SALÁTÁK ÉS SAVANYÚSÁG

SALADS AND PICKLES

"WHEN I WAS GREEN IN JUDGMENT, COLD IN BLOOD":

The Salad in Late Medieval England

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"'This is dainty for company,' suggested a contributor to *New England Kitchen Magazine*, and gave directions for a cheese salad that she made by adding granulated gelatin to a boiled dressing, then folding in whipped cream and grated cheese, and molding the mixture in egg cups for individual servings. Mayonnaise, which scientific cooks had tended to spread as a cloak over the surface of a salad, now [c. 1890s] could be easily stiffened with gelatin and used to harden a chicken salad that had been shaped to look like a chop, with a bit of almond representing the bone."[1] Far removed as this tiny, ersatz mutton-hock may be from the first leafy salads, its association with the dainty female sex seems persistent: "Despite the often hefty ingredients that were assembled in its name," Laura Shapiro writes, "the salad course never lost its original image as a fragile, leafy interlude that was something of a nutritional frill. […] Salads were perceived as ladies' food, reflecting the image of frailty attached to the women who made them."[2] The following brief peek behind the scenes sheds light to some aspects of the continued association of salad greens with women, starting with the first documented bowl of the stuff in England—both in Richard II's time and in Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

Surveying mostly Dutch and northern European sources, Johanna Maria van Winter considers salads a Renaissance innovation.[3] Although they may have been embraced as a worthy topic by literate mankind as late as the Renaissance, raw leafy greens have always undoubtedly been part of both everyday diets and luxury menus. There are several early witnesses to culinary arts in Richard II's England, such as *Diuersa servicia* (*c.* 1381), *The Boke of Kokery* (*c.* 1440), and *The Forme of Cury* (*c.* 1390s).[4] It is the latter that contains the first (and, for a long time, only) English salad recipe whose ingredients suggest the use of a rather wide variety of leafy greens.[5]

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1 Shapiro 2001: 94.

2 Shapiro 2001: 95.

3 Winter 2007: 367–378.

4 For the text of the *Diuersa seruicia* (Bodleian Library, MS Douce 257, fols 86^{r}–96^{v}), see Hieatt – Butler 1985: 62–79.

5 The *Forme of Cury* is the core of a large and convoluted corpus of texts that contain the recipes found in MS Harley 4016. For example, A *Boke of Kokery* can also be found in a manuscript made in England in around 1430, now known as London, British Library, Harley MS 279, probably written between 1430 and 1440, which probably was one of the sources for MS Harley 4016. This copy is divided into three parts: a "Kalendare de Potages dyvers" (diverse directory/ guide/ list of dishes); a "kalendare de Leche Metys" (guide to sliced meats); and "Dyverse bake metis" (Diverse baked meats), and, similarly to MS Harley 4016, includes bills of fare for a number of extravagant banquets. *The Forme of Cury*, London, British Library, Additional MS 5016 (roll) is nearly identical with Manchester, John Rylands University Library, English MS 7 (codex). There are, of course, more than these two books; similar texts form a large, interrelated corpus of recipe collections, for example, clusters of recipes in London, British Library, Harley 5401 also

.lxxiiij. Salat.
Take persel, sauge, garlek, chy
bollus, oynouns, leke, borage,
myntes, poorettes, fenell, and
towne tressis, rewe, rosmarye,
purslary, lave & waische hem
clene, pyke hem pluk hem small
with thyne honde & myng hem
wel with rawe oyle, lay on
vyneger & salt & serve hem forth.[6]

