

Diet and Identity in Early Modern Dietaries and Shakespeare: The Inflections of Nationality,
Gender, Social Rank, and Age

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What does dietary literature tell us about habits of consumption in early modern England and how are these habits represented in Shakespeare's plays? This essay will consider how the early moderns asserted their identity, and the identity of others, through their attitudes to food and diet. The focus is on early modern dietary literature because this neglected genre has much to tell us about attitudes to nationality, gender, social rank, and age that might usefully inform our reading of Shakespeare's plays. At times religion also emerges as a marker of identity but it tends to merge with nationhood, specifically the notion of Catholicism as part of England's past and now observed by foreigners. Dietaries (also called 'regimens') were mainly prose texts recommending what one should eat and why and they played an important part in the cultural life of early modern people. We know these texts were popular and influential because they were reprinted many times and important examples include Thomas Elyot's *The Castle of Health*, Andrew Boorde's *A Compendious Regiment or A Dietary of Health*, and William Bullein's *A New Book of Physic called the Government of Health*.¹

Dietaries offer the reader guidance on which foods to eat and why and which foods ought to be avoided at all costs in order to maintain good health. What one ate was an important means of adjusting the balance of the humours (blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy) to establish an ideally proportioned mixture of the four and thus produce an ideal complexion. Dietaries tell the reader what food they ought to eat but they also give advice on other health issues, such as how much sleep is advisable. Maintaining an ideal complexion could be achieved through proper diet and a good night's sleep, as well as

breathing good air and getting sufficient exercise, but aspects of identity also affected one's complexion, for example nationality, gender, social rank, and age. By considering the views given in the dietaries on a range of foodstuffs, for example beef, milk, wine and sugar, it is possible to trace patterns of consumption in Shakespeare's plays and what they might indicate about early modern attitudes to foreigners and Catholics, women, the poor, the old, and the social elite.

What comes up repeatedly in early modern dietary literature is the belief that eating meat was divinely ordained and certainly more healthy than a vegetarian diet, although there were lots of factors to be taken into consideration including whether or not a specific meat was suited to one's humour, occupation, and even nationality. For example bacon was thought fitting only for labourers or those involved in physical activity because it was considered difficult to digest and vigorous work would help the digestion process. Chicken was considered more favourably; as the food historian Ken Albala points out, "Chicken was universally praised as the healthiest food for people of all complexions, ages and regions."² Chicken was also specifically recommended by some as a food for the sick, for example the dietary author William Vaughan regarded it "fitter to be eaten of sick men, then of them that be in health."³ But chicken was expensive in Shakespeare's time so only the wealthy would eat the birds' flesh although many would keep them for their eggs. In Shakespeare, capons are an indulgence: they are a favourite of Sir John Falstaff and in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Launce's dog Crab steals a capon-leg from an aristocratic table (4.4.8-10).

The English dietary author Andrew Boorde, who had travelled extensively and throughout Europe, criticized English eating-habits, including excessive eating of the wrong kind of meat:

Englande hathe an euyl vse in syttyng longe at dyner and at supper. And Englysshe men hath an euyl vse, for at the begynnyng at dyner & supper they wyll fede on

grose meates. And y^e beste meate which be holsome and nutrytyue and lyght of digestion is kept for seruauntes, for whan the good meate doth come to the table thorowe fedyng vpon grose meate, the appetyde is extynct . . .⁴

Boorde later remarks that “Beefe is good meate for an Englyssh man,”⁵ a claim also made by Thomas Cogan who indicates that beef is healthy, a view that disagrees with Galen and other ancient authorities that beef is a gross meat that provokes melancholy,⁶ ‘gross’ indicating meat that was not delicate and came from a large animal. As Cogan makes clear, it was thought that the cold English climate made English stomachs hotter than those of their Mediterranean neighbours and so better able to digest a cold and gross meat like beef, which was also more tender in England due to the manner in which the meat was produced.⁷

William Bullein confirms this when he states:

Much beif customably eaten of idle persons, and nice folks that laboure not, bringeth many diseases. . . . but vnto hot stronge, cholerick stomacks it is tollerable, and may be vsed as we haue the dailye experience thereof.⁸

