

5-28-2018

“Gold—it needs more gold”: John Ford, Food, and Alchemy in Peter Greenway’s *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*

Sally J. Templeman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/emc>

Recommended Citation

Sally J. Templeman (2018) ““Gold—it needs more gold”: John Ford, Food, and Alchemy in Peter Greenway’s *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*,” *Early Modern Culture*: Vol. 13 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/emc/vol13/iss1/3>

This Standard Essay is brought to you for free and open access by TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Early Modern Culture by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

“Gold—it needs more gold”: John Ford, Food, and Alchemy in Peter Greenaway’s *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*

SALLY J. TEMPLEMAN

Peter Greenaway has admitted that he based aspects of his film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* on satirical English Jacobean drama in general and on John Ford’s revenge tragedy *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* in particular.¹ He claims to have been especially interested in this genres’ “obsession for human corporeality—eating, drinking, defecating, copulating, belching, vomiting, nakedness, and blood,” and by Ford’s serious and compassionate treatment of incest, on which he modelled his film’s treatment of another taboo act: human cannibalism.² In fact, the relationship between film and play goes significantly beyond these acknowledged instances. In particular, the centrality of food in Greenaway’s film involves, to paraphrase Linda Hutcheon, the (re)-interpretation and the (re)-creation of culinary aspects of *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*.³ In Ford’s play, food has an integral relationship with violence: feasts are sites of murder and mayhem; wine is poisoned; eating implements become murder weapons; and human organs are metaphorically transformed into food. Greenaway weaponizes this aspect of Ford’s play, adds a dash of alchemy, and with these ingredients he creates a biting satire on modern greed in general and Thatcherism in particular.⁴

Ford’s play concerns Giovanni (a bookish young man), who develops an incestuous passion for his sister, Annabella. When he discovers that his sibling reciprocates his desire, the two consummate their relationship. As she is unable to marry her brother, Annabella agrees to marry one of her suitors, Soranzo, but the ceremony has to be brought forward when Annabella discovers she is pregnant with her brother’s child. Soranzo’s castoff mistress, Hippolita, comes to the wedding feast with revenge in mind. However, her plan to murder Soranzo is prevented by Soranzo’s servant, Vasques, and Hippolita is poisoned and dies in torment, cursing the newlyweds. When Soranzo discovers Annabella’s incest and its consequences, he plots revenge. He and Vasques plan to exact this revenge with the help of hired assassins, or “*Banditti*?” at Soranzo’s birthday banquet (5.4.1-19; 5.6.79-86). On arrival at the feast, Giovanni is sent to fetch his sister as a ruse to encourage him, in Vasques’ words, to “glut himself in his own destruction” (5.4.45). As they talk, the siblings realize their situation is hopeless. Giovanni stabs Annabella during a kiss, cuts out her heart, and bears the organ into the banquet on the point of his dagger. He then offers it to Soranzo: “Here, here, Soranzo!” (5.6.10). Predictably, violence ensues; during which, all members of the Giovanni family and Soranzo are killed. In the moral world of the play, justice has been

served: those who have committed incest and those who have failed to punish it are dead. Revenge, then, is delivered in and contained within a culinary space, and its victims are confined to those who have been invited to consume therein.

Cannibalism and Incest

Marion Lomax interprets the incest in Ford’s play—which triggers Giovanni’s quasi-cannibalistic, heart-offering act—as a metaphor for “the evils in [a] society” in which “the incestuous relationship emerges as an inevitable response to an inward-looking world where most values are distorted and strictures are rigidly applied to keep everyone in the places their sex or social position decrees.”⁵ Frustratingly little information about Ford’s life has survived, but it is possible that his social concerns centered on religion. Lisa Hopkins contends that the playwright may have been part of a “Catholic coterie.”⁶ If so, in early modern Protestant England, this religious stance would have represented an extremely dangerous act of conscience. Persecution drove Catholics to worship in secret because, if discovered, they faced torture and/or execution. If Ford was willing to run these risks, it demonstrates that he may have been as passionately pro-Catholic as Greenaway is passionately anti-consumerism.⁷

