

Early Modern Literature and Food in Britain FREE

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Summary

Early modern literature about food is found in a range of genres that have traditionally appealed to literary critics, such as drama and poetry, as well as writings that can be less neatly categorized as literary but that tend to have a literary dimension, such as religious sermons, cookery books, and dietary literature, also known as regimens. Food in early modern literature often signals a complex relationship between the body, a sense of self, and the sociopolitical structures that regulated food's production and consumption in the period. Writers mentioning food may thereby convey details of narrative, characterization, and motivation but also signal broader social concerns such as the role of women, religious obligations, treatment of the poor, and the status of foreigners. Ordinary staple foods such as bread feature heavily, but so too do exotic foods newly imported into England such as apricots and other fruits that were hard to grow. There is also a fascination with perverse consumption, such as cannibalism (sometimes metaphorical and sometimes literal), which functions as an indication of various modes of alterity. The consumption of food in early modern literature is often grounded in the period in which it was written. A common recurrence is the way in which patterns of consumption signal social and moral responsibility, so that eating and drinking to excess, or taking too much pleasure in them, is considered sinful. Also evident is the shift from medieval communal dining and a sense of feudal obligation and hospitality to strangers to a growing early modern sense of privacy and individualism. Food functions as a complex marker of national, religious, and cultural identity whereby certain foods signify Catholicism or Englishness and other foods, or their preparation, will signify strangeness. Yet food can also be a shorthand way to address issues such as hunger, desire, and disgust.

Keywords: gluttony, hunger, dietary literature, cookery books, sermons, cannibalism, gender, religion, nationalism, foreigners

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Given how commonly food comes up in early modern writing, it is surprising that it is only in the early 21st century that it has become a serious topic for scholarly discussion. This interest apparently reflects the prevalent obsession with physical and psychological wellbeing as well as a familiarity with exotic cuisine unavailable to previous generations. The obesity epidemic in the rich West, celebrity chefs, and fad diets coexist with food shortages elsewhere in the world. Although there are no famines in the West, future food security in relation to the threat of climate change is a real concern. Experience of food depends upon culture and other aspects of identity such as rank, impacting upon what gets consumed and why. The early moderns would have recognized many of these issues surrounding food, although they would have understood them through the lens of their own sociopolitical concerns, and it is the way in which food works as a signifier for more than simply what gets eaten that dominates in literature from the period.

Food historians led the way in the exploration of food in writing from the past and their influence is apparent in the approach to early modern literary criticism about food. Just how might the kind of literature in which food is important be categorized? While traditional authors and genres have been explored in terms of their engagement with food, so too critics have considered texts that readers are unlikely to know well, such as cookery books. Early modern ideas about food and how it related to bodily health were indebted to older classical authorities, such as Galen, and the ancient model of humoral theory, which still dominated. Ideally a person would have a properly proportioned mixture of the four humors: blood, choler, melancholy, and phlegm. The humors were described in relation to their heat and moisture: blood was hot and moist; choler hot and dry; melancholy cold and dry; phlegm cold and moist. Diet was thought to be the most efficient means to correct humoral imbalance, due to the belief that each food and drink had its own complexion. Thus, for example, if a person suffered from an excess of phlegm they would be well advised to avoid a food such as lettuce that was considered cold and moist.

In addition to the old humoral theory still at work in the early modern period, there was an increasingly prominent sense of the specifics of identity when it came to diet. Although Galen recognized that certain foods were more suitable for certain types of people, for example the more physically active laborer as opposed to the sedentary scholar, early modern English writers were especially alert to the relationship between food (its production, preparation, and consumption) and identity, specifically what was considered an English foodstuff and which foods might compromise English identity. One example of a specific foodstuff should serve to illustrate the complex signification at work whereby food tends to represent, in subtle ways, a range of issues besides its own substance, taste, or nutritional value. Fish was thought to be less nourishing than meat, especially red meat, and so was a coded way to signal weakness. The English government's promotion of fish over meat for economic reasons—to help the fishing industry and the navy and to reduce the price of meat—was an unpopular policy in part because, for many English Protestants, it was associated with the old Catholic (now foreign) practice of refraining from the consumption of meat on Fridays. Thomas Nashe's prose work *Lenten Stuffe* (1599), apparently a study of herring, contains wide-ranging religious themes including anti-Catholic satire, so it is clear that the connection between Catholicism and fish would have been readily understood.¹

In early modern literature, the mention of fish is often a coded reference to these issues. For example, in *Henry 4 Part 2* (1597) Sir John denounces Prince John for eating “many fish meals” (4.2.89); in *King Lear* (1605) Kent tells Lear that he is a loyal man who chooses “to eat no fish” (1.4.17); and in John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605) Mary Faugh, a member of the mystic sect the Family of Love, proclaims herself “none of the wicked that eat fish o' Fridays” (1.2.19–20).² In Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Woman Hater* (1606), Lazarello, an Italian courtier, is obsessed with the thought of eating a fish-head, his desire signaling his Catholicism and an excessive, and thus sinful, interest in the pleasure of eating food.³ References to fish might also have sexual connotations, which can be traced back to the fish as an ancient symbol of fecundity.⁴

Overeating and Morality

A review in the *Times Literary Supplement* of three new books on obesity refers to a rather unpleasant group of fat-shaming activists called “Overweight Haters Ltd” who, in 2015, distributed cards to people on the London Underground whom they considered to be overweight. The message on the card stated:

It’s really not glandular, it’s your gluttony . . . Our organisation hates and resents fat people. We object to the enormous amount of food resources you consume while half the world starves. We disapprove of your wasting NHS money to treat your selfish greed . . . We also object that the beatiful [sic] pig is used as an insult. You are not a pig. You are a fat, ugly human.⁵

What is notable about this message (aside from its cruelty) is its moral dimension, in particular the use of the word “gluttony” in an attempt to instill a sense of shame in the people targeted. In a predominantly secular context, it is curious that traditionally religious concepts such as shame and guilt should be invoked in an attempt to influence behavior. The message harks back to a time when gluttony was a sin, although the cash-strapped NHS (National Health Service) takes the place of the religion and God against which the fat person is deemed to transgress.