In Shakespeare’s time there also seems to have existed “two contrasting traditions concerning beef”⁹: on the one hand it was thought to stir up courage, something emphasized by classical philosophers and evident in *Henry V* when the French Constable says of the English soldiers “give them great meals of beef, and iron and steel, they will eat like wolves and fight like devils” (3.7.145-47). On the other hand, it was believed that beef caused stupidity, something Shakespeare refers to twice: in *Twelfth Night* when Andrew Aguecheek observes “I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wit” (1.3.83-84) and in *Troilus and Cressida* when Ajax calls Thersites a “mongrel beef-witted lord!” (2.1.12-13).¹⁰ As Robert Appelbaum has pointed out, part of the joke of Sir Andrew’s remark is that by Shakespeare’s time beef was not considered as good as it once was and Sir Andrew thus fails in his ambition to be a man of fashion.¹¹ The view that English stomachs could digest beef and the sense of

beef as rather old-fashioned—at least on the Continent where lighter meats were more acceptable—also explain Ajax’s attack upon Thersites in terms of rank and intellect.

The English were also well-known for liking pies: as Ken Albala noted, certain recipes were identified with specific nations and “England was first and foremost, and in practically all cookbooks, associated with pies.”¹² Take-away food is not a new development and since many early modern homes did not have a kitchen or an oven, certain types of food, especially those that required roasting or baking, such as pies, would have been bought already cooked from street-vendors and cook-shops. Pies come up a number of times in Shakespeare, for example the warden-pie (pear-pie) containing saffron mentioned in *The Winter’s Tale* (4.3.44-45), the Lenten pie (containing no meat) in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.3.123) and the pie containing human flesh in *Titus Andronicus* (5.3). In *All’s Well That Ends Well* (1.1.155-158) and *Troilus and Cressida* (1.2.248-253) there are references to putting dates into pies to add sweetness. Pie Corner in Smithfield, London, contained a number of cook-shops and in Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* Face reminds Subtle that he found him there “Taking your meal of steam in, from cook’s stalls”;¹³ Pie Corner is less than half a mile to the north of the house in Blackfriars where the action of the play takes place. The pasty, a pie that usually contained one filling, was also common in England and venison was a popular filling; in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Master Page offers one to Slender and Sir John for dinner (1.1.179).

Venison, strictly the flesh of deer, was also used in Shakespeare’s time to refer to the flesh of any animal killed by hunting and used as food, which could include boar, hare, rabbit and other game animals. The flesh of deer would have been eaten by the fashionable and the wealthy and Andrew Boorde claims the English were especially fond of it:

I haue gone rounde aboute crystendome and ouertwharte crystendome, & a thousande or two and more myles out of crystendome, yet there is nat so muche pleasure for

harte & hynde, bucke and doo [doe]e, and for roo bucke [roebuck] and doo, as is in England . . .¹⁴

Boorde acknowledges the legitimate role of desire in eating when he playfully observes that “although the fleshe be disprayed in physycke, I pray God to sende me part of the fleshe to eate physycke nat withstandynge.”¹⁵ However he warns that only those of a high rank should kill and consume it, not for health reasons but due to legal proscription: “But I do advertise every man for all my words not to kill and so to eat of it except it be lawful for it is a meat for great men. And great men do not set so much by the meat as they do by the pastime of killing of it.”¹⁶ As Diane Purkiss has pointed out, the early moderns had a taste for strong, dark, foods and venison was the very best of these since it was associated not only with landownership but also masculinity.¹⁷ William Bullein especially recommended eating the lungs of deer.¹⁸

Boorde explains that the English are especially fond of pottage, which was a kind of thick soup that is “nat so much vsed in al christendom as it is vsed in Englande” but he warns that it “dothe replete a man that eateth them with ve<n>tosyty [wind]” and, “[when] many partes of Englande is infected with the pestylence, thorowe the corruption of the ayer the which doth infect y^e herbes. In suche tymes it is nat good to make any potage, nor to eate no potage.”¹⁹ Another name for this foodstuff was ‘porridge,’ which word only later came to also (and now predominantly) denote a dish of cooked oats commonly eaten at breakfast. Although pottage might be consumed by all ranks, it would commonly have been eaten by the poor because a basic version was cheap to make. In *The History of King Lear* Edgar as Poor Tom asks “Who gives anything to Poor Tom, whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through ford and whirlypool, o'er bog and quagmire; that has laid knives under his pillow and halters in his pew, set ratsbane by his potage . . .” (11. 46-49), thus evoking the sense that this is the only meal a poor man such as a Bedlam beggar might expect to eat. In *1 Henry VI* Alençon,

pleased with the recent French victory over the English, thinks their success due to English over-reliance on food, and coarse food at that:

They want their porrage and their fat bull beeves.
 Either they must be dieted like mules,
 And have their provender tied to their mouths,
 Or piteous they will look, like drownèd mice. (1.2.9-12)

Like an animal, the Englishman cannot function properly without food but there is also a suggestion that the English of all ranks are less noble than the French, the mule being a hybrid animal and not pure-bred.

‘Bardolf’ is a kind of pottage, an especially thick pottage and a rather expensive variety too since it called for the use of chicken. A recipe for bardolf appears in a fifteenth-century manuscript:

Take almond mylk, and draw hit up thik with vernage,[white wine] and let hit boyle, and braune of capons brai<s>ed, and put therto; and cast therto sugre, clowes [cloves], maces, pynes, and ginger, mynced; and take chekyns parboyled, and chopped, and pul of the skyn, and boyle al ensemble, and in the settinge doune from the fire, put therto a lytel vynegur alaied [mixed] with pouder of ginger, and a lytel water of everose,[rose-water] and make the potage hanginge [thick], and serve hit forthe.²⁰

Shakespeare’s rogue, Bardolph, appears in *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The Oxford editors changed the name ‘Bardolph’ to ‘Russell,’ arguing that ‘Russell’ was the name Shakespeare originally gave to this character. John Jowett claimed that Shakespeare may have changed the name ‘Russell’ to ‘Bardolph’ in *1 Henry IV*, and subsequent plays in which that character appears, because of imposed censorship from powerful individuals, the same reason he changed ‘Sir John Oldcastle to ‘Sir John Falstaff.’²¹

‘Russell’ might be an allusion to the widow Elizabeth Russell who started a petition to stop the Blackfriars theatre. Shakespeare might have got the name from Holinshed but it would have been objectionable to Elizabeth Russell since the name means ‘red’ and the character's red face is endlessly remarked on. Russell had the right contacts to add her objection to the Cobhams’s objection to Oldcastle.²² Of course, there is also a Lord Bardolph in the opening scene of *2 Henry IV* who, bringing what he claims is “certain news from Shrewsbury” (1.1.12), wrongly informs Northumberland that “The King is almost wounded to the death / And, in the fortune of my lord your son, / Prince Harry slain outright” (1.1.13-16). This isn’t the only time Shakespeare gives more than one character the same name, for example there is a Gower in *Pericles* and *Henry V* and there is a John Fastolf in *1 Henry VI*. Fastolf and Falstaff have thematic connections, both being considered cowardly knights, but the link between the Gowers and the Bardolphs is less obvious. Why would a name chosen by Shakespeare as a substitute identifier for his clownish rogue in *1 Henry IV* also be used by him for an aristocrat in *2 Henry IV*? It could be simply a coincidence or there might be another explanation. Both Bardolphs get things wrong. Falstaff's friend Bardolph is morally corrupt, a drunkard and a thief; he is also fairly stupid and without leadership qualities, explaining to Prince Harry his behaviour at the Gad's Hill robbery: “Faith, I ran when I saw others run” (2.5. 305). The Lord Bardolph who brings “certain news from Shrewsbury” (1.1.12) is also in error; deceived by Rumour, Lord Bardolph tells Northumberland that Hotspur has won the battle, getting his news second-hand from “A gentleman well bred and of good name, / That freely rendered me these news for true” (1.1.26-27). When his report is challenged, the following exchange occurs:

LORD BARDOLPH My lord, I'll tell you what:

If my young lord your son have not the day,

Upon mine honour, for a silken point

I'll give my barony. Never talk of it.

NORTHUMBERLAND Why should the gentleman that rode by Travers

Give then such instances of loss?

LORD BARDOLPH Who, he?

He was some hilding fellow that had stol'n

The horse he rode on, and, upon my life,

Spoke at a venture.

