



## Early Modern Studies Journal

Volume 7: Early Modern Recipes in a Digital World: A Case Study of the Baumfylde Manuscript / 2021

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### Introduction

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This journal volume began its life as a workshop at the 2018 Shakespeare Association of America annual meeting. Participants devoted their efforts to transcribing a single recipe manuscript associated with Mary Baumfylde, V.a. 456 held by the Folger Shakespeare Library. During our workshop, participants then presented experimental project based on their discoveries of and within the recipe manuscript. Our general objectives in the workshop were for participants 1) to become familiar with the practice of paleography or to increase their facility with paleography 2) to learn to navigate Dromio, the Folger transcription platform and 3) to generate research questions based on the manuscript.

Before our in-person meeting, we began with online conversations that generated transcribed text and explored the manuscript's features and context, helping participants learn about the genre of domestic recipe collections. As we discussed the manuscript and its world, we invited each participant to create an experimental project to showcase during our face-to-face meeting. We encouraged these projects to take innovative forms, such as: blog posts, course syllabi, contextual essays, demonstrations devoted to making a recipe, or digital humanities applications.

This volume considers questions we raised during the workshop: 1) What are the features of an early modern manuscript, and what features are particular to recipe manuscripts? 2) How can we teach and use paleography in our classrooms? 3) How can we use the digital archive as a teaching tool? 4) How can we use recipes or recipe manuscripts in teaching? 5) What can we learn from texts created by underrepresented populations? 6) What are the problems and opportunities associated with texts not associated with authors, or linked only to unknown people? 7) What does it mean to use a recipe manuscript as the centerpiece of research? And lastly, 8) What new scholarly products do digital archives allow, and how do we integrate them into current academic practices and institutional structures? The following papers show how the participant/authors engaged with these questions with complex and creative perspectives.

Writing "The Communal Basis of Distinctive Voice in 17th-Century Receipt Manuscripts," Peter Parolin considers the question of authorship and community in a manuscript named after one contributor, Mary Baumfylde, but that clearly indicates it is the work of "many hands, hands." Parolin muses how the pursuit of the self in these multi-authored texts requires an altogether alternative "kind of quest," one that attests to the relationship between the community and the individual. Astutely demonstrating the many ways in which these recipe manuscripts are sites of collective knowledge, Parolin also recognizes how they are also "expressions of individual voice." These recipe manuscripts thus stand as evidence of shared authority; these texts then are spaces of both singular and plural innovation, experimentation, and judgment. Acknowledging the great divide in time between the early modern period and our own, Parolin nevertheless contends that we still have continuities with these seventeenth-century manuscripts, in that we still inherit recipes, experiment with them, collaborate in their making, and enjoy them together communally around the table.

Margaret Simon's essay, "The Experience of Scholarly Labor: Recording Affect in Transcription," broadens this discussion of recipe books as sites of collective knowledge, considering how individual transcribers themselves bring meaning to these recipe collections as they work to make them searchable. Asking "how we can bring bodies, voices, and minute-by-minute reflections on the experience of transcription into our thinking about early modern recipe manuscripts," Simon analyzes transcriber responses to both the contents of these texts and to the experience of encoding them. Her essay examines Tweets, blogs, and other "para-scholarly" records of the transcription experience to consider how "students and scholars influence what ends up in digital archives," and how these archives in turn "shape our own ideas about authority, experience, digital information, interdisciplinarity, and the scope of humanities research."

In "Juxtaposition as a Tool for Inquiry: A Reading of the Baumfylde Manuscript," Nancy Simpson-Younger argues that recipe books should be considered as collections of disparate materials, from different times, places, and genres. "Because each manuscript can include medicinal recipes, culinary recipes, penmanship exercises, poetry, signatures, and/or financial accounts, written by different hands in close proximity to each other," she writes, "these collections are a key source for asking how early moderns used juxtaposition as a tool of meaning-making." Like the bodies they helped tend, recipe manuscripts are made of parts

which work together, even if the details of those workings remain opaque to readers today. Simpson-Younger approaches each contributor to V.a. 456 separately, considering how every addition to the manuscript reframes other materials already in the volume. Without simultaneous consideration of both the manuscript's parts, and its existence as a whole, she concludes, "the pieces in the collection lose some of their potential as both medical and literary signifiers--and the contributions of some authors become either isolated or dropped."