A flashpoint between early modern Catholics and Protestants (for which many martyrs on both sides of the religious divide were burned at the stake) centered on a ritual of consumption: the Sacrament. Protestants believed (and believe) that the bread and wine of the Sacrament function as symbols of Christ’s blood and flesh. Catholics believed (and believe) that the bread and wine transubstantiate into Christ’s blood and flesh. To many early modern Protestants, therefore, the Catholic Eucharist represented a form of cannibalistic consumption. To many early modern Catholics, by comparison, the Protestant Eucharist was regarded as inadequate and insubstantial. Thus, Hopkins interprets Ford’s “broken banquets” in plays such as *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* as “constituting an indictment of the fundamental inadequacy of the ultimate insubstantial banquet, the Protestant communal ceremony, and the spiritual starvation to which it gave rise.”⁸ Possibly, Ford intended the quasi-cannibalistic moment in *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*—during which a human heart is offered by one Catholic character, Giovanni, to another, Soranzo—to operate as a satirical repudiation of Protestant accusations of Catholic cannibalism because, after all, Soranzo declines to consume the organ “trimmed in reeking blood” (5.6.9-12).

Although Greenaway replaces the incest in his source with adultery, he seizes on Ford’s suggestion of cannibalism and expands it into a bleak, anthropophagous climax for his dark political satire. In *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, Greenaway transforms Giovanni into his eponymous Lover, Michael. Like Giovanni, Michael puts aside his beloved books in order to converse “with lust and death” by beginning an adulterous, rather than incestuous, affair with the Wife: Albert Spica’s wife, Georgina (1.1.58). Ford’s womanizing Soranzo becomes Greenaway’s wife-beating Thief, Albert Spica. Both cuckolded husbands have misogynistic and violent relationships with

women. Soranzo seduces the pure, but married, Hippolita by promising her that he “wished no happiness on earth/ More than to call [her] wife” (2.2.69-70). When her husband is rumored to have died while travelling, however, Soranzo reneges on his promise and tells Hippolita that he hates her “monstrous life,” her lust, and her foulness (2.2.95, 99). Upon discovering Annabella’s incest, Soranzo uses similar language to describe his wife as a “damned whore” and he threatens to drag her pregnant “lust-belepered body through the dust” by her hair (4.3.60-1). Greenaway gleefully materializes both the misogyny and the threat in his film. Albert not only labels his wife as an “ungrateful bitch,” but he also drags her through the restaurant when he begins to suspect her of having an affair (4.3.60-1).⁹ Thus, both playwright and filmmaker use unhappy and violent marital relationships to offer microcosmic models of the dysfunctional society in which they believed them to operate.

Moreover, in line with the oft used early modern trope that saw women depicted as food for men to consume, male revenge on female transgressions in Ford’s play is often expressed using a culinary register.¹⁰ Soranzo threatens to tear his adulterous wife apart “joint by joint” with his teeth like meat; Giovanni transforms his sister’s heart into a piece of meat skewered on a dagger; and, for her complicity in the siblings’ incest, Annabella’s tutor, Putana, is condemned to be roasted over a fire like a meat carcass (4.3.54-61). Greenaway adapts this cannibalistic convention in his film, but he is less gender specific than Ford. Although Albert reduces Patricia to something like meat when he stabs her in the face with a fork for taunting him with the truth about the lovers, he also threatens to cook and eat Michael: “I’ll kill that bloody book-reading jerk! I’ll kill him and I’ll bloody eat him.”¹¹ Albert carries out the first part of his threat by stuffing Michael to death with pages torn from Michael’s favorite book, *History of the French Revolution*, but cannibalism is, initially at least, a step too far for this particular revenger. Instead, with a nod to the film’s source genre (revenge tragedy), Albert expresses concern that Michael’s death should look like “a dignified revenge killing” rather than just “a sex murder.”¹² Nevertheless, he is unable to resist mixing his “dignified revenge killing” with a culinary joke by drafting Michael’s obituary in the style of a food review: “he was stuffed,” says Albert, “and Albert liked good food.”¹³ In Greenaway’s film, then, revenge is a culinary act that transforms erstwhile consumers into gruesome consumables.

Food also influences the setting for *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*. On the one hand, Greenaway creates a delicious helping of irony by setting his anti-greed film in an *haute cuisine* restaurant: an establishment designed to encourage guests to conspicuously and expensively consume. On the other hand, he may also have found inspiration for his restaurant-based setting in Ford’s play. *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* is set in Parma, which is an area famous since before the medieval period for producing *prosciutto crudo* (dry-cured ham) and *Parmigiano-Reggiao* (Parmesan cheese). Greenaway, thus, exchanges the play’s food-producing region for his film’s food-producing venue. Further inspiration for his setting may have come from the fact that, for an early modern play, *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* is unusually rich in banquets.