(1.1.51-59)

Lord Bardolph is made to look foolish and it is this combination of rank and foolishness that may have appealed to Shakespeare. Having been compelled by powerful aristocrats to drop the names Oldcastle and Russell, Shakespeare looked elsewhere amongst his writings. He took the name Fastolf that he had previously used for a cowardly knight in *1 Henry VI* and reworked it to produce the new name Falstaff to replace the name Oldcastle. For Russell he settled on the new name Bardolph, which he might already have had in mind--or even have committed to paper--as the name of the foolish lord at the start of *2 Henry IV*. Whether or not the censorship of Part One occurred after Shakespeare had begun to write Part Two, it presumably pleased Shakespeare to bring on stage a foolish aristocrat who is mistakenly certain that he knows the momentous events of Henry IV's reign better than anyone else, and to have him announce his name as Bardolph, the same as a dish of pottage.

Fish was generally considered inferior to meat by the early moderns because it was thought to be less nourishing but it was also associated with the Catholic practice of not eating meat on Fridays. 'Fish days' had been introduced by the government for economic reasons, to encourage the fishing industry and bring down the high price of meat, but they held an unpleasant cultural resonance for England's Protestants. In *King Lear* the disguised Kent says to Lear:

I do profess to be no less than I seem, to serve him truly that will put me in trust, to love him that is honest, to converse with him that is wise and says little, to fear judgement, to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish. (1.4.13-17)

As Stanley Wells noted, this reference to eating no fish is “Self-deflatingly anticlimactic” but might also suggest that Kent is “a loyal Protestant who does not fast on Fridays”²³ and hence is a plain, reliable man. In Shakespeare’s *2 Henry IV* Falstaff criticizes Prince John:

There’s never none of these demure boys come to any proof; for thin drink doth so overcool their blood, and making many fish meals, that they fall into a kind of male green-sickness; and then when they marry, they get wenches. (4.2.87-91)

‘Green sickness’ was an anaemic disease commonly attributed to a virgin’s sexual fantasies that could be cured by a sexual encounter.²⁴ The dietaries support Sir John’s view: William Bullein, citing Galen, claims that “the nourishmeⁿts of flesh is better than the nourishmeⁿts of fish”²⁵ and Thomas Moffet asserts that “all fish (compared with flesh) is cold and moist, of little nourishment, engendring watrish and thinn blood.”²⁶ However, Sir John himself eats fish: it is amongst the foods found listed on the receipts retrieved from his pockets when he is drunk and sleeping but it is specifically “anchovies and sack after supper” he has consumed, not a meal (*1 Henry IV* 2.5.541). Anchovies and also herring, preserved in salt or pickled, were commonly sold as snacks in taverns, which would explain why they bother Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* (“A plague o’ these pickle herring!”, 1.5.116-117). Thomas Moffett notes that anchovies were eaten to restore appetite, not something Sir John is lacking.²⁷ It is curious that Sir John, ordinarily such a glutton, should criticize anyone for eating too much of anything but the notion seems to be that whilst eating fish occasionally or as a snack was fine (at least acceptable to a glutton like Sir John) to eat “many fish meals” was suspiciously Catholic.

Animal flesh was preferred over fish and also considered healthier than fruit, a term that encompassed not only what we consider fruit but also what we consider vegetables. Fruit was believed to be full of water that could cause a harmful imbalance in the body. Moffett explains the origins of this belief:

before the flood men were of stronger constitution, and vegetable fruits grew void of superfluous moisture: so by the flood these were endued with weaker nourishment, and men made more subject to violent diseases and infirmities. Whereupon it was requisite or rather necessary, such meat to be appointed for humane nourishment, as was in substance and essence most like our own, and might with less loss and labour of natural heat be converted and transubstantiated into our flesh.²⁸

In the second edition of his dietary William Vaughan denounced fruit as “taken more for wantonnesse then for any nutritive or necessary good, which they bring vnto vs” warning that it should be eaten before meals (avoiding the French habit of eating it after meals) and even then “very sparingly, least their effects appeare to our bodily repentance.”²⁹ Of course, despite warnings from the dietaries and elsewhere, people still ate fruit, which was sold in the streets and markets and picked from bushes and in hedgerows by those who could not afford to buy it or be fussy about what they ate. New and fashionable fruits, such as apricots and melons, were being imported into England from Southern Europe and dried fruits such as raisins and figs were also available to those who could afford them. Pumpkin seeds have recently been found in excavations of the Rose and Globe playhouses and so it is possible that the fruit itself or the seeds were consumed by wealthier members of the audience.³⁰ Pumpkins were considered especially watery; in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Mistress Ford describes Falstaff as “this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumpkin” (3.3.37-38).

