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Introduction to Volume 8, "Celebrating Ten Years of the Early Modern Recipes Online Collective"

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Volume eight of *Early Modern Studies Journal* is dedicated to “Celebrating Ten Years of the Early Modern Recipes Online Collective (EMROC),” an open access digital humanities project designed to transcribe and make available early modern recipe manuscripts for the use of scholars, students and the general public. The group was founded in 2012 by a number of international scholars – Michelle DiMeo, Rebecca Laroche, Elaine Leong, Jennifer Munroe, Hillary Nunn, Lisa Smith, and Amy L. Tigner – who believed that the study of manuscript recipe book (or receipt books, as they were called in the period), which contain culinary, medicinal and household recipes, could tell us a great deal about the domestic life and global culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As we all had laboriously transcribed manuscripts individually, we felt that working collectively would be more efficient and the work could be shared more widely. The collaborative nature of the project was truly founded in a Feminist ideology that ascribed partnership and cooperation as a model rather than individual competition.

Indeed, the number of people who have been involved at various levels of this transcription project is tremendous, and they all deserve both kudos and thanks.

Since EMROC's inception, the Folger Shakespeare Library and its staff – in particular, those involved in the Early Modern Manuscripts Online (EMMO) project – have been integral to the project's work. As Heather Wolfe has mused, "I do think of EMROC and EMMO/Dromio as having a symbiotic relationship in our mutual infancy and preteen years, as we were figuring out the potential to engage with larger and larger audiences through a tiny, buggy portal which we wanted to do all things for all people, but which was originally built to help me teach paleography for the Folger Institute." That portal – the Dromio web platform that facilitated many an EMROC transcribathon – allowed users to transcribe the recipes into digital formatting using only the barest minimum knowledge of coding. And the conversations that sprung up around EMROC transcription efforts has transformed the ways that both the Folger and EMROC work. As Wolfe points out, it has made recipe transcription an international effort encompassing a wide array of libraries:

... EMROC helped us get to where we are today, technology-wise, because you included us in your discussions and planning. We were able to justify the time spent on tweaks and improvements because there was an immediate need which served your audiences and ours. Because you amplified the value of our collection of recipe books, we were able to acquire dozens of additional recipe books, and because of our jointly sponsored transcribathons, we were able to combine transcription communities and build an international audience, which ultimately became the kernel of both *Before Farm to Table* and our *From the Page* partnership with the Wellcome to facilitate the transcription of non-Folger, non-Wellcome recipe books. It's a long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship, plus we love any opportunity to hang out with EMROC because of your energy, enthusiasm, creativity and sense of humor!

Truly, the synergy between EMROC and the Folger Shakespeare library has engendered a great deal of archival and scholarly work.

Recipe Manuscripts

Looking back, this international focus has been a prominent thread since EMROC's beginning days, determining one of our earliest manuscript transcription choices: Ann Fanshawe's manuscript. We adopted this manuscript – Welcomes MS 7113 – while working with a non-Dromio interface both because of its accessibility, since the Wellcome has a policy of open access and the manuscript was fully digitized, and because Ann Fanshawe a known historical figure. She was the wife of Richard Fanshawe, who had served as ambassador to King Charles II's court to various countries, including Ireland, France, Portugal, and Spain. In addition and perhaps more significant to our project, Ann Fanshawe had written an extensive memoir of her life abroad. Thus, we had an understanding of Fanshawe's life, written in her own hand, and could connect many of the recipes and the people in the receipt book manuscript to the narrative of her life. Indeed, such a wealth of knowledge about an early modern manuscript and its originator is rare. The manuscript itself is rich as a cultural document, especially when viewed in conjunction with the memoir. For example, some of the recipes are written in Spanish or Portuguese, or clearly have Iberian connections, such as a whole set of perfume recipes attributed to Francisco Morenos; a recipe for the Portuguese cake, Paõ de ló, (written both in Portuguese

and English); and one of the earliest recipes for Chocolate, a delicacy of Mexican origins and that reveals Spanish imperial/colonial experience.