Research by Alfred Harbage, which was revised by S. Schoenbaum and Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim, lists some 489 extant plays (both printed and in manuscript form) that were performed in public and private playhouses between 1584 and 1642.¹⁴ Chris Meads has identified 114 banquet scenes in

“Gold—it needs more gold”

99 of these plays.¹⁵ On this evidence, only 20.2% of plays from this period include an onstage feast, and only some 3.1% contain more than one such occasion.

Probably for practical reasons, early modern playwrights were much more likely to refer to offstage meals than to stage them. Shakespeare, for example, staged meals in very few of his 38 plays: there are eight such plays if the count includes *The Tempest*'s magic banquet, which disappears before any of the characters can eat, and the sheep-shearer's feast in *A Winter's Tale*, which despite the setting makes no mention of staged food.¹⁶ Even if banquet properties were fixed to a table top or board, as Peter Holland suggests, this board would still need to be maneuvered onstage and then offstage from a wingless thrust stage.¹⁷ It would also need to have been accompanied by numerous chairs and stools together with any unfixed cutlery, glasses, or food that were required as usable properties (actors could neither drink from glasses fixed to boards, nor appear to consume food that was similarly secured). In a dramatic culture that relied on minimal rehearsal, feasts on the early modern stage also required the choreographing of stage space and bodies to ensure that all characters were seen and heard.¹⁸

Undeterred by such staging challenges, however, Ford wrote two banquet scenes for *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Dramatically, their function is threefold. First, they provide a motive for a group of diverse characters to gather in one place. Secondly, they provide a space in which violence can be both triggered and contained: both perpetrators and victims are restricted to the banquet-going group, which includes the “*Banditt?*” invited by Soranzo. Thirdly, disrupted or broken banquets that degenerate into violence provided dramatists with the perfect device to comment upon notions of civilized conviviality in their society. As Michel Jeanneret points out, since the classical period, the dining table has been viewed as “a microcosm of society, the ideal place for communication, the nexus where ideas are exchanged, where social relationships are formed and where people learn how to respect each other.”¹⁹ This civilized ideal provided rich material for early modern playwrights to satirize.

Both the banquets that Ford wrote for *'Tis Pity She's a Whore's* are broken. The first occurs during Annabella's and Soranzo's wedding celebration. It is broken when Hippolita comes to the feast bearing gifts: a masque, which is performed, and poisoned wine, with which she intends to poison her former lover. Although her culinary-based revenge is thwarted by Soranzo's servant, her presence at the feast mocks Soranzo's alleged morality and overturns any notion of civilized conviviality at the wedding. Ford's message is clear: this is a world with distorted values in which “incest and cuckoldry” are quite at home (5.2.2).

'Tis Pity She's a Whore's second banquet, Soranzo's birthday-cum-revenge feast, is both broken and grotesque. As the scene begins, Annabella “Like a good housewife, [is] scarcely ready yet”; so when her brother-cum-lover arrives, Soranzo tells Giovanni to “walk to [Annabella's] chamber . . . [and] . . . get her forth” (5.4.40-43). Annabella, however, warns her brother not to be deceived by Soranzo's apparent conviviality because the banquet is actually “an harbinger of death” (5.5.26-7). Her prediction proves correct. Giovanni has turned mad with jealousy: “Thou art a faithless sister,” he tells Annabella (5.5.9). Prompted by a perverted desire to protect Annabella's honor—“To save

thy fame, and kill thee in a kiss”—and craving revenge—“Revenge is mine; honour doth love command”—Giovanni kills and carves up his sister (5.5.84-6). When he carries her bloody heart into Soranzo’s banquet, as mentioned above, murder and mayhem ensue.

Greenaway expands on both the culinary and critical aspects of Ford’s play by structuring his action around eight feasts held over an eight-day period. Two of these occasions are of the grotesque, anti-feast variety, and they function as brackets to contain the film world’s action and its remaining banquets. Thus, the conspicuous consumers that frequent Greenaway’s restaurant are themselves trapped and contained by acts of obscene consumption. I will return to this idea below.

In the film’s opening obscene feast, Albert and his cronies strip and humiliate Roy, an unfortunate who owes Albert money, and then treat him to what Albert describes as “a good meal,” dog excrement with which he is smeared, and “a good drink,” Albert’s urine with which he is sprayed.²⁰ As he humiliates Roy, Albert directs an inaccurately pronounced culinary monologue at his victim: “I need to eat and drink the very best—and that’s very expensive. Have you heard of Chicken à La Reine Marie, or Oyster Sauce Mornay, or Frog’s Legs à la Parisienne?”²¹ Thus, Albert’s character (a philistine and greedy consumer), his *modus operandi* (thug and bully), and the film’s position on consumerism (as deviant and immoral) are established from the outset using this extreme example of grotesque consumption.