For modern readers one of the strangest ideas to emerge from early modern dietary literature is the fact that human breast-milk was recommended for consumption by adults as

well as children. William Vaughan is typical of the dietary authors in describing women's milk as "[the] wholesomest and purest [milk], because it is a restorative medicine for the braine and the consumption."³¹ So too William Bullein claims "the best milk y^e helpeth against consumptions, is womans milke."³² Andrew Boorde specifically recommends milk "for melancoly men, & for olde men & children,"³³ as does Thomas Elyot.³⁴ Milk (commonly termed a 'white meat,' that is, dairy produce) was also considered to be cooling: Henry Butts, noting that milk is cold and moist, warns "Vse no violence after it, nor drink wine, afore you feele it thoroughly decocted [meaning digested]."³⁵ When we realize that human breast-milk was recommended for consumption by adults as well as children in Shakespeare's time, references to milk and milkiness in the plays begin to make more sense. When Lady Macbeth worries that her husband is "too full o' th' milk of human kindness" (1.5.16) she is likening him to herself, a woman able to feed not only children but also adults. Goneril in *King Lear* similarly criticizes Albany for being milky:

This milky gentleness and course of yours,
 Though I condemn not, yet under pardon
 You are much more attacked for want of wisdom
 Than praised for harmful mildness.

(1.4.321-324)

The accusation of milkiness activates two kinds of weakness: the producers of milk consumed by the old, the sick, and babies were weak because they were women, and the consumers were weak because they were old, or sick, or babies. Lady Macbeth has not seen her husband on the battle-field where he is described as "brave Macbeth" (1.2.16) and kills a man by slicing him open "from the nave to th' chops" (1.2.22); Albany's 'gentleness' is concern for the welfare of the king. In *Macbeth* and *King Lear* the audience are encouraged to reject the views expressed by these men's wives just as the audience are encouraged to side

with the English and not the French in *Henry V*. Lady Macbeth asks the powers of darkness to take her milk “for gall” (1.5.47), meaning either “take away *my milk* and put *gall* in the place,” as Samuel Johnson suggested,³⁶ or ‘use it as gall,’ and she also refers to having “given suck” (1.7.54). Critics have long focused on the references to babies and children in *Macbeth* but none has connected these references to the fact that in the early modern period women’s breast-milk did not only nourish babies. For Janet Adelman, Lady Macbeth is characterized as a perverse nurse, the milk-gall reference revealing the “unnatural abrogation of her maternal function,” indeed “the horror of the maternal function itself.”³⁷ Of course Lady Macbeth is not necessarily a mother although she is a demonic inversion of the nourishing woman, her violence directed not only at the babe she says she would kill had she but promised to do so but also at the men around her including the grooms she drugs with a posset, a milky, alcoholic drink.

Lady Macbeth is herself damaged by the murder of Duncan, her sleepwalking a sign that her “heart is sorely charged” (5.1.51). Dietary literature offered advice on sleep as well as diet as a means to good health, for example it indicated what was the best time to sleep and what sleeping-position was most healthy. Andrew Boorde is typical of the dietaries in his warning against over-sleeping, sleeping during the day or after a meal, advising that if one must sleep after eating then “stand and leane and slepe agaynst a cupborde, or els . . . sytte upryght in a chayre & slepe,”³⁸ Going to bed happy is also emphasized, so that “no anger nor heuynes [heaviness], sorow, nor pencyfulnes [pensivefulness] do trouble or disquyet you.”³⁹ In his translation and revision of Charles Estienne’s *Maison Rustique, or, The Countrey Farme* Gervase Markham recommends a cure for those who cannot sleep: a frontlet (a cloth worn on the forehead) soaked in “the milke of a woman giuing a girl sucke.”⁴⁰ An attentive early modern playgoer might connect the references to human breast milk in the play with Macbeth’s inability to sleep and Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking (5.1.1-76), coming to the

conclusion that milk would soothe their agitated minds, providing a sort of antidote to counter the pernicious inversion of what should be a nutritious foodstuff that has occurred throughout the play. These connections are lost to us without reference to dietary literature and other contextual material promoting the use of human breast-milk as medicinal for adults as well as babies. Similarly, knowing that the early moderns thought daytime sleep dangerous makes the Fool's last words in *King Lear* "And I'll go to bed at noon" (3.6.43) especially ominous.