Another EMROC transcribed recipe manuscript that has yielded important historical and cultural information about early modern England and the Iberian peninsula is the Granville Family Recipe Book (Folger V.a.430), which was owned by at least three generations of women (from c.1640 to 1750). The family, like that of the Fanshaws, had diplomatic connections with the Mediterranean south, as Mary Granville's uncle, John Westcome, was a Consul at Cádiz between 1662 and 1688. Interestingly, many of the Iberian recipes come from male family members who had connections with soldiers and sailors. Tracing the provenance of the recipes and the history of their donors has generated some fascinating connections with other early modern texts and chronicles how recipes create relationships between what might be called strange bedfellows. One recipe in particular from the manuscript, which is for the voiding of kidney stones, comes from a "Captain felpes of bristol" who relayed it to "John Emilli" (John Westcombe) in Cadiz in January 1687. The recipe reveals that Captain "felpes" or Phelps was a slave in the Barbary Coast and that he "moors" (his captors) provided him with this cure, relieving him of much pain. The recipe fails to give any more clues about this strange providence and the story behind it; however, serendipitously, because Phelps published an account of his experience of Moroccan enslavement and subsequent escape in 1685, we have a great deal more context, for example, about slavery and the dissemination of culinary and medicinal knowledge.^[1] Though such connections between recipes and other texts are rare, they do occur, and they offer scholars the opportunity to understand the broad culture and strange networks of recipe exchange. Recipes, thus, have become a new lens with which we can glimpse and gather knowledge about the past, with potential implications for the present and future.

Recipe books like Rebeckah Winche's (Folger V.b.366), the subject of our 2015 transcribathon, meanwhile, highlight the links between domestic recipe compilations and the medical professions. As Elaine Leong wrote in her [introduction to the 2015 transcribathon](#) Winche's father, [Martin Browne](#) (c. 1590-1655) was an active medical practitioner in early modern London and appears in the *Annals* of both the London College of Physicians and the Barber-Surgeons. Like many compilers, Winche often named the people who provided the recipes she included, offering us a glimpse at her social world as well as her medical community. She credits Dr. Briggs for her book's recipe "For the Green sicknes," though it may strike today's readers as less than scientifically legitimate:^[2]

Take a pound of hobnails & put them in to a quart of white wine let them in=fuse a weeke. in a pewter pot, often stiring them uery much; about the full of the moone giue 5 spoofulls & (mixed with as much ale) in a morning fasting & at 4 in the afternoon for 3 days together & let them stir after it (18)

Winche's attributions are not particularly inclined to name doctors, despite her family's medical connections. She traces more recipes to women than to men, suggesting that her book remains firmly anchored in the domestic realm. In fact, it provides a record of family births and deaths on its final pages, with her accounts of "my daughter[s]" rendered in strikingly personal terms (206).

These transcriptions of these and other recipe books are now keyword searchable, thanks to the Folger Shakespeare Library's LUNA interface (<https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/FOLGER~3~3>) and the transcription platform FromthePage <https://fromthepage.com/folger/early-modern-recipe-books>. And the collection is constantly growing, with new transcriptions consistently appearing, thanks to the work of transcribers from all around the world.

The Volume

The first article published in this volume, "Reconstructing Recipes, Recovering Losses, Telling Stories," was written by current EMROC steering committee members, Jennifer Munroe, Hillary M. Nunn, Margaret Simon, and Lisa Smith. These senior scholars provide both a brief history of this Collective focused on early modern recipes but also a clear methodology of research and knowledge recovery when working with the ephemerality of the past, especially domestic manuscripts about which we may or may not know much about the people who wrote, collected, and made these recipes. What becomes more difficult is that much is textually obscure in translation or, more accurately, transcription, since the manuscripts are written in older scripts, perhaps in haste or with abbreviations created by and for those who lived and died three or four hundred years ago. Ingredients and processes are also opaque, and spelling is not standardized. Much indeed stands in between the understanding of the recipes then and our comprehension of them now. Further, the recipes are primarily written and used by women, who are veiled by history, often losing their identities as their maiden names are eclipsed by married names, and by the general lack of esteem of women's writing has suffered in the past, especially the prosaic, quotidian writing meant for household use.

What we see in the article is that the authors are grappling with the many tears, holes, lacunae, and other absences in the recipe texts and the often anonymous or named-but-unknown writers who collected and curated them. The authors and other EMROC scholars—sleuth-like—follow small leads of names, provenance, stories, ingredients, techniques to tell readers a narrative about these written works and the cultures that fostered them. Following a feminist methodology, the authors discuss how collaborative scholarship, mirroring the communal efforts in how the recipes themselves were produced, has enabled a much greater understanding of the texts. This methodology and its attendant practices of digitization and collective transcription unlocks the wealth in the manuscripts to masses of students, scholars, and the interested general public, people who likely would not have known about, much less had access to these historic texts otherwise. In the past, the academy has frowned upon or outright rejected scholarship based on seemingly tenuous evidence and the ensuing leaps of narrative gleaned from these umbrageous texts, but these scholars demonstrate that imagining past lives and cultures through these small glimpses is indeed rather a strength and a necessity for perceiving a larger, more inclusive view of history, especially women's history.