This recipe prompts some gentle myth-busting. Among others, Melitta Weiss Adamson notes that based on humoral medicine the "recommendation was to eat the salad first, and the hot dishes afterward to counteract the salad's *cooling effect*."[7] Van Winter looks at the Galenic medicine in Ibn Butlan's eleventh-century *Tacuinum Sanitatis* and Maino de Maineri's fourteenth-century *Regimen sanitatis*, to find out about the medieval attitudes towards "lettuce, a main ingredient in most salads."[8] She describes a general suspicion toward lettuce on account of it being cold and moist, and thus capable of quenching both thirst and sexual desire.[9] It is noteworthy, however, that the English recipe bypasses both the dangerous lettuce and cabbage.[10] There is no mention of chard, spinach, and similar vegetables grown in kitchen gardens either. Instead, the *salat* is herby and aromatic, and not for the faint-hearted: the strong—not to mention bitter—flavors of the

correspond to these to some extent but are different. A later one, *Ancient Cookery*, is found in a miscellany (London, British Library, Arundel 334), which also contains a chronicle from 1326 to 1399, *De remediis utriusque fortune*, extract (f. 10); and *Epigramma de Goliardo et episcopo*; written in before the mid-fifteenth century. It was printed in Antiquitates Culinariæ 1791: 37–90, which also contains the text of *The Forme of Cury*.

6 "74. Salad. Take parsley, sage, garlic, green / onions, onions, leeks, borage, / mint, young onions, fennel and watercress, rue, rosemary, / purslane; wash and rinse them [until] / clean, pick and pluck them finely / with your hands, mix / well with raw oil; add / vinegar and salt, and serve." *Fourme of cury*, Manchester, John Rylands University Library, English MS 7, fols 40^{v}-41$^{r.}$

7 Weiss Adamson 2004: 143. My italics.

8 Winter 2007: 369.

9 Weiss Adamson 2004: 370–371.

10 Cabbage was not only the commoners' pottage vegetable but was also thought to cause melancholy and nightmares. The complete absence of lettuce in the English notion of salad is also visible in horticultural works. Fromond's *Herbys necessary for a gardyn* (*c.* 1525), for example, lists the following as "Herbs for Salad": Alexandrum, Borage, Calamint, Chickweed, Chives, French Cress, Daisies, Dandelion, Fennel, Heartsease, Mints, Red Nettle, Parsley, Primrose buds, Purslane, Rampion, Ramsons [wild garlic], Rocket, Violet, Burnet, Cresses. Landsberg 2003: 80. A similar (and even more flowery) list can be found in the herb list of London, British Library, Sloane 1201. "Also of the same Herbes for a Salade. Buddus of Stanmarche, Vyolette flourez, Percely, Redmynte, Syves, Cresse of Boleyn, Purselan, Ramsons, Calamynte, Prime Rose buddus, Dayses, Rapunses, Daundelyon, Rokette, Red nettell, Borage flourez, Croppus of Red Fennell, Selbestryn, Chykynwede." (Also of the same herbs for a salad: Alexandrum buds, Violet flowers, Parsley, Red Mint, Chives, French Cress, Purslane, Wild Garlic, Apple Mint, Primrose buds, Daisies, Rampion, Dandelion, Rocket, Red Nettle, Borage flowers, crops of Red Fennel, *Silvestrine, Chickweed). Printed in Amherst 2013: 72.

green herbs were further intensified by the pungent aroma of onion, garlic, and shallots added in unknown proportions. The resulting mixture of greens used in the *salat* are, in fact, considered hot (both moist and dry) in Galenic medicine. This was clearly a well-known fact, for example, the Middle English translation of Guy de Chauliac's *Grande Chirurgie* warns thusly: "Escwe he also fro tosted þingez, rosted, fried, *salatez acetose* & sharp as beþ garlekez, oynounz, piper, mustard, & al þingez brennyng blode."[11]

Salad greens, albeit obviously grown in English gardens and enjoyed at English tables, did not make an appearance in literature until much later. And when they did, their qualities were fully exploited. Of course, as the author who also famously coined the phrase 'salad days' in Antony and Cleopatra, it is Shakespeare who can provide a glimpse into the perceived place and character of salad greens hidden in a luscious garden scene.[12] In Richard II (1595), he constructs a vivid and complex metaphor for the English realm by the image of less-than-perfect greenery in the Duke of York's garden. In the scene, a servant asks the gardener why the two of them should bother to maintain order within their garden in Langley, when the country around it has been allowed to sprout weeds and be infested by pests—mismanagement and unpopular advisors.[13]