In her essay "Cooking the Baumfylde Manuscript," Marisa Nicosia argues that we should take seriously historical recipes books as instructions to make recipes. Nicosia's article argues for cooking as methodology and then offers a vibrant and detailed account of preparing four recipes from the manuscript: Sassage (sausage patties), Pickled Cucumbers, White Hippocras (white wine milk punch), and Bisket (cookies). As co-author/blogger/cook of the [Cooking in the Archives](#) website, Nicosia has a great deal of experience in making and adapting early modern recipes for the modern kitchen. In this article, she considers the significance of such acts of making as a practice of intellectual investigation in line with a growing scholarly field that studies the interchange between artistic making and scientific knowing. Following in the footsteps of Mary Baumfylde and other contributors of the manuscript, Nicosia experiments with the recipes she makes, thus she analyzes each one with her own understanding of the historical practices and adapts them to her own modern circumstances. Explaining her cooking processes step by step, Nicosia invites and enables the reader to continue the practice of recreating these historical recipes.

In his short experimental article, "'A gallon of the finest honey you can get': Considering Quantity and Domestic Work in Mary Baumfylde's Recipe Book," Keith Botelho considers the significance of honey in the Baumfylde manuscript to examine early modern issue of supply, consumption, and domestic work, both in the human and non-human worlds. Providing a concise history of bees and honey in Renaissance England, Botelho demonstrates the importance of this inexpensive and local commodity, which supplied the taste of sweetness to palates of all classes. Focusing on recipes for metheglin, a spiced mead whose main ingredient is honey, Botelho emphasizes the labor-intensive (both bee and human) aspect of its production. Then Botelho addresses pedagogical applications for teaching recipes that use honey as a key ingredient, and how such a study enhances historical understanding, ecological awareness, and textual practices.

The transcription of the Baumfylde manuscript, Danielle Rosvally shows, also creates an ideal, manageable platform for helping students understand the creation of Digital Humanities projects. In "Sifting and Sorting: An Introduction to Database Methods and Pedagogy using Humanist Texts," Rosvally argues that the manuscript "creates an excellent gateway to the underlying methods and structures required for digital thought." Because the manuscript "has already done much of the work of breaking its data into parts, Rosvally points out, it, like other recipe books "is a data curator's dream." Her essay supplies a series of easily implemented teaching activities designed to help students see what steps are involved in treating the manuscript as a collection of data. She also supplies a database file that students can use to conduct their own experiments in interpreting the Baumfylde manuscript.

The result is an essay that lays bare the questions – and demonstrates the processes -- that underlie the creation of digital text projects.

Modeling after the collaborative aspects of the Baumfylde manuscript itself, Gaywyn E. Moore and Brian J. Harries in their essay, “Undergraduate Archival Research in Early Modern Studies: Digital Possibilities for Small Colleges and Universities,” have worked together to write about a collective project between their two institutions, Missouri Western State University and Concordia University Wisconsin. They begin by describing an experimental assignment in which they gave their students an assignment option of participating in the 2018 EMROC (Early Modern Recipe Online Collective) [Transcribathon](#). Encouraged by such a rewarding student learning experience, Moore and Harries have decided to create a summer research project whose aim is to teach students textual editing, and in the last third of the course students would be transcribing and editing the Baumfylde manuscript. Included in the article is a proposed syllabus with the idea that faculty from other institutions might be interested in collaborating in the project or building a similar one. Throughout the essay, Moore and Harries emphasize the significance and rewards of collaboration in Digital Humanities, especially as small institutions that have limited faculty and financial resources.

Keri Sanburn Behre's "Practical Paleography and the Baumfylde Manuscript: An Undergraduate Research Unit for Literature Classes" describes the rich experience of working with transcription in her Early Modern Literature and Culture course. Using commonplace books as a comparison, Behre's class invites students to consider recipe books as a creative outlet for students unfamiliar with early modern domestic writing. Students entered the class unaware of the everyday activities that dominated women's time, but the class shed light on the sometimes surprising areas of knowledge represented in recipe books. At the unit's conclusion, "students enjoyed "a sense of having contributed to the field by making an interesting text more available and engaging."

Readers can view the fully transcribed Baumfylde manuscript and cover to cover page images through the Folger Shakespeare Library [catalogue entry](#).

We hope that you enjoy reading this new volume of Early Modern Studies Journal.