A prominent issue relating to food in early modern literature is eating too much and the fat body. As with the message from “Overweight Haters Ltd,” the fat body indicates easy access to food in a period where food shortages were a reality for many. It exists within the context of gluttony being routinely condemned as a sin from the pulpit. The Church of England *Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness* (1563) compared excess consumption to other pleasures, such as the wearing of expensive clothes, and warned that it could lead to other sins, such as idolatry and lust, as well as provoking disease.⁶ In line with the traditional Christian view of gluttony, promulgated by Gregory the Great’s definition of the sin, gluttony did not involve merely eating to excess but also taking too much pleasure in food and drink, as is the case with Lazarello from *The Woman Hater* (1606) who, being a Catholic, is considered already to be of dubious morality.⁷

In Book One of Edmund Spenser’s epic poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590) gluttony is considered primarily in moral terms. He is one of the deadly sins personified who parade through the court of the evil Lucifera. He is described as having a swollen, sweaty body and a long neck “With which he swallowd vp excessiue feast/For want whereof poore people oft did pyne.” Riding upon a “filthie swyne,” vomiting, and drinking from “a bouzing can” so that he can barely sit upright, he is less like a man than a beast or monster. This description of gluttony is indebted to medieval morality plays, where characters represent a specific vice, and to the gluttonous figures found in medieval poetry.⁸ Christopher Marlowe also personified the sin in *Doctor Faustus* (1592) where Gluttony explains his heritage to Faustus:

My parents are all dead, and the devil a penny they have left me but a bare pension, and that is thirty meals a day, and ten bevers—a small trifle to suffice nature. O, I come of a royal parentage: my grandfather was a gammon of bacon, my grandmother a hogshead of claret wine; my godfathers were these: Peter Pickle-Herring and Martin Martlemas-Beef. O, but my godmother! she was a jolly gentlewoman, and well beloved in every good town and city; her name was Mistress Margery March-Beer.⁹

Faustus will not invite Gluttony to supper because “thou wilt eat up all my victuals.”¹⁰ Like Spenser, Marlowe here invokes the medieval morality tradition but arguably subverts its moral impact with a humor not evident in Spenser’s poem.

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1601) the old king’s gluttony is signaled by an excess of one relatively modest food when Hamlet recalls that his uncle Claudius “took my father grossly, full of bread” (3.3.80), and in *Antony and Cleopatra* it is the volume of expensive animal flesh served at an unusual time of day that denotes Egyptian excess: “Eight wild boars roasted whole at a breakfast and but twelve persons there—is this true?” (2.2.186–187). English writers criticized their fellow countrymen for being especially gluttonous in terms of the volume of food consumed. In Phillip Stubbes’s prose pamphlet *The Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), presented as a dialogue between Philoponus and Spudeus, Philoponus complains that the English are “marveilously given to daintie fare, gluttonye, bellicheer” as well as excessive drinking.¹¹ Thomas Nashe’s satirical prose pamphlet *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) observes that although the English accuse other nations of being drunkards, they themselves are considered by foreigners to be “bursten-bellied Gluttons” who “eat more meat at one meale, than the Spaniard or Italian in a moneth.”¹² English drunkenness, referred to specifically as “a sinne,” is blamed on the influence of the Low Countries.¹³

The physical consequences of gluttony and humor align in Shakespeare’s Sir John Oldcastle (also known as Falstaff) who appears in the English history plays *1 Henry 4* (1597), *2 Henry 4* (1597), and the only comedy Shakespeare set in England, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597). In *1 Henry 4* Prince Harry repeatedly jokes about the size of Sir John’s body and his eating habits: for example, he is a “fat-guts” and an “obscene greasy tallow-catch” (2.2.31; 2.5.232). He also consumes what Prince Harry refers to as an “intolerable deal of sack” (2.5.543–544).

Sir John is an amusing figure but there is a darker side to his character, in particular his cynicism and disregard for others, for example the men he is responsible for pressing into service in the war.¹⁴ In *2 Henry 4* he suffers ill health, which he blames on others, telling the Prostitute Doll Tearsheet: “If the cook help to make the gluttony, you help to make the diseases” (2.4.43–45). This darkness lifts when Sir John is featured in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, but even here he is vain and selfish in his efforts to seduce the wives and get access to their husbands’ wealth.

Humanity, Religion, and Hypocrisy

The link between eating and sin that emerges from the biblical story of Eve's consumption of forbidden fruit was specifically presented as an act of gluttony in John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667). Here Milton firmly established what was already a traditional association between the Bible's unspecified fruit and the everyday, English apple. When Eve eats the apple she is said to have "Greedily . . . engorged without restraint"¹⁵ and her gluttony ultimately leads to the sin of lust, which is a consequence (that one sin leads to another) warned about in the Church of England *Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness*.

Early modern dietary literature, or regimens, focus mainly on the physical consequences of gluttony, although the behavior is still judged to be morally reprehensible. William Bullein's *The Government of Health* (1558) features a dialogue between the greedy John and the moderate Humphrey, who warns John that the consequence of being a glutton when young is to suffer from ill health later in life. Humphrey's focus on the physical consequences of excess situates his advice in terms of what it means to be human: "Consider with thyself thou art a man and no beast, therefore be temperate in thy feeding."¹⁶ Similarly in an earlier dietary, *A Compendious Regiment, or a Dietary of Health* (1547), Andrew Boorde observes that any man not involved in physical labor who eats more than two meals a day, or any laborer more than three, "liveth a beastly life."¹⁷

Much of the literature considering gluttony tends to emphasize the dehumanizing effect of greed. In Ben Jonson's play *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) Ursula is nicknamed "the pig woman" because she cooks and sells pork and because her obesity renders her human form pig-like. She is teased for being fat by her fellow tradesman Quarlous, who calls her a "walking sow of tallow" that will "make excellent gear for the coach-makers, here in Smithfield, to anoint wheeles and axle-trees with."¹⁸ She challenges this mocking, characterizing herself as "juicy and wholesome" while they prefer "thin pinch'd ware."¹⁹ Ursula complains about the discomfort of her occupation and makes what was a traditional connection between the hot kitchen and damnation: "Hell's a kind of cold cellar to't."²⁰ Jonson is also invoking the traditional negative stereotype of the cook as a rogue, as evident in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* where the Cook is a drunk who is said to cheat his customers.²¹

Like Sir John in Shakespeare's plays, Ursula sweats profusely, which suggests that her own bodily fluids are basting the meat she sells.²² The focus on Ursula's animal-like appearance and the cannibalistic dimension to her bodily fluids infusing the pork she sells is part of the play's wider engagement with gluttony and religious hypocrisy. The Puritan preacher, Zeal-of-the-land-Busy, proclaims against indulging in what he terms "Bartholomew Pig" but manages a convoluted justification for consuming it, claiming that it may be eaten provided it is "eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety, and humbleness; not gorg'd in with gluttony, or greediness."²³

In *The Alchemist* (1610) Jonson invokes the concept of gluttony in terms of the sensual pleasure to be had from food when Epicure Mammon imagines the delicacies he will consume having got possession of the Philosopher's Stone, among them "tongues of carps, dormice and camels'

heels.”²⁴ Yet the audience knows Mammon has no chance of fulfilling his desire because he will never obtain the Philosopher’s Stone promised by the tricksters Subtle and Face. In *Volpone* (1606) exotic delicacies such as “the heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales”²⁵ are promised by Volpone in his attempted seduction of the virtuous Celia.

