine Given to Early Modern Touring Actors

Theater historian William Ingram writes that “If one is to talk of the ‘costs’ of touring, one must remember that some of those costs cannot be measured in shillings and pence.” The same can be said in considering the forms of payment for early touring actors visiting regional English towns: some rewards were not measured in shillings and pence, but in food and wine. My paper will examine the presence of food and wine as partial compensation for performances, as hospitality, as signs of respect for acting troupes’ patrons, as ceremony, as what David B. Goldstein and Amy Tigner call a “structure to relationships,” and even as mayoral practices of control. The *Records of Early English Drama* volumes evidence many instances of such gifts. Actors often received food and drink at the beginnings and ends of their stays in provincial towns, especially in the form of wine, beer, and sugar. The size of the quantities suggests that these imported provisions were not always meant to be consumed on the spot but instead re-transported, for example, from Bath or York to London. Such gifts also necessitated secondary obligations for actors, who had to commit further professional time to show up to receive these benefits. While civic gestures are seemingly generous (as in *Hamlet*’s directive for the players to be “well bestowed”), their costs and benefits demand further analysis. Offers of food and wine took place both in local contexts marked by tensions between traveling players and city officials—since many visits were refused or contentious because of occasional violence—and in global contexts marked by the transferal of imports dependent on the labor and violent histories of enslaved peoples.

Rachel E. Poulsen
Edgewood College
SAA 2025: Early Modern Foodways

Meating People is Easy: Food and Flesh on the Early Modern Stage

Falstaff “lards the lean earth as he walks along.” Chiron and Demetrius, baked into a pie and served at a banquet, punish their mother, who becomes both predator and prey for carrion. Romeo imagines sexual conquest as sauce on a “sweet goose.” On the early modern stage, people are depicted as meat in a multitude of ways. Most often, particularly in city comedy, the portrayal signifies objectification, the emptying out of humanity in favor of commodification and exchange. The vocabularies of appetite, consumption, digestion, and excretion can function as ways to express power and domination of others in contexts ranging from business to government to sex. And in tragedy, the realm of slaughtered bodies and literalized metaphor, people eat people. My goal in this paper is to counter these metaphors by examining them in the opposite direction: to consider not only the implications of the people-as-meat equation onstage as a rhetorically violent, reductive one, but also to weigh the potentially generative logics of food and foodways--in the sense of preparing, dressing, transforming, displaying, satisfying, nourishing, and sustaining.

The Forbidden Fruit and the Adam's Apple in Early Modern Anatomy and Culture
SAA: Early Modern Foodways Seminar (2025)
Jan Purnis, Campion College at the University of Regina

My paper focuses on a specific food and food-related event: the eating of the forbidden fruit by Adam and Eve. As my title suggests, I am particularly interested in the relationship between the story of the Fall and the anatomical structure commonly called the Adam's apple, a term that first entered the English language in the early modern period. Although representations of the Fall of Adam and Eve have been the subject of many studies, as have representations of the body, surprisingly little has been said in early modern scholarship about the laryngeal prominence, or about the ideological implications of describing it as "the Adam's apple." In the space that I have, I will briefly trace the history of the term, particularly in anatomical treatises, problematizing claims that have been made about its timeline and connection to medieval Arabic medical texts. I will then contextualize the term in relation to inherited as well as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century extra-biblical narratives, iconography, and commentary on the Genesis story of the Fall of Adam and Eve, which included discussion about the kind and nature of the forbidden fruit. Finally, I will analyze what the term suggests about the how the throat and act of swallowing are moralized in the period, becoming sites of both transgression and punishment. My paper thus touches on these suggested areas of interest to the seminar: religion, the development of science and medicine, sex and gender, and cross-cultural encounters.

“‘A Field of Feasts’: Planning, Preparing, and Serving Shakespearean Communal Repasts”

This essay, drawn from my work in progress focused upon Shakespearean foodstuffs and foodways in the classroom, details pedagogical practices related to the many feasts describe in the canon. References to feasts vary widely in the plays, from the shopping list for Perdita’s gathering in *A Winter’s Tale* to preparations for the Capulets’ festivities in *Romeo and Juliet* and the truncated feasts in *Macbeth* and the *Tempest*. Less enticing plans, of course, contribute to memorable meals served in *Timon of Athens* and *Titus Andronicus*. Here, I will discuss the ways that incorporating an emphasis on both literary and culinary history can provide students with experiential opportunities (preferably not including cannibalism) to better understand the drama and culture of the early modern period.

Sheila T. Cavanagh, Emory University

Jennifer C. Vaught
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**Bitter Sweets: Food Rhetoric and Satire of Literary Patronage
in Shakespeare's Sonnets and *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2***

Food studies in Shakespeare's sonnets is a field ripe for planting. The words "sweet," "sweets," and "sweetest" occur over 80 times in Shakespeare's sonnets, constituting the most occurrences of these words in any work by him. Likewise, the word "sweet" recurs over 20 times in each of the history plays *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* and in dialogues involving Hal, Falstaff, and Poins, who exchange sugar with Francis, the apprentice to the Vintner at the Boar's Head Tavern. In addition, the phrase "sweet boy" appears in sonnet 108 and *Henry IV, Part 2*. This repeated phrase offers a tempting parallel between the familial, intimate, or homoerotic relationships of the older speaker of the sonnets and the younger male addressee and between Falstaff and Prince Hal in *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*. Moreover, Shakespeare's sonnets and *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* satirize gluttony for the luxury import of sugar among the upper ranks. As a further satirical critique of the wealthy, the bittersweet speaker in the sonnets and Falstaff, Poins, and Francis in *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* receive little or no payment for their gifts of love from royals, aristocrats, or patrons. I approach the matter of patronage in Shakespeare's sonnets in terms of philology, food, and queer studies. The rhetoric of sweetness in sonnets 1-126 addressed to the young man and in contexts involving the homoerotic exchange of sugar in *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* satirize the upper ranks for their lack of financial support for poets and playwrights. Ultimately, sugar in these poems and plays functions as a powerful nonhuman agent for satirizing the literary patronage system.

Eunwoo Yoo

University of California, Santa Barbara

SAA 2025: Early Modern Foodways

December 2024

Constructing and Performing an English Body in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*

My paper examines how Englishness was conceived and expressed at the turn of the 17th century through diet. Informed by geohumoralism, food was a critical aspect that determined what a body was to become physiologically and temperamentally to an early modern mind. Drawing on this framework that links diet, climate, and the body, I analyze Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* to illuminate how the play stages anxieties and ideals surrounding English identity through tropes of consumption. Functioning as a microcosm of London and English society, the fair depicts and characterizes particular senses — religious, class, and gender — identity through its food, such as the roast pig. This paper situates the sumptuous indulgence and foreign influence observed at the fair within dietary discourses that sought to delineate the English body through moderation and familiarity in consumption. In doing so, I explore how Englishness was imagined and contested through performances of material and cultural consumption, ultimately to disclose the instability and the porousness of the English body in a transformative and turbulent period.