Working with recipe texts serves as the central activity in an undergraduate research project outlined in "Transcribing Recipe Manuscripts Online: V.b. 380 and the "What's in a Recipe?" Undergraduate Research Project at Penn State Abington." Heather Froehlich, and Christina

Riehm-Murphy of the Penn State Library system and Marissa Nicosia, a literary scholar in the PSU Abington English department, describe how they pooled their knowledge to create a multi-term research project for their students as part of *Abington's Undergraduate Research Activities (ACURA) initiative*. Their efforts led undergraduates not only to read, transcribe, and interpret recipe manuscripts, but also allowing them to engage confidently with others who have more experience working with these texts. The students developed their own approaches to their shared manuscript, Folger V.b.380, becoming “part of the EMROC scholarly community as researchers” as they took up their own original research projects. Whether working from home during the pandemic or visiting the Folger Shakespeare Library to meet their manuscript and the people who made it accessible in digital form, students took part in “[a]uthentic legitimate peripheral participation in scholarly practices” that enabled them to see how their work intertwined with the “larger community of scholars researching recipes, manuscripts, science, food, and medicine.”

Scholar Rob Wakemen has mined EMROC’s database of recipe manuscripts, along with extant early modern printed recipe books, to think ecologically about species that have been historically part of our food system and about their depletion due to culinary practices and alimentary desires. In his essay, “Preserving the Last Sturgeon: Appetites for Sustainability in Seventeenth-Century Recipe Books,” Wakemen considers the historic decimation of sturgeon in England and later in New England, and recipes, for Wakeman, uncover evidence that helps us to understand the loss of the sturgeon and the important cultural imagination that surrounds this majestic fish. In the Tudor period, sturgeon was the *pièce de résistance* of the aristocratic and royal banqueting table, but even in this period part of their appeal was their rareness. However, the increasing economic development of riverways in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had true catastrophic consequences for the migratory fish, such as salmon, umber, and sturgeon, that swim between the salt and fresh waters. What Wakeman demonstrates is that recipe collections from the Restoration period have a nostalgia for the grand royal dishes, especially of sturgeon, particularly following the scarcity of luxurious consumption during tumult of the Civil Wars and ideological abstinence of the Puritan Commonwealth government. So while some recipes return to the piscine splendor of the past, requiring the importation of sturgeon from other European waterways or functioning as dishes only of the imagination, other recipes become inventive in replacements for sturgeon, substituting and dressing other meats to appear as the desirable fish. Wakeman’s article is instructive in helping us think through alternatives to current and potential culinary species extinctions, showing us that “recipe culture can provide a framework for thinking otherwise about the relationship between consumer and consumed.”

Taking an altogether different tack of recipe exploration, Grace Beacham examines how medicinal recipes associated with the lungs and breathing and olfactory recipes for perfume explicate early modern (and modern) notions of breath in Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, both textually and somatically. In “Preserving the Spirit in *Antony and Cleopatra*,” Beacham juxtaposes the language of breath and spirit in the play with the living actors’ acts of breathing in their stage/film performances. For Beacham, intangible breath can indeed preserve representations of these historical characters in Shakespeare’s text. Perhaps most iconically in this play is the image of Cleopatra’s perfumed air, generated by her sails, which becomes a “spatiotemporal extension” of Cleopatra herself and her powerful allure. Looking to a filmed performance of the (Ontario) Stratford Shakespeare Festival 2017 *Antony and Cleopatra*,

Beacham discusses how the film, through multiple microphones, captures and preserves the moments of the actor's breath, as well as the exhalations (coughs) of the audience. She writes, "the randomness of a physiological function of breath is precisely what makes the moment authentic and reminds us that real bodies exist in the play and in the audience, just as real bodies surmise the intentions of recipes." With this emphasis on real bodies and the life sustaining significance of breath, Beacham both begins and ends her essay with a discussion about our contemporary concern with breath and breathing in the charged political climate that has brought about the *Black Lives Matter* movement and George Floyd's fatal plea for breath.

In her short article "'Here begins the good': A Woman on the Edge of Medical Practice," one of EMROC's founding members emphasizes, and celebrates, the literary discoveries that can only come with the act of transcription. Algorithms, she argues, cannot uncover the moments that manuscripts capture in their sudden changes in voice and viewpoint. Laroche argues that "scholars of recipes cannot abandon the work of transcription, even as we should be proud of the work accomplished and now made searchable through LUNA and FromthePage." Her essay "reverse[s] the trend that puts recipe books in the service of literature" and uses two better known literary works – Elizabeth Isham's *Booke of Rememberance [sic]* and Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*– to deepen our understanding of Dorothy Shirley's recipe manuscript. Actively transcribing these manuscripts, she concludes, enables scholars to read them closely, and thus assure their place within the field.