The foods referred to by Mammon and Volpone have their origins in descriptions of sumptuous classical feasts, for example those described by the Roman author Petronius in his *Satyricon*.²⁶ Jonson was himself overweight, something critics have tended to focus on when discussing this author and food.²⁷ Evidence critics have cited for Jonson’s inordinate interest in food includes the banquet he describes in the poem from his “Epigrams,” “Inviting a Friend to Supper” (1616) and his Country House poem “To Penshurst” (1616), where he praises the house owned by Robert Sidney (Earl of Leicester and brother of the author Philip) and describes his experience of dining there.²⁸

Hunger and Poverty

In the early modern period hunger and famine were often the result of poverty or war. The practice of enclosing common land to create pasture for sheep contributed to food shortages resulting from harvest failures, so that hunger and the threat of starvation were a reality for the less well off throughout the 16th century and, as is common in conflicts, it was used by invading armies as a weapon of war.

In Shakespeare’s history plays the prospect of famine is threatened by the great English warrior Talbot who, in *1 Henry 6* (1592), tells the General of Bordeaux that his refusal to submit will “tempt the fury of my three attendants – /Lean famine, quartering steel, and climbing fire” (4.2.10–11). So too in *Henry 5* (1599) the Chorus describes how “the warlike Harry” is poised and ready to release “famine, sword, and fire” upon France (Pr. 5–8). The allusion to the biblical wrath of God—specifically the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the *Book of Revelation* (6:1–8)—is evident also in Shakespeare’s *Pericles* (1608) when the starving people of Tarsus believe they are being punished with famine for their ingratitude to the Gods (“see what heav’n can do by this our change,” 4.33).

Hunger as a consequence of rebellion is also a feature of the literature. *Coriolanus* (1608) opens with a threat of civil insurrection when the citizens of Rome accuse the Patricians of hoarding grain. In his “Fable of the Belly” Menenius explains the apparent injustice of Patrician advantage in terms of digestion: the Patrician belly processes food and supplies nourishment to other parts of the body (that is, the citizens).²⁹ In Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590) Maleger, the captain of the rebellious mob that attacks Alma’s House of Temperance, is described as having a body that is “leane and meagre as a rake,” an allusion perhaps to the starving native Irish rebels.³⁰ The starving rebel features also in Shakespeare’s *2 Henry 6* when, prior to his capture, Jack Cade proclaims that he has been “vanquished by famine, not by valour” (4.9.74–75).³¹

As well as hunger being shown to control the behavior of besieged citizens in times of war, it also emerges in the literature as a means of self-control, for example in the rhetoric of the Roman warrior Coriolanus who associates abstinence with honor, and Angelo in *Measure for Measure* who is said to be uninterested in bodily functions.³² A thin body often signals an aversion to food in the literature, as evident in the character type of the “thin man,” which is used by Shakespeare to indicate an overly fastidious or officious character, such as Slender in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the Beadle who comes to arrest Doll Tearsheet in *2 Henry 4* (5.4.18).

This is in line with the common notion of excessive denial, specifically with the wrong motivation, as unchristian. The Church of England sermons denounced excessive fasting as well as gluttony, with the *Homily of Fastynge* (1563) warning that fasting could be too self-indulgent or self-aggrandizing.³³ In dietary literature too deliberately fasting to excess is condemned as physically harmful; for example, in *Health's Improvement* (1655) Thomas Muffet warns against what he terms “thin diets” and “self pining” that should only be followed when the body has become diseased through overeating or some other corruption.³⁴

Withdrawing food from others is a means of revenge in *Timon of Athens* (1605) when the previously generous Timon punishes his false friends by serving them a meal of stones and water. In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) Redcross, the Knight of Holiness, is thrown into a dungeon and starved by the monstrous Orgoglio at the behest of the witch and whore Duessa who wants him enslaved. It is only by virtue of his later sojourn in the House of Holiness that Redcross recovers from his ordeal, making it clear that his hunger indicates a spiritual lack. In *The Taming of the Shrew* (1591) Petruchio employs the withdrawal of food as one of a number of controlling tactics to tame the volatile Katherine.

Real food shortages or the threat of food shortages means these literary depictions of hunger would have struck a chord with early playgoers and readers. In *The Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) Phillip Stubbes (in the voice of Philoponus) describes in detail the plight of England's poor and vulnerable who are “forced to walke the countries from place to place to seeke their releefe at every mans doore, except they wil sterve or famish at home.”³⁵ Hugh Platt's prose work *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies against Famine* (1596) advised the reader on which plants might be used for food that were not previously considered palatable and how to cook them.³⁶

Starving Women, Working Women

In a number of plays from the period, women refuse to eat or drink as a sign of abnegation. In Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603) Anne Frankford is expelled from the family home after her husband, Frank, discovers her adultery with his friend, Wendoll. Although he allows her to take property and servants to live in his nearby manor house, she is not permitted to see her children again. Full of sorrow, Anne swears that “from this sad hour/I never will nor eat, nor drink, not taste/Of any cates that may preserve my life.”³⁷ Frankford forgives her but only after it is clear her demise is irrevocable.

Anne's behavior is understandable in the context of the association between lust and gluttony in the Church of England *Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness* and elsewhere, for example in Shakespeare's narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* when Adonis tells the goddess: "Love surfeits not; lust like a glutton dies./Love is all truth, lust full of forged lies" (803–804). For Anne, not eating functions as an antidote to the unlawful appetite she indulged in with Wendoll.

George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1604) involves Lysander and his wife, the chaste Cynthia, who insists that, should he die before her, she would never remarry. Lysander's brother, Tharsalio, goads Lysander to doubt her claims, having himself just married a wealthy widow who swore she would never remarry. To test his wife, Lysander fakes his own death and returns disguised as a soldier. He finds Cynthia in mourning before the family tomb and learns she has refused food and drink for five days. Encouraging her to eat and drink, he seduces her, and persuades her to marry him. Tharsalio believes he has been proved right, but when it transpires that the soldier is really Lysander in disguise, Tharsalio himself proclaims Cynthia to be "a constant wife."³⁸

John Ford's *The Broken Heart* (1630) features another interfering brother (Ithocles) who insists that his sister (Penthea) marry a husband of his choosing. Unlike Chapman's comedy, this play, like Heywood's, ends in tragedy: the marriage is abusive, Penthea starves herself to death, and the lover she wanted to marry murders her brother.³⁹ All the women in these plays are from the higher ranks of society where food is freely available. To some extent their food-refusal is an act of defiance in a world of devious, sometimes cruel, men, but there is also a sense, especially in the case of Anne, that the female body that is given to appetite must be sacrificed in order to satisfy male honor.⁴⁰