Naturally, Shakespeare's description of the Duke of York's fourteenth-century garden represents how the horticultural space of a noble household was imagined in the late sixteenth century, and it is governed by Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic necessities. However, as Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe point out, the Langley garden where the queen also appears to eavesdrop on the horticultural/political discussion of the commoners was more than a simple metaphor for the state and the king, primarily because it was written to be performed on stage where the spatial references to actual plants made sense.[14] The scene is part of a complicated interplay between the human and non-human bodies occupying the space therein, whether momentarily or habitually. In this vein, Laroche and Munroe particularly emphasize the synergy of the female figure and the reference to the "bank of rue" at the end of the scene—a plant that was commonly known as "herb of grace" for its widely acknowledged healing qualities, and which is also found in our *salat* recipe above.

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[11] "He [should] also abstain from toasted, roasted and fried things; salads vinegary and sharp as are garlic, onions, pepper, mustard and all things that heat the blood." New York, Academy of Medicine, MS 12, illustrated Middle English codex, fourteenth or fifteenth century, my italics. https://digitalcollections.nyam.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A1109?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=9db7c5bef5aa9363c422&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0

[12] I borrowed Cleopatra's description of her 'salad days' for the title of the present essay. William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act I, Scene 5.

[13] William Shakespeare, *The Life and Death of Richard the Second*, Act 3, Scene 4; the Duke of York's garden at Langley (now Kings Langley, Hertfordshire). The choice of place is not coincidental: Richard II died in prison at Pontefract Castle, and his body was buried at the church of Kings Langley before his remains were moved to Westminster Abbey.

[14] Laroche – Munroe 2014: 42–50. See also the correlation of the queen's image in the play and in the Wilton diptych, the latter probably made for Richard's private devotions (about 1395–99). The left panel shows three saints with a kneeling Richard II, facing the virgin with child and other saints in the right panel. The virgin, a reference to Richard's child bride, seems to be standing in a paradise garden with flowers growing at her feet. Barron 1993.

QUEEN

Nimble mischance, that art so light of foot,
Doth not thy embassage belong to me,
And am I last that knows it? O, thou think'st
To serve me last, that I may longest keep
Thy sorrow in my breast. Come, ladies, go,
To meet at London London's king in woe.
What, was I born to this, that my sad look
Should grace the triumph of great Bolingbroke?
Gardener, for telling me these news of woe,
Pray God the plants thou graft'st may never grow.
Exeunt QUEEN and Ladies

GARDENER

Poor queen! so that thy state might be no worse,
I would my skill were subject to thy curse.
Here did she fall a tear; here in this place
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace:
Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen,
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.

Laroche and Munroe suggest that Shakespeare here references the ability of simples and kitchen garden plants to balance the body, both physical and politic.[15] It is not unimportant that Shakespeare consciously referred to humoral medicine in his works, whereby women were considered cold and moist, as opposed to the dry heat of men.[16] Surely, the low temperatures of the fairer sex calls for a good hot English salad! More importantly, the lowly but powerful greens also show Shakespeare's ability to direct the limelight to the ever-so-important marginal in this scene—the queen's body and the bank of rue, the sidelined remedy that is at once bitter and wholesome in its natural power:

The material specificity of the bank of rue contributes to an understanding of the analogy to the Queen's body the gardener implies. As the queen stands outside the realm of women's work, she nonetheless stands as representative of women in the play, both above and of them. The Queen is literally separated from the political realm at this moment, having been shuffled off to the York estate, as her weeping, fertile body is too potent for the political hotbed of London.

[15] Laroche – Munroe 2014: 48–49.

[16] In the *Taming of the Shrew*, for example, Petruchio denies his wife dinner, claiming that roasted meat is too hot and dry for her nature. He intends to change her by removing the accumulation of hot, dry choler in her body: "I'll curb her mad and headstrong humor." Act 4, Scene 1.

