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Multilingual Pasts and Futures: Recipes Across Languages

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On the occasion of the Early Modern Recipes Online Collective (EMROC) celebrating a decade of collaboration and innovation, I am grateful to reflect on the ways this project bolsters our teaching of early modern recipes and its potential for elevating multilingual recipes and the broader culture of multilingualism during the period. As an early modernist researching and teaching the cultural history of women in early modern Spain and colonial Latin America, my teaching and research traces life stories across a variety of literary and historical texts, including recipe collections. I frequently cite Edith Snook's definition of early modern recipes in the context of these geographies as "the most culturally pervasive form of women's writing engaged in Atlantic knowledge exchange."[\[1\]](#)

My undergraduate courses dealing with recipes compile primary texts and discussion questions to explore a variety of topics, including access to ingredients, location of preparations, intended makers, and recipients.[\[2\]](#) We use the specificity from each recipe as a way to better grapple with sense of place, considering for example how plants and animals from Spain were introduced into the Americas, while New World plants such as sassafras and tobacco, alongside foods including chocolate and tomatoes, became part of European diets and medical treatments. We study how bezoar stones from Andean camelids were harvested and circulated to produce drug antidotes across Europe.[\[3\]](#) While my primary sources are not traditionally categorized under the framework of "recipes written in English", our ongoing

collaborations with EMROC have demonstrated how English-language recipes intersect with a global network of ingredients and makers, and demonstrate what Mary Louise Pratt has described as the “lived reality of multilingualism and the imperatives of global relations.”^[4]

Animating these conversations related to place, my undergraduate classroom community and sense of self as a faculty member at a liberal arts college is bolstered by EMROC’s annual transcribathons, promoting awareness of manuscript preservation, transcription, and analysis. Each year my students in Maine are invited to connect with wide communities of recipe enthusiasts, students, and scholars across the United States and around the world. The format and organization model democratization in the creation of scholarship, and the immediate impact of open-source transcribing and digitization, as well as the experiential enthusiasms of scholarly community, with increasingly impressive opportunities for students to connect in real time about the historical impact of recipes writ large and the minute details of transcription as process. I likewise find regular inspiration from EMROC blogs on pedagogy, where for example I modeled classroom activities from other colleagues.^[5] I was particularly interested in hands-on experiences related to the teaching of recipes via making and testing early modern recipes in real time. In the case of one final project at Bowdoin, our school cafeteria supported the endeavor with a surprise night on campus of early modern lentils and stews, even rabbit empanadas that landed a headline in our college newspaper.

For Spanish-English recipes in particular, a well-loved example from the EMROC archive is of course the [Granville manuscript](#). The collection prompts conversation related to recipe circulation in the Iberian context, demonstrating ties between England and Spain, the global circulation of ingredients (including cacao from the Americas), and variety of preparations. Three generations of English women — Mary Granville, her mother Mary, and her daughter Anne D’Ewes — authored the Granville recipe collection between 1640-1750 and includes a range of recipes: savory stews, baked goods, preserves, candies, beauty treatments, cures for ailments.

It is also fascinating for its conversation across generations, the lively editing within the manuscript indicative of refining and testing over time (diverse methods of preparation and evidence for trial and error). Although the family resided in England, Mary Granville was the daughter of Sir Martin Westcomb, former English Consul in Cádiz. Many of the recipes reference Cádiz, and several are written in Spanish. While the international content of this collection is worth emphasizing, even more compelling is the way the recipes evidence multinational and cross-cultural conversations among women around recipes as a form of knowledge.

Another recipe book featured in the 2021 transcribathon was compiled primarily by Lady Ann Fanshawe, and later her daughter Katherine, between 1651 and 1678. Fanshawe spent considerable time in Spain, as the wife of diplomat Richard, who was posted as ambassador ordinary to Spain in 1664–1666, when the majority of the Iberian recipes was collected. Fanshawe's book focuses on Spanish perfume recipes as well as some culinary recipes, including chocolate. These various multilingual collections provide specific evidence of cross-cultural circulation of knowledge pertinent to health and well-being. The organization of

these multilingual collections are varied: side-by-side translations, bilingual editions (one copy following another), and hybrid forms (multiple languages used within a single recipe or imperfect translations).

As stand-alone volumes or in conversation with one another, the multilingualism of these collections raise challenging questions concerning audience and readership, cultural knowledge, dissemination, and appropriation. Through the study of recipes, we can also recover new narratives about the lives of early modern women, who were authoritative though frequently contested administrators of domestic life. Women made and used recipes to attend to themselves and their families, for a wide range of purposes: treating ailments, self-fashioning, preparing meals, and complying to gendered aesthetic and social norms. Increasingly I have turned to examples of bilingual, multilingual, or translingual texts that demonstrate the multiple proficiencies of their makers and the vibrant network of languages for the period. It is my hope that in the next decade of EMROC we will uncover additional layers of these multilingual conversations within and across collections and turn to translation and comparison as widen our understanding of multilingual recipe communities in the global early modern.

[1] Edith Snook, "English Women's Writing and Indigenous Medical Knowledge," in *A History of Early Modern Women's Literature*, ed. Patricia Phillippy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 383.

[2] Selections from Nicolás Monardes's *Primera y segunda y tercera partes de la historia medicinal de las cosas que se traen de nuestras Indias Occidentales que sirven en medicina* (1565) provided us much needed contemporary context, with catalogues of ingredients and descriptions of preparations.

[3] Marcia Stephenson, "From Marvelous Antidote to the Poison of Idolatry: The Transatlantic Role of Andean Bezoar Stones During the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (2010): 3–39.

[4] Mary Louise Pratt, "Building a New Public Idea about Language," *Profession* (2003): 111.

[5] For more on the results of this work, see "Teaching Transcription and Recipes at a Liberal Arts College," Dec. 20 2017, <https://emroc.hypotheses.org/1521>