Women from the lower ranks dominated the production, preparation, and selling of certain types of food and drink in the early modern period and this is reflected in the literature also, for example in the manufacturing and selling of dairy produce and ale and the selling of specific foodstuffs such as herbs, oranges, and oysters. When these women feature in the literature of the period they are often mocked by other protagonists, as happens with Ursula the pig woman in *Bartholomew Fair*. Moreover, women who sell food are not to be trusted since their product is usually inferior in some way. Ursula sells tobacco and beer as well as pork, and cheats her customers by adulterating the tobacco with colts-foot and providing frothy beer that is taken away from the customer prematurely and then sold back to them.⁴¹ Jonson here suggests the medieval ale-wife who produced small, home-brewed batches of ale, often sold and consumed in her own house; the ale-wife was still a feature of early modern life although (like her ale) considered rather old-fashioned.⁴²

In Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1591) Christopher Sly refers to being a regular customer of "Marian Hacket, the fat alewife of Wincot" (I.2.21–23), and in the university play *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1553) Dame Chat runs an alehouse and is characterized as a "drunken beast" and a "drunken sow."⁴³ Another early instance of the caricatured ale-wife can be found in John Skelton's poem "Elynour Rummyng" (1550) where she is described as old and ugly, her face wrinkled "Lyke a rost pygges eare" [like a roast pig's ear].⁴⁴ The association between unattractive (fat or old or both) women and pigs is clearly longstanding. *Bartholomew Fair* also

features Joan Trash, who sells gingerbread men. She is taunted by her fellow tradesman Lantern Leatherhead who claims her gingerbread is made from “stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey”; Leatherhead calls her “old Joan” and, as with Ursula, there is a sense in which Joan’s body is identified with her produce, and both provoke disgust.⁴⁵

Neither Ursula nor Joan is sexually attractive, but in other instances where women sell food to make a living there is a suggestion that the woman herself may be available for sexual favors. Natasha Korda considers how women who sold their wares on the street were sexualized in a way men were not and suggests that Ophelia in her mad scenes may have evoked the herb-wives of London who were routinely denounced in the period.⁴⁶

In Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well*, Paroles, annoyed at himself for talking too much, says “Tongue, I must put you into a butter-woman’s mouth . . . if you prattle me into these perils” (4.1.40–43), suggesting the woman’s mouth is easily accessible. In *As You Like It*, Touchstone says of Orlando’s verse: “I’ll rhyme you so eight years together, dinners, and suppers, and sleeping-hours excepted. It is the right butter-women’s rank to market” (3.2.94–96). Although it is not clear what he means, there is apparent sexual innuendo since “butter quean” and “butter-whore” were familiar terms in the period, and butter could also suggest semen.⁴⁷

Instructions on Cooking and Eating

Cookery books and household manuals published in the early modern period were invariably written by men and aimed primarily at middle-ranking women readers, for example John Partridge’s *The Tresurie of Commodious Conceits* (1573), the anonymous *Good Housewife’s Handmaid for the Kitchen* (1594), Hugh Platt’s *Delightes for Ladies* (1602), the anonymous *Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen* (1608), and Gervase Markham’s *The English Housewife* (1615). These works contained recipes and useful advice on the practicalities of running a home. For example, Partridge provides recipes on preparing dishes as well as instructions on how to preserve fruit and make jam. He also advised on how to make various perfumes and household preparations such as “a violet powder for wollen clothes and fures” as well as remedies for ailments such as colic.⁴⁸ Partridge’s work was extremely popular, printed in thirteen editions over eighty years, and influenced subsequent authors who also claimed to be revealing valuable culinary and household secrets.

The subtitle of Partridge’s book proclaims that it is a “Tresurie of Commodious Conceits, & Hidden Secrets and May be Called, the Huswives Closet, of Healthfull Provision,” and similarly Platt’s subtitle declares that the book will provide the means for a lady to “adorne their persons, tables, closets, and distillatories with beauties, banquets, perfumes and waters.” The use of the word “closet” shows how these early English cookery books were marketed as a resource similar to an elite household’s closet, a space that held its valuable possessions: jewels, paintings, and money and also expensive foodstuffs such as spices.⁴⁹

The *Good Housewife's Handmaid for the Kitchen* also appealed to the desire for upward social mobility and knowledge of the latest cooking trends, promising in its subtitle to show the housewife “how to dresse meates after sundry the best fashions used in England and other countries.”⁵⁰ The subtitle of the *Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen* will instruct on “the art of preserving, conserving, and candying” as well as “all kind of banqueting stuffes.” Among the skills described here, and in Platt’s book also, is sugar-work: the manipulation of sugar and marchepane (almond paste), to create ornate sculptures, for example of birds and beasts. Yet the *Closet* also offers the more quotidian “divers soveraigne medicines and salves, for sundry diseases” that the good housewife ought to know.⁵¹

Peter Parolin draws connections between the domestic secrets revealed to women in cookery books and books of household management and female access to power in two plays: Francis Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) and Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (1591). In Beaumont’s play the housewife, Nell, has significant domestic expertise that she displays and uses to her own advantage, whereas in *The Taming of the Shrew* Katherine is prevented by Petruchio from exerting control over the domestic realm and thus remains powerless.⁵²

Markham’s lengthy volume advises the housewife on being virtuous and, as is typical of the genre, lists remedies and household preparations as well as culinary recipes.⁵³ He also provides detailed information on running a dairy, on brewing beer, and on making bread—all jobs that would have fallen within the remit of “women’s work” within the home. Later in the period there emerged a shift towards recipe collections aimed at the professional, male, cook, the most notable example being Robert May’s *Accomplisht Cook* (1660), although female expertise was to be reasserted in the numerous books aimed at the housewife and authored by Hannah Woolley, including her *Ladies Directory in Choice Experiments & Curiosities* (1672).⁵⁴

The dietary literature mentioning gluttony and fasting were popular works that advised the non-specialist reader how to live a healthy life by practicing the correct diet, explained via reference to a range of factors such as humoral type, occupation, age, and nationality. Notable titles included Thomas Elyot’s *The Castle of Health* (1541), Andrew Boorde’s *A Compendious Regiment of Health* (1547), and William Bulleyn’s *The Government of Health* (1558).⁵⁵ The dietaries, also called regimens, offer a useful insight into some of the common conceptions about food and diet in the period. Often the advice aligns with the modern understanding of health and nutrition, for example that moderation is sensible, but sometimes it will strike the modern reader as odd, for example the idea that fruit could be unhealthy, especially if uncooked. Often there is a logic behind the warnings, for example that mushrooms are dangerous, due to the fact that many people would have foraged for their own food and could easily select a poisonous variety.⁵⁶

Many of the dietary authors also provided their readers with cooking tips so as to get the best nutrition from food, for example William Bulleyn who observes that “the flesh of hares must be tenderly roasted, and well larded, and spiced because of the grossness, but it is better sodden.”⁵⁷ The dietaries echo the cookery books in their appeal to the amateur who wanted access, in English, to the sort of information about food and medicine hitherto only available to experts and

the elite who understood Latin and Greek. Many of the dietaries thus speak directly to the concerns of the English reader by taking into account English ingredients, national dietary habits, and local phenomena that pertained to health, such as the English weather.