While Ford’s target may have been state-sponsored Protestantism, Greenaway’s target is state-sponsored capitalism. More specifically, it is Margaret Thatcher’s government, which operated from 1975 to 1990. Thatcherism’s support for private over state industry, free-market economics, and monetarism led to the reduction and/or removal of subsidies for the Arts and, what Greenaway viewed as, an irresponsible surge in consumerism.²² In an interview with Stephanie McBride, Greenaway said that he created the “appalling character Albert Speaker” to embody “the Thatcherite condition, which created an unequal and very unjust world which was very philistine, very much concerned with the price of everything and the value of very little.”²³

Greenaway balances the quasi-allegorical figure of Greed and Philistinism, Albert Speaker, with its antithesis: the Lover (Michael), who represents the Arts through his association with literature. He is the film’s art lover; his ubiquitous books are only absent during his sex scenes and during the lovers’ escape-in-the-van scene; and only Michael rejects the conspicuous consumption of material goods in favor of the consumption of knowledge and literature: a point neatly made by showing him too diverted by his book to eat his *haute cuisine* dinner. Michael’s isolation from the other diners in the restaurant; his bookshop’s failure to attract customers; and the fact that he spends his spare time in the Book Depository, which is a place where huge numbers of unwanted books are stored in darkness, all comment on the Thatcher government’s abandonment and marginalization of the Arts. The fact that Greenaway’s film shows Arts’ demise as being hastened, rather than halted, by Georgina’s loving attentions reveals just how frustrated he was at Thatcherism’s *laissez-faire* attitude towards the Arts in his society.

In addition to using allegories to underpin his anti-Thatcher polemic, Greenaway also uses force-feeding as a metaphor for aggressively promoting (or force-feeding) Thatcherite propaganda. His “appalling character” Albert

“Gold—it needs more gold”

wields it as a weapon against those who resist or fail to integrate into his system. In addition to force-feeding Roy with dog excrement for failing to pay his debts, Albert crams the kitchen boy, Pup, with buttons because he refuses to reveal the lovers' location. Twice Albert attempts to force Mitchel, one of his lackeys, to feed on what he claims are “bollocks” because of Mitchel's failure to function as an effective henchman. He also force-feeds Michael to death with book pages because he has betrayed him by maintaining an adulterous relationship with Georgina. Even Georgina, as Albert's trophy wife, is forced to feed “in the best restaurants” and conspicuously consume elsewhere.²⁴ The fact that Albert's victims are all bruised, traumatized, or killed by their enforced consumption demonstrates Greenaway's view of Thatcherite propaganda that sought to convince England's population that unrestrained material (and culinary) consumption benefited them, business, and society in general.

The film's overarching metaphor uses culinary consumption to castigate the irresponsible consumption of material things. Thus, the film's feasts are anti-convivial affairs. Albert uses these occasions to abuse his wife, his guests, Michael, and other diners in the restaurant. The first such feast is held to celebrate not a wedding as in Ford, but the three-month anniversary of Albert and Richard Borst's (the titular Cook's) business-based “mutual understanding”: that of paid protector and paying-through-the-nose protectee.²⁵ Although it is Albert who has decided on the celebration, it is Borst who provides the location and the feast. On this occasion, then, Albert takes on Hipolita's role as the unwelcome guest, who arrives at the feast bearing gifts. As the film's much-mocked philistine, we should not be surprised that, in place of a masque of poetry and stunning special effects, Albert brings a misspelt and malfunctioning sign proclaiming his takeover of the restaurant. This restaurant is now to be known, he insists, as *Spica & Boarst* (an error for Borst) instead of *Le Hollandaise*.²⁶ As with the feast held to celebrate the reluctant Annabella's marriage, Greenaway's first restaurant-based feast marks and mocks an acquisition and an enforced name change.