Similarly, rue, while distinguished among herbs for its healing potentials, is planted separately from the wholesome herbs elsewhere sown in the play.[17]

While the recipe of the *salat* above is inserted between other vegetable-based dishes that are all cooked, it is one of the few recipes in the book where the ingredients are not boiled into oblivion but enjoyed fresh and green. Much like the queen's nubile body, "too potent for the political hotbed of London," raw salad ingredients are untamed, untouched by men.[18] Uncooked food was often mentioned in tones of caution at the time. As sixteenth-century Thomas Elyot warns his readers in a truly Galenic vein, consuming *herbes* raw or in potage was seen as potentially dangerous: "Herbes used in potage, or to eate. Cap. 15. Generally all herbes raw, and not fodden, do ingender cold & watry iuyce, if they be eaten customably, or in abundance: albeit fome herbes are more comestible, and do laffe harme unto nature, & moderatly ufid, maketh metely good blud."[19] Notably, while Galenic medicine was cautious about consuming raw greens, they were recommended for both women and animals: "[Jacques] Guillimeau itemizes the foods a wet nurse should eat or avoid: no spicy or strong foods, boiled meats, eggs rather than fish, no raw fruits, but generous use of local greens such as 'Lettuce, Sorrell, Purcelaine, Borage, Buglosse, and Succory'. [Thomas] Moffett provides a comparable list for animals."[20] The balance between the natural power of the queen still in her 'salad years', whose tears nourish the dangerously potent leafy greens on the edge of the stage, makes Shakespeare's garden a site of raw, untamed natural energy and power.

"At the end of winter and the beginning of spring it was said proverbially among women that every green plant goes into a salad." Citing Costanzo Felici's 1570 treatise "On Salads and Plants That in Some Way Become Food for Humans," Massimo Montanari suggests an important connection between women and the growing and use of leafy greens—practical botanical knowledge that is inaccessible ~~even~~ for the most famous scholars "'because they [women] mix into them many plants without names or scarcely used.' Just that: plants without names. Felici seems to be admitting that peasant women gather plants whose existence even university professors ignore."[21]

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17 Laroche – Munroe 2014: 49.

18 The queen's body in this scene also plays an important role in Marian interpretation. Ostovich, for instance, suggests that Shakespeare portrayed her as a child approaching puberty, and the garden scene is constructed to show her "promise of fruitfulness and vitality." Ostovich, 2007: 32.

19 "Herbs used in pottage or to eat [raw]. Chapter 15. Generally all raw and uncooked herbs cause cold and moist humors, when eaten regularly or in abundance; however, some herbs are easier to digest, cause less harm to one's nature, and make rather good blood when used in moderation." Elyot, 1541: 27. Probably based on the same logic, he also notes in chapter 24 ("Of tyme"), that in wintertime "herbes be not than commendable, specially raw, neither fruites, excepte quynces rosted or baked" (neither herbs nor fruits are recommended, especially raw, except roasted or baked quince). Elyot 1541: 36. Note that the pagination is garbled in the volume.

20 Bassnett 2016: 87. Citing *The Nursing of Children* by Jacques *Guillemeau* (*c.* 1550-1613), and *Healths Improvement* by Thomas Moffett (1553-1604). In this respect, van Winter also reminds us that *lactuca* (lettuce) derives its name from *lac* (milk) because it was thought to fill the bosom of nursing women. Winter 2005: 372.

21 Montanari 2015: 83–84.

Throughout the whole collection of her articles, van Winter repeatedly and rightfully remarks the limitations of the available evidence, which principally relate to the nobility, the clergy, and the wealthy.[22] Besides this well-known inherent bias of written sources, the hidden clues in Shakespeare's garden presented above perhaps suffice to show that another reason for the relative invisibility of raw salads was their multifarious association with women. Shakespeare found the perfectly layered metaphor in rue and planted it in his realistic garden, making more out of it than the obvious play on words and the familiar flavor. The reasons why salads for long remained outside literacy are precisely why he chose this type of plant for his scene: their well-known physical marginality and Galenic powers which contributed to their enduring position in the feminine space—far from the royal cooks' male gaze, or even curiosity.

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[22] Winter 2007.