Food, Place, and the Exotic

The location of the consumption of food and drink plays an important role in early modern literature, as does the kind of meal that is being presented. While the provision of food, lodging, and entertainment was still in the gift of the private householder, the early modern period saw a shift from the old medieval sense of an expectation to provide hospitality to strangers, to the notion of hospitality as a distinctly commercial transaction, and this shift is reflected in literature from the period.

The alehouse was the commercial establishment with the least salubrious reputation, which was partly due to the fact that it served only basic foods, such as bread and cheese, and so attracted a clientele more given to drunkenness who thus represented a threat to social order.⁵⁸ It is referred to in a number of plays featuring drunks, for example Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* (1601), whose behavior is compared to the raucous nature of this establishment: “Do ye make an alehouse of my lady’s house” (2.3.85–86); pickled herring, eaten by Sir Toby and causing him indigestion, would typically be the sort of food sold at an alehouse. Inns and taverns would have sold better food and wine and thus attracted a more upmarket and fashionable clientele. The Boar’s Head Tavern is frequented by Sir John and his associates in Shakespeare’s first tetralogy, and the Mitre and the Mermaid are both taverns that feature in plays by Jonson, Middleton, and others.⁵⁹

When it came to exotic foodstuffs, banquets were a way to signal opulence and an occasion for conspicuous consumption. As well as describing a grand meal, the term “banquet” was also used to describe a snack between meals (known as a “running banquet”) and a sweet course after the main meal, a precursor to the modern dessert course. Cookery books from the period often provide recipes for what was often termed “banquetting stuffe”: foods made from the newly fashionable foreign ingredient, sugar (which was considered medicinal), and expensive fruits and spices imported from abroad.⁶⁰

The banquet course would typically contain cream desserts, fruit tarts and biscuits, gingerbread, and various sweetmeats such as fruit served with or preserved in sugar; it might also feature an ornate sculpture as a centerpiece created from marzipan and sugar.⁶¹ It would usually take place in a separate location from the main banquet, which in the winter might be a different room in the main house and in the summer a building some distance away called a banqueting house. In his essay “Of Gardens” Francis Bacon describes his ideal garden, which would contain “a fine banqueting house.”⁶²

In the climax to Book Two of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590) Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, destroys the Bower of Bliss presided over by the witch Acrasia, wrecking everything in the Bower “with rigour pittillesse,” defacing its gardens, and burning the banquet houses.⁶³ His actions are

extreme and critics have wondered why he is not more temperate, as would befit the virtue he represents.⁶⁴ Earlier in Book Two Guyon visits the House of Temperance where Alma, “like a virgin Queene most bright,” welcomes her guests with a “bounteous banket” that is “Attempted goodly well for health and for delight.”⁶⁵ Although Appetite is described as “jolly,” he takes instruction from his Steward Diet, who is “rype of age,/And in demeanure sober, and in counsell sage”; moreover, it has been created by the master cook Concoction who is described as “A carefull man” assisted by the kitchen clerk Digestion.⁶⁶

Spenser thus differentiates between this generous but temperate consumption and the kind of indulgent and frivolous foods that would be served in a banqueting house. Later in Book Two, Alma’s house will be attacked by the skeletal villain Maleger (discussed previously in the section “Hunger and Poverty”), whose thinness also indicates a lack of temperance.⁶⁷

Despite the difficulty of staging a grand meal and the logistical problem of onstage eating, banquets in this more usual sense of the word often take place in the drama, for example in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606), suggesting that a prop representing a banquet may have been carried onstage and quickly removed when required.⁶⁸ This may well have been what occurred in early performances of *The Tempest*, where Ariel summons a banquet and then makes it disappear; here the focus is on the spirits, in “several strange shapes,” that bring in the banquet and not what it contains (3.3.19.SD.1–3).

It would make good practical sense to merely refer to but not stage a feast. For example, in the opening scene of Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603), the marriage celebration between Anne and Frankford (which would presumably have involved a feast of sorts) occurs offstage with only its music heard; later in the play Frankford enters from an offstage meal with the stage direction “brushing the crumbs from his clothes with a napkin, and newly risen from supper.”⁶⁹ As Andrew Moran observed, there are many references to food and eating in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* (1609), including the description of the bear dining upon Antigonus, but there does not appear to be any food at Perdita’s sheep-shearing feast. This is perhaps unsurprising since her brother the Clown, sent to buy the food, has had his money stolen by Autolycus.⁷⁰

Although early modern plays often indicate the presence of a banquet onstage, less common is the actual eating of the food from the banquet, which might suggest that fruit and other “banqueting stuff” was not the genuine article but specially created from marchepane and sugar plate as outlined in cookery books from the period.⁷¹ When eating is specifically called for in a banquet scene, the dish is often human flesh.

Cannibalism

The concept of cannibalism is often invoked figuratively in early modern literature to signal barbaric or unnatural behavior, but literal cannibalism too is remarkably common. As Chris Meads notes, Thomas Kyd’s revenge play *The Spanish Tragedy* established a link between banquets and revenge for subsequent dramatists.⁷² Kyd himself was indebted to the Roman

dramatist Seneca, whose plays featured the typical revenge tragedy motifs that emerged also in early modern drama such as the innocent victim who requires reparation and a bloody denouement.

Plays such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601) and Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (1621) feature poisoned drinks (the latter at a banquet) as well as other kinds of violence. Seneca's *Thyestes*, based on the Greek myth of the same name, influenced subsequent plays that conclude not just with violence but with a gruesome, cannibalistic banquet. Another influence was the myth of Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where (with the help of her sister, Procne) Philomela avenges her rape and mutilation at the hands of Tereus, her brother-in-law, by killing his son Itys and feeding the child to his unwitting father.

Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1592) and *The Bloody Banquet* by Middleton and Thomas Dekker (1608) feature similar scenes of cannibalism as a punishment for wrongdoing. The cannibalism in these plays taps into the banquet event as a form of display and a way to impress one's guests with exotic ingredients, only here serving up the most exotic ingredient imaginable, which is human flesh. In *Titus Andronicus* Titus tells Chiron and Demetrius that to avenge their rape and mutilation of his daughter Lavinia, they themselves will feature as ingredients: from their bones and blood he will make pastry to form a "coffin" (pie crust) and the dish upon which Tamora, their mother, will dine (5.2.185–194). In the banquet scene itself the audience, though not Tamora, know what to expect, with the stage direction "Enter Titus like a cook, placing the dishes" (5.3.26) adding to the macabre humor of the scene. Ordinarily the quotidian nature of eating is made extraordinary by the banquet itself as a special occasion, but here it is the nature of the ingredients served in the pie—a dish that was especially popular in early modern England—that makes for its horrific exoticism.