Other important white meats included butter and cheese, which were usually manufactured by women and evoked distinct national stereotypes, butter being especially associated with the Dutch and cheese with the Welsh. Andrew Boorde recommends that butter be eaten "in the mornynge before other meates," noting that "frenche men wyll eate it after meate" and "dutche men dothe eate it at all tymes in the day."⁴¹ So too in his *Haven of Health* Thomas Cogan claims that "the Flemmings are little troubled with the collicke, because they . . . eat much Butter."⁴² Shakespeare refers to Flemings eating butter in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (2.2.291-294) but most of the references to butter in this play and in *1 Henry IV* are made by or about Falstaff (in *1 Henry IV* 2.5.120, 2.5.517; 4.2.61 and in *Merry Wives* 3.5.6-8 and 5.5.140). In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* the Welshman, Sir Hugh Evans, conforms to national stereotype by looking forward to a dessert of cheese: "I will make an end of my dinner; there's pippins and cheese to come" (1.2.12-13). Pippins, a variety of apple, were considered difficult to digest, especially if eaten raw and cheese was thought helpful to close the stomach after a meal. When Sir John is tricked into dressing up as Herne the Hunter, and pinched by children disguised as fairies, he responds to Evan's directing them with "God defend me from that Welsh fairy, / Lest he transform me to a piece of cheese!" (5.5.80-81). As Joan Thirsk pointed out, cheese was traditionally a food for the

poor, specifically peasants, but after 1600 it became more fashionable, especially expensive hard, long-maturing cheeses or those that had been imported.⁴³

National stereotypes extended to drink also. As the historian Peter Clark noted, beer and ale were safe alternatives to water “which was increasingly suspect, particularly in towns, as a result of deteriorating sanitation caused by population increase.”⁴⁴ In the sixteenth century the increasing popularity of beer meant that ale soon came to be regarded as old-fashioned. Andrew Boorde, a dietary author especially alert to national identity, argues that “Ale fo<r> an englysh man is a natural drynke” and disapproves of the ‘foreign’ beverage beer that “nowe of late dayes . . . is moche vsed in Englande to the detrimen<t> of many englysshe men.”⁴⁵ Beer was foreign because it used hops that were often imported and required the brewing expertise of Flemish immigrants. In Shakespeare’s *Henry V* the Boy longs for England and English ale during battle with the French: “Would I were in an alehouse in London. I would give all my fame for a pot of ale, and safety” (3.2.12-13). Longing for beer would not have carried the same nationalist and nostalgic impetus.

Wine, which was pretty expensive and so outside the reach of most ordinary people, was generally considered better than beer and ale by the dietary authors, although Thomas Cogan thought it worse to get drunk from wine than ale.⁴⁶ The sack often consumed by Sir John Falstaff was a fortified wine, imported from Spain and the Canary islands; sack was dry but the English usually added sugar to it before it was sold in order to sweeten it and Falstaff’s inordinate desire for it explains why he is called “sack-and-sugar Jack” by Poins in *2 Henry IV* (1.2.112-113). The early moderns thought sugar was healthy and that old people craved sugar, for example in Thomas Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* Simon Eyre tells the Lord Mayor of London that he should be light-hearted, as Eyre is, because “Old age, sack and sugar will steal upon us ere we be aware.”⁴⁷ Andrew Boorde warns against giving wine to young unmarried women: “wynes hyghe and hote of operacyon doth co<m>fort olde men

and women, but there is no wyne good for chyldren and maydes, for in hyghe Almayne [Germany] there is no mayde shall drynke no wyne, but styl she shal drynke water vnto she be maried.”⁴⁸ Wine was thought to be warming and heat provoked lust, something not advisable in a young unmarried woman. William Vaughan warns that certain types of wine: muscadel, malmsey, and bastard "are only for maried folkes, because they strengthen the back.”⁴⁹ In *2 Henry IV* there is the following exchange between Mistress Quickly and Doll:

MISTRESS QUICKLY I' faith, sweetheart, methinks now you are in an excellent good temperality. Your pulsidge beats as extraordinarily as heart would desire, and your colour, I warrant you, is as red as any rose, in good truth, la; but i' faith, you have drunk too much canaries, and that's a marvellous searching wine, and it perfumes the blood ere we can say 'What's this?' How do you now?