Greenaway reimagines Ford's dark and “inward-looking” society as a claustrophobic, restaurant-based world.²⁷ Indeed, what better place to satirize obscene consumption than in a corpse-serving restaurant? As with Ford's feasts, Greenaway's restaurant (including its carpark, kitchen, and toilet) provides a space in which most of the drama's violence is both triggered and contained: all of Albert's victims have consumed in the restaurant. (Even the excrement-smearing Roy is served alcohol in the restaurant's kitchen.) As in Ford, much of Greenaway's banquet-based violence is motivated by sexual jealousy: Albert beats Georgina repeatedly when he begins to suspect her of having a sexual interest in Michael; he bullies and attempts to humiliate Michael; he stabs Patricia in the face with a fork when she gloatingly confirms his suspicions: “Haven't you noticed? They always go off to the john together”; and he rampages through the restaurant smashing all in his wake as he tries to locate the lovers.²⁸

Nevertheless, in both play and film, the most grotesque instance of violence occurs in the margins of the feasting space. In *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, Annabella is stabbed to death and dismembered in her offstage bedroom. When Giovanni comes onstage to the banquet bearing his lover's heart on the point of his dagger, he identifies the heart as food:

Templeman

You came to feast, my lords, with dainty fare.
I came to feast too, but I digged for food
In a much richer mine than gold or stone. (5.6.23-25)

He also specifically offers the heart to her husband: “Here, here, Soranzo!” (5.6. 10). Although Soranzo is furious that his intended banquet-based revenge has been foiled, he declines to turn cannibal and consume the “spoil[s] / Of love and vengeance” all “trimmed in reeking blood” (5.6.9-12).

With an ironic culinary flourish, Greenaway replaces Giovanni’s murder weapon, a sharp dagger, with the blunt end of Albert’s wooden spoon. Giovanni’s murder weapon would have doubled as an eating implement in Ford’s day. In Greenaway’s hands, Albert’s wooden spoon, which doubles as a cooking utensil and eating implement, becomes a murder weapon. With his dagger, Giovanni guts Annabella like a meat carcass; with his wooden spoon, Albert stuffs Michael like a meat joint. Moreover, as in the play, one of Greenaway’s illicit lovers (Michael) is murdered in what has become the lovers’ bedroom (the Book Depository). Despite the alterations, there can be little doubt that Greenaway’s curious climax, which he himself has described as “preposterous”—in which one of his lovers is murdered, transformed into food, and then offered in revenge by the surviving lover to the cuckolded husband—is deeply indebted to Ford’s final banquet scene.²⁹

In both film and play, the invitation to the final “sudden solemn feast” provides the means for modern and early modern revengers to draw their victims into their trap (5.5.21). In the film, Georgina tells Albert that the feast is to celebrate an anniversary. It turns out to be not the husband’s birthday, as in Ford, nor a business anniversary, as in Greenaway’s opening scene, but the day that will henceforth mark the day of Albert’s demise. Despite Albert’s oft repeated threats to cook and eat the “bloody book-reading jerk,” as in Ford’s play, the revenge-seeking husband is out-maneuvered by the surviving lover. Moreover, in both play and film, revenge is a dish served warm: Ford’s freshly harvested heart is replaced with Greenaway’s freshly roasted corpse. Giovanni claims that his revenge will unify him with his lover because, as he tells Soranzo, his heart “is entombed” in the heart that he offers to the cuckolded husband (5.6.27). Greenaway, on the other hand, makes it very clear that unification is not the ambition of his feast. When Georgina asks the initially shocked Richard Borst to cook Michael, he asks, “Do you have some idea that by eating him he can become part of you[?] . . . You can’t believe that by eating him . . . you can always be together.”³⁰ Georgina assures the Cook that this is not the case. Instead, Georgina’s culinary revenge is designed to serve up a helping of poetic justice by using Albert’s own force-feeding weapon against him. As Georgina forces Albert to consume a forkful of Lover, he is in fact “consuming death” because his next course is a bullet through the head.³¹

Although Greenaway’s revenge feast appears *avant-garde*, the model for revenge feasts involving anthropophagy originates in Classical tragedies. In Seneca’s *Thyestes* (written c.62 CE), Thyestes and his brother Atreus compete for the throne of Mycenae. Thyestes has an affair with Atreus’ wife, which raises questions in Atreus’ mind about the lineage of his children and stokes his passion for revenge. With this in mind, Atreus murders Thyestes’ three sons, cooks them, and serves them to their unknowing father. Although

“Gold—it needs more gold”

the murders and cookery occur offstage, they are described in gory detail by the Chorus:

The entrails ripped from the living children’s bellies
quiver, their veins throb, the heart still beats in fear
but he [Atreus] sorts through the innards, checks the
omens,
and scans the still-hot markings of the veins.³²

Only after Thyestes has gluttoned himself on the “vengeance feast” does Atreus triumphantly tell him that he has consumed his own children.³³