In *The Bloody Banquet*, Armatrites, a tyrant who has ousted the rightful King of Lycia, discovers that his wife has been unfaithful with Tymethes, the son of the former King. To punish them both, he kills Tymethes and compels his young Queen to eat her lover's flesh at a banquet where the rest of his remains are hung up in a grisly display. Unlike Tamora, who is unaware of what she consumes, the young Queen in this play knowingly (if unwillingly) eats the human flesh and drinks the blood from the skull set before her. In both *Titus Andronicus* and *The Bloody Banquet* cannibalism is a consequence of lust: just as Tamora eats her rapist sons, so the tyrant Armatrites tells his young Queen (like Tamora, an adulteress) that "The lecher must be swallowed rib by rib."⁷³ Notably, the young Queen eats apart from the others present, the stage direction indicating that she eats by herself at a "small table" after the main banquet has been presented, thus emphasizing her humiliation.⁷⁴

There were reports of cannibalism in the New World from Europeans who had visited there and who characterized its indigenous people as savages.⁷⁵ In his essay "Of Cannibals" (translated from French into English and published in 1603), Michel de Montaigne remarks that the natives of Brazil do eat their enemies but it is for revenge rather than nutrition, and asks if the Europeans are not more savage since they "mangle by tortures and torments a body full of lively sense."⁷⁶ Montaigne's essay is considered a source for Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (1611), influencing both the nuanced relationship between Prospero and Caliban and Gonzalo's description of a

Utopian society (2.1.149–174). Cannibalism was also invoked to signal political and religious loyalties, which saw the Catholic belief in Eucharistic theophagy (the eating of God) aligned with savagery, for example in Milton's theological treatise *Christian Doctrine* (c. 1660) where he describes the Catholic Mass as "a banquet of cannibals."⁷⁷

The cannibals in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) are more straightforwardly savage than Caliban, for although they share Caliban's desire to commit rape they have none of his sensitivity and imagination. In Book Four of Spenser's poem, the chaste Amoret is abducted by Lust, described as "a wilde and saluage man" who rapes and eats women; he keeps "the relickes of his feast,/And cruell spoyle" in his lower lip and it is clear that his appetite for human flesh is characteristic of his inability to control desires of any kind.⁷⁸ The Savage Nation who abduct and assault Serena in Book Six of the poem admire her physical beauty (they strip her naked and gaze upon her) but their primary objective is to fatten her up, present her blood to their god as a sacrifice, and of "her dainty flesh . . ./To make a common feast, and feed with gurmandize."⁷⁹

Literature from this period often refers to medicinal cannibalism via the term "mummia" or "mummy," a substance derived from embalmed Egyptian mummies (or thought to be this) that was consumed for medicinal reasons. A shortage of genuine mummies led to recipes for making artificial mummy from the recently deceased.⁸⁰ The term comes up in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* when Sir John Falstaff escapes drowning in the Thames, observing that "the water swells a man, and what a thing should I have been when I had been swelled? By the Lord, a mountain of mummy!" (3.5.14–17). The ingredient is used to connote the diabolical when the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* add "Witches' mummy" to their cauldron (4.1.23), and Othello claims the handkerchief he gave to Desdemona had "magic in the web of it," being "dyed in mummy, which the skilful/Conserved of maidens' hearts" (3.4.69, 74–75).⁸¹ In John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) Lodovico's friend, Gasparo, says that Lodovico's followers who "swallowed you like mummia" now vomit him up, "being sick/With such unnatural and horrid physic."⁸²

Food Then and Now

As the literature shows and as food scholars have recognized, references to food in the early modern period usually carry a signification beyond mere taste and sustenance. Food functions as a coded means to present the religious, social, political, and cultural issues that impacted upon early modern people. Food security, food as medicine, and the consumption of food as an indication of moral or ethical beliefs emerge repeatedly in literature from the period. The literature engages with concepts and beliefs that are historically specific and are no longer considered valid, such as humoral theory, but other issues remain pertinent in a world where population growth and climate change make human interaction with the planet's natural resources more important than ever. In Western Europe people no longer experience hunger as their early modern forebears did, and people of all ranks have access to a wide range of foods, including exotic produce, but there is a growing awareness of potential food shortages due to a strain on natural resources and a hotter planet. The sin of gluttony has morphed into social shame and blame leveled at the apparent inability, or refusal, of the overweight to control their

appetite. Ultimately, though, 21st-century people share with the early moderns their view that diet, and especially moderation, is an important means to maintaining good physical and mental health.

Discussion of the Literature

Food historians initiated the phenomenon of food as a serious topic for academic study. Important works include Ken Albala's *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (2002), which examines attitudes to food and medicine in early modern dietary literature, and *Food in Early Modern Europe* (2003), which provides a useful and highly accessible guide to all food-related issues relevant to the early moderns, such as the cuisine of specific countries and their regions, the foods consumed by people of different religions, and the type of equipment used to prepare food as well as an invaluable annotated list of ingredients used in the period.⁸³ Another important work by Albala, *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe* (2007), traces patterns of consumption by Europe's elite in the context of a shift in tastes and fashions that distinguished classical sophisticated French cuisine from the typical medieval diet.⁸⁴

Also of interest is Joan Thirsk's *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500–1760* (2007), where the agricultural historian uses her knowledge of food production to consider the change in public attitudes from one period to the next as well as providing sections that discuss specific foods in detail. An earlier, useful, work by Thirsk is her essay "Food in Shakespeare's England" (1999), published to accompany an exhibition on food in the period at the Folger Shakespeare library in Washington.⁸⁵

Ale and beer played an important role in the diet of early modern people and key works on this include Judith Bennett's *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600* (1996) and Richard Unger's *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (2007), both of which trace the social and economic implications of the production and consumption of these beverages.⁸⁶

Before the sustained analysis of food provided by historians, there was little sense of a comprehensive, interrogative, critical discussion about food in early modern literature. In *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* (1935) Caroline Spurgeon provides detailed literary analysis of food and other topics in plays by Shakespeare and some of his contemporaries and although still useful, her study is primarily concerned with uncovering Shakespeare's personal views on a wide range of subjects.⁸⁷ In the latter half of the 20th century, references to food in literary criticism tended to focus on one or two literary works in a single journal article and, as with Spurgeon, there is often a focus on the figurative use of food in these pieces. For examples, see Donald K. Anderson Jr., "The Heart and the Banquet: Imagery in Ford's 'Tis Pity and *The Broken Heart*," (1962); Margaret Bryan, "Food Symbolism in *A Woman Killed With Kindness*," (1975); J. A. Cole, "Sunday Dinners and Thursday Suppers: Social and Moral Contexts of the Food Imagery in *Women Beware Women*," (1984).⁸⁸