Margaret E. Boyle, who teaches cultural history of women in early modern Spain and colonial Latin America, expands upon the benefits of transcription in the classroom in "Multilingual Pasts and Futures: Recipes across Languages." Her discussion of the Granville manuscript in particular highlights how student interactions with recipe manuscripts capture "multinational and cross-cultural conversations among women around recipes as a form of knowledge," expanding their understanding of transatlantic exchanges in the process. Manuscripts like Ann Fanhawe's meanwhile, illustrate the variety of ways these multilingual conversations are recorded on their pages. EMROC's project thus opens up the possibilities of using translation as a means of understanding cross cultural exchange.

A trio of scholars outline how transcribing recipes changed their experience with students at The University of York in "An EMROC Satellite: An Institution-Specific, Interdisciplinary Approach to Transcribing Early Modern Manuscript Recipes." Emma Marshall, Grace Murray from the University of York, and Katherine Hunt (now of University of East Anglia) outline their experiences organizing a campus-based transcribathon as a means of introducing students to interdisciplinary modes of study. They describe the process of creating a toolkit for getting undergraduates ready for transcribing, which in their case helped lead to their successful work with the Johanna St. John manuscript (Wellcome MS. 4338). They are pleased to report that their efforts were recognized with York Open Research Awards in 2022.

In a blog-style short article, "Top Tips from Early Modern Women: Examining Medical Cures in Two Recipe Manuscripts from the Royal College of Physicians and the Wellcome Collection," Librarian Julia Nurse from the Wellcome Library in London, recounts the 2021 EMROC transcribathon, organized in collaboration with the Wellcome Library and Royal College of Physicians (RCP). The focus of the event was a text from each of the archives: *Lady Ayscough's*

Receits of phisick and chirurgery (dated 1692) from the Wellcome Collection and *The Lady Sedley her Receipt book* (dated 1686) from the RCP. Coincidentally, the authors of these texts are potentially related, as Lady Sedley, is thought to be Ann Ayscough, who became Sir Charles Sedley's common law second wife around 1672. Even though Lord Sedley is a well-documented figure in history, scant information exists about the female members of the family. Like so many women who are lost to history, we have only a scant amount knowledge of these two women. The manuscripts, however, do evidence some commonalities, such as two overlapping, though not identical recipes. What Nurse observes is how both manuscripts, like many from aristocratic households, have recipes that are aimed specifically at women and the health and welfare of their families. Nurse ends her piece with a lineup of recipe highlights from Lady Ayscough's manuscript.

We hope that this volume inspires students and scholars, both new to and experienced with EMROC, to contribute to the ongoing expansion of the recipe manuscript database through transcription (individual/class/transcribathons) and to delve deep into the archives to discover new ways that recipes can illuminate the past, reveal greater understanding of our present, and engender a more sustainable, balanced future. Though recipes have in the past been often treated as mundane and therefore not an important field of study, they are in fact at the heart of what it is to live upon the earth. They tell us much about culture, about what we value, what we enjoy, how we stay or become healthy, how we treat the non-human creatures around us, and how we and our planet can and should thrive.

For information about participating in EMROC, especially the annual Transcribathons, please visit the [EMROC website](#).

On **November 4, 2022, EMROC will be hosting the next Transcribathon** in partnership with the Wellcome Library and the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), both housed in London, and the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, D.C. This year, you can join EMROC to transcribe [Mary Hawker's](#) manuscript (MS 9304) from the Wellcome Collection, and [a collection of medical receipts and prescriptions \(MS 502\)](#) from the RCP. The Folger will be providing support via the FromthePage transcription interface.

EMROC Scholarship

Finally, we end our introduction with a selected list of scholarship created by EMROC members and/or derived from the database that EMROC has populated with transcribed recipe manuscripts.

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[1] For more information about the Granville manuscript, this recipe, and its connections to slavery, see Amy L. Tigner, "Transborder kitchens: Iberian recipes in seventeenth-century English Manuscripts," *History of Retail and Consumption* 5, no. 1 (2019): 51-70.

[2] For more information about green sickness, see Hillary Nunn, "On Vegetating Virgins: Green Sickness and the Plant Realm," in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, edited by Jean Feerick and Vin Nardizzi, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 159-77.