Shakespeare adopted Seneca’s revenge-feast model in *Titus Andronicus*.³⁴ His titular general stoically suffers horrific persecution and abuse at the hands of Rome’s jealous Emperor, Saturninus, and his wife, Tamora. Finally, the beleaguered general stops stoically suffering and starts plotting a Senecan-style revenge feast. Titus murders Tamora’s sons (onstage) and cooks them (offstage) in a pie, which he serves to the Emperor and Empress. Again, it is only after they have eaten that Titus tells Tamora she has eaten “the flesh that she herself has bred.”³⁵

Predictably, perhaps, although Greenaway borrows from the Seneca-Shakespeare revenge-feast model, he serves it up with several twists. In the first place, his revenger is female. As Raymond J Rice points out, the medieval and early modern “community of revengers is . . . a quintessentially active and masculine one from which women are excluded . . . any attempt by women to join such a community [is] constructed as an inherently transgressive act.”³⁶ Thus, as a modern adaptation of early modern revenge-tragedy traditions, Georgina’s actions are doubly transgressive because they overthrow both the male bastion of Albert’s rule and of the revenge tragedy form.

Secondly, Greenaway’s revenger overturns the traditional alienation process that has long been “recognized as integral to the revenge process.”³⁷ Seneca’s Thyestes is exiled by his brother; Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus is isolated when Rome’s Emperor and Empress mutilate and murder his family. In Greenaway, by comparison, instead of being isolated by her trials and tribulations, Georgina is supported during her revenge feast by a community of Albert’s avenging victims. It seems likely that this twist is designed to repudiate Thatcher’s oft-cited claim, which she made in an interview with Douglas Keay, that there “is no such thing as society.”³⁸ Despite the macabre occasion, Greenaway seems to be arguing for a more supportive form of society than the one envisioned by Thatcher.

Greenaway’s third break with revenge-feast traditions lies with Georgina’s choice of dish. Traditionally, the revenger murders and cooks those who are beloved by their tormentor. In the film, however, the embittered Wife cooks and serves the man she loved to the husband she loathes. As mentioned above, this particular twist owes much to Ford’s plot, in which the surviving lover, Giovanni, also offers the flesh of his dead lover, Annabella, to her cuckolded husband.

Fourthly, Greenaway abandons the act of innocent cannibalism found in Seneca and Shakespeare (although not in Thomas Middleton, in whose *The Bloody Banquet* the husband forces his adulterous wife to knowingly and publicly consume the body of her lover).³⁹ At Georgina’s revenge banquet,

culinary methods that would disguise human body parts, such as stews (Seneca) and pies (Shakespeare), are rejected in favor of a cooking method designed to accentuate the human ingredient: Michael's full-length body is roasted and served whole. Thus, unlike the earlier models, Albert's act of grotesque consumption is neither innocent nor voluntary. Rather, it is forced upon him by his wife who commands him at gunpoint to consume. Greenaway, thus, subjects the "Thatcherite condition" to a dose of its own force-feeding medicine as Georgina enacts upon it a gastronomic form of "wild justice."⁴⁰ Despite the fact that Greenaway has Thatcherism in his sights, rather than religion, and despite the twists he adds to his source material, Greenaway's polemic is embedded in culinary, critical, and dramatic traditions with which Ford would have been very familiar.

"Gold—it needs more gold"

In addition to its extraordinary relationship with food, the film also has a curious relationship with color, as many critics have pointed out. This latter relationship, as I will show, strengthens the film's embeddedness in early modern culinary traditions. *Le Hollandaise* restaurant is divided into four colored zones: the carpark is predominately blue, the kitchen green, the restaurant red, and the cloakroom white. Although Greenaway has repeatedly acknowledged that color provides an organizing principle in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, critics have struggled to pin down just what this principle might signify. The situation is compounded by the fact that Greenaway has put forward three different theories of his own to explain his film's color palette. In one interview, he claimed he was "trying to invent some colour-coding system related to Newtonian optics."⁴¹ However, of the seven colors identified by Newton—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet—the film uses very little orange, yellow, or violet. In another interview, this time with Ronald De Feo, Greenaway claimed that he was inspired by the colors of Frans Hals' group portrait, *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company in 1616*, a copy of which he enlarged and used as a backdrop for his restaurant.⁴² This claim is also problematic because the portrait's colors are orange (not red as in the film), blue and white.⁴³