DOLL TEARSHEET Better than I was. - Hem!

MISTRESS QUICKLY Why, that's well said! A good heart's worth gold.

(2.4.20-29)

In a recent production of the play Doll vomited before saying “Better than I was” and the text does indeed does warrant some sort of vomit or belch at this point.⁵⁰ Doll is a whore and so the effects of drinking wine are less serious for her than for a maid, but consuming too much wine, and the consequences of doing so, was warned against repeatedly in dietary literature.

Diet and identity was a complex issue in early modern England and dietary literature engages with a host of factors that were believed to affect one’s physical and mental well-being. Whether a person was melancholic, sanguine, choleric, or phlegmatic was important but this was influenced also by aspects of identity we recognize today when describing who we are. The early modern belief in humours determining one’s complexion seems odd to us but their focus on nationality, rank, gender, age and religion less so. Like our early modern ancestors we tend to describe ourselves in terms of where we come from, our occupation,

class, gender, age, and religion. We also believe that some foods are better for us than others, even if we hold different views than the early moderns on which foods are good for us, and why, and how they work upon the body. Dietaries provide us with important information about attitudes to diet and identity in early modern England and these important texts can help to facilitate our exploration of the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, allowing us to notice hitherto neglected attitudes to food and eating in literature from the period. Part of our identity is that we are ‘modern’ not ‘early modern’ but we share with our ancestors the belief that good health, above all other things, is what matters most. It seems fitting to allow the dietary author William Bullein the last word on the subject:

For what auayleth ryches, honoures, costlye buyldinges, fayre apparell, with all the pompe of this worlde, and to be honoured of the people, and in the meane time to be eaten wyth wormes in the breaste or in the belly, consumed with agues, turmented with gowtes, sorenesse, bone ache. &c.⁵¹

Not all of one’s consequential choices relate to food, of course. Bullein lived with his patron, Sir Thomas Hilton, whilst writing his dietary and Hilton died soon after it was published; not long after this, Bullein married Hilton's widow, Anne (or Agnes). Hilton’s brother, William, accused Bullein of murdering Sir Thomas and although the case came to court it was dismissed, perhaps due to Bullein’s influential connections. William Hilton continued to pursue Bullein and Anne, and both were imprisoned for a debt that Hilton claimed was owed to Sir Thomas.⁵² Bullein advised caution in diet but, like Andrew Boorde—an ex-Monk and alleged womanizer⁵³—he clearly proved no role-model when it came to living a quiet life free from care.

¹These dietaries are currently only available as early printed texts but a forthcoming modern-spelling edition (Joan Fitzpatrick, *Three Early Modern Dietaries: A Critical Edition*, The Revels Companion (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014)) will make them more accessible to those interested in the culture of food, health and identity in the early modern period.

²Ken Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe*, Food Through History (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2003), 67.

³William Vaughan, *Natural and Artificial Directions for Health*, STC 24612 (London: Richard Bradocke, 1600), C1r.

⁴Andrew Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, STC 3380 (London: William Powell, 1547), C4v.

⁵Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, F1v.

⁶Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, STC 5484 (London: Anne Griffin for Roger Ball, 1636), R1r.

⁷Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, R1r-R2r.

⁸William Bullein, [*The Government of Health*] *A Newe Boke of Phisicke Called the Government of Health*, STC 4040 (London: John Day, 1558), N4r-N4v.

⁹F. David Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 236.

¹⁰All quotations of Shakespeare's plays are from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, William Montgomery. Prepared by William Montgomery and Lou Burnard (Oxford: Oxford Electronic Publishing, Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹¹Robert Appelbaum, *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture, and Food Among the Early Moderns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1-15.

¹²Ken Albala, *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe*, The Food Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 136.

¹³Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed. Elizabeth Cook, New Mermaids (London: A & C Black, 1991), 1.1.25-26.

¹⁴Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, F3v.

¹⁵Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, F3v.

¹⁶Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, F4r.

¹⁷Diane Purkiss, "Crammed with Distressful Bread? Bakers and the Poor in Early Modern England," in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories*, ed. Joan Fitzpatrick (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 11-23, 18.