A key scholarly monograph on the role of food in early modern drama emerged in Chris Meads's *Banquets Set Forth: Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama* (2002), which focuses on non-Shakespearean plays that featured the banquet in its various manifestations.⁸⁹ Another important monograph on food in literature is Robert Appelbaum's *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture, and Food among the Early Moderns* (2006), which considers the significance of specific foods (beef, herring, baked meats, the apple) in a range of genres: plays, poetry, and prose works such as dietaries.⁹⁰ As the book's title indicates, there is a detailed focus on references to food in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as well as baked meats in *Hamlet*, herring in Nashe's *Lenten Stuff*, and the apple in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

The first monograph to present a scholarly analysis that concentrates on food in Shakespeare is Joan Fitzpatrick's *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (2007), where references to food and eating in the plays are considered in the context of the dietaries that were such an important part of the lives of early modern people and thus help make sense of otherwise obscure references.⁹¹ In 2010, Fitzpatrick produced a dictionary entitled *Shakespeare and the Language of Food*, which provides historical and cultural context for Shakespeare's use of food in his plays and poems.⁹²

Scholarly works on the body have tended to focus on digestion and other physical processes rather than food itself—for example Gail Kern Paster's *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (1993) and Bruce Boehrer's *The Fury of Men's Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (1997), which is a topic Boehrer developed from an earlier piece.⁹³ The relationship between food and gluttony is more fully developed in Elena Levy-Navarro's important study *The Culture of Obesity in Early and Late Modernity: Body Image in Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Skelton* (2008), and at the other end of the spectrum is Nancy Gutierrez's "*Shall she famish then?*" *Female Food Refusal in Early Modern England* (2003) focusing mainly, though not exclusively, on drama.⁹⁴

Special volumes dedicated to food in early modern literature reveal the growing interest in food as a serious topic for academic study. In 2009 the journal *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* published a volume on Shakespeare and food with essays considering staging food in Shakespeare, the significance of sugar in his writings, and what dietary literature reveals about the plays.⁹⁵ The year 2009 also saw a special food issue of the journal *Early English Studies* entitled "Eating the World: Food in Early Modern England" with notable essays on Shakespeare (emerging vegetarianism in *Hamlet*, fear of hunger in *Macbeth*, Falstaff in the context of English nationalism), 17th-century recipe books, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.⁹⁶

In 2010, a collection of interdisciplinary essays on food in Renaissance drama, poetry, and prose from the late medieval period to the mid-17th century included essays on bread in England, cookery books and household manuals, and Caliban's diet in *The Tempest*.⁹⁷ In 2014 a special forum ("Diet and Identity in Shakespeare's England") was included in the journal *Shakespeare Studies* (Volume 42) containing essays on food and related topics including the significance of the herb rue in *Richard 2*, hunger in *2 Henry 6*, the sociopolitical context of dietary literature, and the significance of spices in the period.

David Goldstein's *Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare's England* (2013) explores the nature and meaning of eating in the early modern period. Despite the title's reference to "Shakespeare's England" the scope is considerably broader (1547 to 1680), with only two plays by Shakespeare considered in any detail (*Titus Andronicus* and *The Merchant of Venice*), from which Goldstein concludes that Shakespeare was negative about food. The book also considers the Eucharist in the Examinations of Anne Askew (a Protestant martyr burned at the stake in 1546), 17th-century manuscript recipe culture via the aristocratic Anne Fanshawe, and eating and hospitality in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.⁹⁸

A volume of essays edited by Goldstein and Amy Tigner, *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England* (2016), does not, despite its subtitle, consider how eating and drinking in the plays might be presented on the stage.⁹⁹ Here Shakespeare is considered in the context of historical writings such as William Harrison's discussion of food and drink in his *Description of England* from Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577) as well as various cookery books. The essays tend to focus on a specific foodstuff in Shakespeare, for example small beer in *2 Henry 4* and herring in *Twelfth Night*, with notable observations including Peter Kanelos's contention that *Much Ado About Nothing* offers an alternative history of the Fall where the fruit of transgression (here a rotten orange) is rejected by Claudio.¹⁰⁰

Publications considering early modern cookery books and household manuals include *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550–1800* (2013), an important collection of essays edited by Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell, and Wendy Wall's monograph *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (2016), both of which reveal cookery books and household manuals as important historical documents that provide insight into the expertise of the housewife (technical and medicinal as well as culinary) and also provide evidence of female relationships and women's role in print culture.¹⁰¹

Two volumes of early modern cookery books and books of physic by women, published in 2017, made these writings more accessible to a modern reader, as did Elizabeth Spiller's detailed and informative introductions to the volumes.¹⁰² Similarly, 2017 saw the publication in one volume of three of the most popular and influential of the early modern dietaries: Thomas Elyot's *The Castle of Health* (1541), Andrew Boorde's *A Compendious Regiment, or a Dietary of Health* (1547), and William Bullein's *The Government of Health* (1558). The dietaries are here introduced, contextualized, and, freshly collated, edited, and modernized for the first time, thus making them more readily available to scholars and students of early modern culture. Also published in 2017 was *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present*, which provides a comprehensive overview of food in literature across the centuries in the light of relevant contextual material and the views of critics as well as tracing evidence of the influence earlier works had upon later writers. Early modern authors considered include Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Milton.¹⁰³

Links to Digital Materials

Database of Early English Playbooks (DEEP) <<http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/>>.

Early English Books Online (EEBO) [<https://eebo.chadwyck.com/>](https://eebo.chadwyck.com/).

Leeds Symposium on Food History and Traditions [<http://www.leedsfoodsymposium.org.uk/>](http://www.leedsfoodsymposium.org.uk/).

Oxford Symposium of Food and Cookery [<https://www.oxfordsymposium.org.uk/>](https://www.oxfordsymposium.org.uk/).