Greenaway's third theory on color claims that he selected blue to represent "the cold nether regions of this world"; green to suggest "safety and vegetation"; red to suggest violence because the dining room is "where the thief eats [and] where violence happens"; and that a sense of irony made him select white for the cloakroom.⁴⁴ However, the action of his film also overturns this color-code theory. Primarily because most of the film's violence occurs in locations other than the red restaurant: Albert beats his wife, attacks Pup, and, goes on the rampage in the green kitchen; he beats and humiliates Roy, appears to rape his wife, attempts to (possibly does) rape Pup, and cuts out Pup's belly button in the blue car park; and the most violent scene of the film, Michael's murder, occurs in the Book Depository. In addition, shots in the far-from-safe kitchen associate it as much with meat as with vegetation.

Beatrice Fink points out that the zones used by Greenaway are adapted from the work of the Marquis de Sade (to whose work Greenaway

has acknowledged a debt).⁴⁵ *Cent Vingt Journees de Sodome*, for example, contains “a number of zoned spaces that bear striking similarities with those in Greenaway’s film: kitchen, dining-room, hallways, lavatories, doorways.”⁴⁶ Fink also points out that color-coding is an “ordering device in Sadean fiction . . . where victims tend to be dressed in given colours according to sex and age.”⁴⁷ With regard to the coloring of the film’s zones, however, Nicolas O Pagan contends that color has no bearing on characterization or on plot and that it is, therefore, simply “effect.”⁴⁸ On the other hand, numerous critics disagree with Pagan and various readings of Greenaway’s color-coded sets have been put forward.

Fink describes the kitchen recesses where the lovers make love as “a lush primeval [and Edenic] world lit in blues and greens.”⁴⁹ Maria Angel and Zoë Sofia’s psychoanalytic reading of Albert’s anal and oral eroticisms draws attention to the bright white toilets whose “luminosity” reminds them of “the inside of a refrigerator, or . . . theatre.”⁵⁰ Pagan draws attention to the slippage between historical periods that Greenaway’s set produces: “the sumptuous dining area is almost Victorian, the kitchen where fowl are being plucked seems from an even earlier period, the bathroom [is] contemporary or futuristic.”⁵¹ Ruth D Johnston claims that each zone in the film has class implications: “the kitchen has its working-class staff, the dining room its upper-class clientele.”⁵² Nita Rollins expands this idea by drawing on early modern sumptuary laws to associate the red dining room with the upper classes because these regulations forbade this color to the lower classes.⁵³ Greenaway’s *Screenplay* challenges Rollins’ theory, however, by describing his restaurant’s clients as “well-heeled business people,” rather than members of the upper classes.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, these critics avoid discussing, or trying to explain, the color-changing character of Greenaway’s costumes—most of which adopt the color of the zone in which their wearer stands—and this color-change problematizes their readings. An exception to this strategy is Eugenie Brinkema, but her focus is solely on Georgina’s color-changing dress of “canvas.”⁵⁵ Overlooking the fact that almost all the film’s costumes change color (an oversight common to Pagan), Brinkema argues that Georgina “constitutes the palette by bearing the force of autonomous color through the spaces of the film.”⁵⁶ This reading overlooks scenes in which color is established in Georgina’s absence (some kitchen scenes, for example) and scenes in which color-coded space is established before Georgina enters (during visits to the cloakroom, for example). Adopting the same Wife-centric focus, but taking the opposite stance, Fiona Black suggests that her color-changing costumes signify her lack of autonomy: until she is free from Albert ‘she is unable to differentiate herself as a person from the world around her.’⁵⁷ What most of these readings fail to consider, however, is that if red signifies diners as upper class, quasi-Victorian, autonomous, or lacking autonomy when they are in the dining room, then what class, period, power, or the lack thereof are they intended to represent or have when they visit the cloakroom and their costume turns white and the period becomes contemporary or futuristic?

As intimated in the introduction, I suggest that the solution to this color puzzle can be found in the film’s relationship with alchemy. Greenaway’s color-coded sets and his color-changing costumes are rooted in the processes of this proto-science. Importantly, alchemy has not only had an integral

relationship with food since the Classical period, but it also epitomizes the lust for quick and easy riches against which Greenaway is raging in his film. Alchemy, then, provides the perfect device to bind the culinary and the critical elements of the film.