¹⁸Bullein, [*The Government of Health*] *A Newe Boke of Phisicke Called the Government of Health*, O1v.

¹⁹Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, E1r.

²⁰Richard Warner, *Antiquitates Culinariae; or Curious Tracts Relating to the Culinary Affairs of the Old English, with a Preliminary Discourse, Notes, and Illustrations* (London: R. Blamire, 1791), 84; Anon, *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household, Made in Divers Reigns. From King Edward III. to King William and Queen Mary. Also Receipts in Ancient Cookery* (London: John Nichols for the Society of Antiquaries, 1790), 466.

²¹John Jowett, "The Thieves in 1 Henry IV.," *Review of English Studies* 38 (1987).

²²Jowett, "The Thieves in *1 Henry IV.*"

²³William Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, ed. Stanley Wells, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 126n14-15.

²⁴Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, vol. 1: A-F, 3 vols. (London: Athlone, 1994), 'greensickness'.

²⁵Bullein, [*The Government of Health*] *A Newe Boke of Phisicke Called the Government of Health*, P1r.

²⁶Thomas Moffett, *Healths Improvement*, 1st edition. Wing M2382 (London: Tho[mas]: Newcomb for Samuel Thomson, 1655), U1v.

²⁷Moffett, *Healths Improvement*, U2r-U2v.

²⁸Moffett, *Healths Improvement*, E4r.

²⁹William Vaughan, *Natural and Artificial Directions for Health. . . . Newly Corrected and Augmented By the Author*, STC 24615 (London: T. S[nodham] for Roger Jackson, 1612), E4v.

³⁰Julian Bowsher and Pat Miller, *The Rose and the Globe: Playhouses of Shakespeare's Bankside, Southwark: Excavations 1988-91*, Mola Monograph, 48 (London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2009), 149-15.

³¹Vaughan, *Natural and Artificial Directions for Health*, B7r.

³²Bullein, [*The Government of Health*] *A Newe Boke of Phisicke Called the Government of Health*, P7r.

³³Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, E3v-E4r.

³⁴Thomas Elyot, [*The Castle of Health*] *The Castell of Helthe . . . Whereby Euery Man May Know the State of His Owne Body, the Preseruacion of Helthe, and How to Instruct Well His Phisition in Sicknes, That he be Not Deceyued*, STC 7642.7 (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1539), I3r.

³⁵Henry Butts, *Diets Dry Dinner: Consisting of Eight Several Courses*, STC 4207 (London: Tho[mas]. Creede for William Wood, 1599), N3r.

³⁶William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare in Eight Volumes*, ed. Samuel Johnson (London: J. and R. Tonson et al., 1765), 395*.

³⁷Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 135.

³⁸Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, C1r.

³⁹Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, C1r.

⁴⁰Charles Estienne, [*Agriculture et Maison Rustique. English*] *Maison Rustique, Or, The Countrey Farme*, STC 10549. Trans. Richard Surflet. Reviewed, corrected, and augmented by Gervase Markham (London: Adam Islip for John Bill, 1616), E3v.

⁴¹Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, E2v.

⁴²Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, Z2v.

⁴³Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London: Continuum, 2007), 38.

⁴⁴Peter Clark, "The Alehouse and the Alternative Society," in *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-century History Presented to Christopher Hill*, ed. Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 47-72, 54.

⁴⁵Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, D2v.

⁴⁶Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, i1v-i12r.

⁴⁷Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, ed. R. L. Smallwood and Stanley Wells, *The Revels Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 11.24-25.

⁴⁸Boorde, [*Compendious Regiment*] *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe Newly Corrected with Dyuers Addycyons*, D2r.

⁴⁹Vaughan, *Natural and Artificial Directions for Health*, B6r.

⁵⁰William Shakespeare, *The Royal Shakespeare Company Production of 2 Henry 4 Directed By Michael Boyd*, The Courtyard Theatre, 6 February to 15 March, 2008.

⁵¹Bullein, [*The Government of Health*] *A Newe Boke of Phisicke Called the Government of Health*, A4r-A4v.

⁵²Patrick Wallis, "Bullein, William," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison and Lawrence Goldman, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/3910 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-13).

⁵³Elizabeth Lane Furdell, "Boorde, Andrew," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison and Lawrence Goldman, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/2870 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-13).