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Notes

1. Thomas Nashe, *The Works*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, Vol. 3, 5 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1904).
2. John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. David Crane, New Mermaids (London: A and C Black, 1997). All quotations of Shakespeare are from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works: Compact Edition*, ed. Stanley Wells et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
3. Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Cyrus Hoy et al., Vol. 1, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle; The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn; The Woman Hater; The Coxcomb; Philaster; The Captain*, 10 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1966). All dates for plays refer to the year of the play's first production according to the electronic resource "Database of Early English Playbooks" (DEEP <http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/>), created by Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser and hosted by the University of Pennsylvania.
4. Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, Vol. 1, A–F, 3 vols. (London: Athlone, 1994), "fish."
5. Anna Katharina Schaffner, "Weighty Matters: Cultural Histories of Fat and Fat Phobia (A Review of Anthony Warner *The Truth About Fat* (Oneworld, 2019); Christopher E Forth *FAT: A Cultural History of the Stuff of Life* (Reaktion, 2019); Sabrina Strings *Fearing the Black Body: The Origins of Fat Phobia* (NYU Press, 2019)," *Times Literary Supplement* 6061 (May 31, 2019): 3.
6. Church of England, *The Seconde Tome of Homelyes of Such Matters as Were Promised and Intituled in the Former Part of Homelyes, Set Out By the Auctoritie of the Quenes Maiestie: and to be Read in Every Paryshe Church Agreablye*, STC 13664 (London: Richard Jugge and John Cawood, 1563), Oo2r–Oo2v.
7. Joseph F. Delany, "Gluttony," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann et al., Vol. 6 (London: Caxton Publishing, 1909).
8. For example, see William Langland's 14th-century poem *Piers Plowman* (William Langland, *The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, The Early English Text Society by (London: Oxford University Press, 1869), 2.92–100).
9. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus: Based on the "A" Text*, ed. Roma Gill, New Mermaids (London: A&C Black, 1989), 7.129–137.
10. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus: Based on the "A" Text*, 7.139.
11. Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, STC 23376 (London: [John Kingston for] Richard Jones, 1583), H8r. Stubbes clearly means England when he refers to "Ailgna," which is "Anglia" spelled backwards.
12. Thomas Nashe, *The Works*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, Vol. 1, 5 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1904), 200.
13. Nashe, *The Works*, 204–205.

14. Critics have perceived Shakespeare's depiction of Sir John as a satirical attack upon non-conforming Protestants, perhaps specifically an early Protestant martyr called Sir John Oldcastle. See Gary Taylor, "The Fortunes of Oldcastle," *Shakespeare Survey* 38 (1985): 45–100; Stanley Wells et al., *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 330; Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 21; and William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan, *The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Thomson Learning, 2002), 59–61.
15. John Milton, *Complete English Poems, Of Education, Areopagitica*, ed. Gordon Campbell (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), 9.791.
16. Joan Fitzpatrick, *Three Sixteenth-Century Dietaries: A Critical Edition*, *The Revels Companion Library* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 280.
17. Fitzpatrick, *Three Sixteenth-Century Dietaries*, 204.
18. Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. E. A. Horsman, *The Revels Plays* (London: Methuen, 1960), 2.5.72–73, 75–76.
19. Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 2.5.77–79.
20. Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 2.2.44.
21. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edition, ed. Larry D. Benson based on the edition edited by F. N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4346–4434.
22. Joan Fitzpatrick, "Shakespeare's Sir John Oldcastle and Jonson's Ursula the Pig Woman," *Cahiers Elisabethains* 79 (2011): 45–46.
23. Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 1.6.72–74.
24. Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, 2nd edition, ed. Elizabeth Cook, *New Mermaids* (London: A&C Black, 1991), 2.2.75.
25. Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Philip Brockbank, *New Mermaids* (London: A&C Black, 1968), 3.7.202.
26. Arbuter Petronius, *Satyricon*, trans. Michael Heseltine, *Loeb Classical Library* (London: Heinemann, 1930).
27. See E. Pearlman, "Ben Jonson: An Anatomy," *English Literary Renaissance* 9 (1979): 386. Jonson also had the reputation of being a great drinker, as discussed in Stella Achilleos, *The Anacreontea and a Tradition of Refined Male Sociability*, in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Adam Smyth, *Studies in Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 21–35.
28. Both poems were first published in Jonson's 1616 Folio (Ben Jonson, *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, STC 14751 (London: William Stansby for Richard Meighen, 1616)). Amelia Lanyer's poem "The Description of Cookeham" (1611), though published earlier than Jonson's poem, was perhaps written later; it does not mention dining at Cookeham (Susanne Woods, ed., *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Jud'orum*, *Women Writers in English 1350–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 128–136).
29. For a discussion of the Fable of the Belly, see Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 94–96.
30. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton et al., *Longman Annotated English Poets* (London: Longman, 2001), 2.11.22.2; and Spenser was Secretary to Lord Grey, Elizabeth I's Deputy in Ireland, so a connection to the hunger experienced by the Irish rebels is likely.
31. For a discussion of hunger in the context of this play, see Hillary Eklund, "Revolting Diets: Jack Cade's 'Sallet' and the Politics of Hunger in *2 Henry VI*," *Shakespeare Studies* 42 (2014): 51–62.

32. For example, see *Coriolanus* 2.3.113–4 and *Measure for Measure* 1.4.57–58.
33. Church of England, *The Seconde Tome of Homelyes of Such Matters as Were Promised and Intituled in the Former Part of Homelyes, Set Out By the Authortie of the Quenes Maiestie: and to be Read in Every Paryshe Church Agreablye*, Nn1v.
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35. Phillip Stubbes, *The Second Part of the Anatomie of Abuses* (London: R. W[ard] for William Wright, 1583), G1r.
36. Hugh Platt, *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies against Famine*, STC 19996 (London: Peter Short, 1596). For a discussion of Platt's book, see Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500–1760* (London: Continuum, 2007), 34.
37. Martin Wiggins, ed., "A Woman Killed with Kindness" and Other Domestic Plays: "The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham," "A Woman Killed with Kindness," "The Witch of Edmonton," "The English Traveller," Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.100–102.
38. George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. Akihiro Yamada, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 5.5.317.
39. John Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore and Other Plays*, ed. Marion Lomax, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.4.3–10.
40. For analysis of the phenomenon of female food refusal in literature of the period, see Nancy A. Gutierrez, "Shall She Famish Then"? *Female Food Refusal in Early Modern England*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); and Sasha Garwood, "'The Skull Beneath the Skin': Women and Self-starvation on the Renaissance Stage," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 145 (2009): 106–123.
41. Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 2.2.90–106.
42. Judith Bennet considers changes to the brewing industry that resulted in the increased marginalization of the brewster (a female brewer) as the industry "became capitalized and industrialized" and beer, brewed with hops, became the more fashionable beverage (Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 146).
43. [William] S[tevenson], *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, ed. Charles Whitworth, New Mermaids (London: A&C Black, 1997), 3.3.27--28, 81.
44. John Skelton, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Scattergood, Penguin English Poets (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 214, line 20.
45. Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 2.2.9–10, 12.
46. Natasha Korda, "Gender at Work in the Cries of London," in *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Karen Bamford, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 117–135 (125, 134). On the historical role of women in the production and selling of food, see also Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture, 41 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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