The earliest extant references to alchemy occur in Chinese and Egyptian texts written between 200BC and 144BC, but knowledge of this proto-science did not spread to the West until 1144.⁵⁸ *The Mirror of Alchimy*, a medieval alchemical compendium ascribed to Roger Bacon (which was printed in 1597, some three hundred years after his death), explains that the “learned Philosophers blessed stone, whereon *Alchimy* worketh,” was used during alchemical experiments that endeavored “to perfect the imperfect that . . . nature hath deliuered vs.”⁵⁹ Perfection for alchemists was gold, which could, they believed, be created from base “mettals” by subjecting them to terrific heat because “[h]eat perfecteth althings.”⁶⁰ In a chapter entitled “Of the accident all and essentiall colours appearing in the worke,” Bacon summarized his period’s thinking on how fire was believed to work on the stone and how it “often changed in decoction [a boiling process designed to extract the essence of a substance] into diuerse colours”:

In the first operation of our stone, it is called putrifaction, and our stone is made blacke: . . . When thou findest it blacke, know that in that blackness whiteness is hidden. . . . But after putrefaction it waxeth red, not with a true rednesse. . . . It is often red, and often of a citrine colour, it often melteth, and is often coagulated, before true whitenesse. And it dissolueth it selfe, it coagulateth it selfe, it putrifeth it selfe, it coloureth it self . . . it maketh it selfe blacke, it maketh it selfe white, it maketh it selfe red. It is also greene: whereon another sayth, Concoct it, till it appeare greene vnto thee, and that is the soule. And another, Know, that in that greene his soule beareth dominion. There appears also before whitenesse the peacocks colour.⁶¹

When Ford was writing, books on alchemy, including Bacon’s, were in circulation, and allusions to this proto-science occur quite frequently in early modern drama.⁶² Recognizing that Alchemy’s get-rich-quick ambitions were ripe for satire, Ben Jonson moved alchemy center stage by making it the topic of *The Alchemist* (written c.1609-10).⁶³ In the play, Jonson demonstrates a theoretical familiarity with alchemy’s methods and processes. His character Face cites the range of alchemical colors listed by Bacon by associating them with animals: “Of the pale citron, the green lion, the crow,/the peacock’s tail, the plumed swan.”⁶⁴ Face also demonstrates a familiarity with the terms used to describe the trials and sufferings “Of metals in the work”: “putrefaction [decomposition], /Solution, ablution [washing off impurities], sublimation,/Cohobation [re-distillation], calcination, ceration, and/ Fixation.”⁶⁵ The alchemist, who is known as Subtle, sounds very much like Bacon as he describes alchemical processes as a series of congealing, dissolving (or melting), and congealing actions.⁶⁶ Despite the scientific terms that he and his

“Gold—it needs more gold”

assistants flourish, however, Jonson’s alchemist is actually a conman using a supposed knowledge of alchemy to gull a series of unsuspecting victims. Jonson’s play interrogates human gullibility for easy solutions and, very much like Greenaway’s film, human greed for easy money.

Significantly, the color palette used by Greenaway for his sets and color-changing costumes exactly mirrors the one described by Bacon and Jonson as occurring during medieval alchemical experiments. Greenaway’s carpark is “the peacocks colour”; the kitchen, which could be described as the ‘soule’ of the restaurant, is predominantly “greene”; the dining room is predominantly red; the cloakroom is of a “true whitenesse”; and “blacke” is present in the base color of most of the costumes and lurks in dark corners of the sets.⁶⁷ Applying an alchemical register to the restaurant’s zones provides a more secure reading than many of those discussed above. Just as green is an appropriate color for the kitchen-based ‘soule’ of the restaurant, so red is entirely appropriate for the gold-producing (or profit-making) dining room because early modern alchemical theory aligned red with gold. Bacon explained that gold was considered to be “a perfect body . . . pure, fixed, cleare, *red*, and of Sulphur clean . . . *red* . . . and it wanteth nothing [*italics mine*].”⁶⁸ The restaurant’s white cloths and white touches represent silver, which is the metal that alchemists believe is next in the purity scale. Bacon described it as “a body, cleane, pure, and almost perfect . . . almost fixed, cleare, and *white* [*italics mine*].”⁶⁹ According to alchemical theory, then, *Le Hollondaise*’s red and white restaurant is symbolically and appropriately dressed in gold and silver.

Alchemy also offers an explanation for Greenaway’s color-changing costumes. Just as metals change color during the different stages of alchemical experiments, so the diners’ costumes change color as they move between the restaurant’s zones. In the cloakroom, costumes “waxeth” into white; in the kitchen, the same costumes “appeare greene”; and in the parking space, they “dissolueth” into blue.⁷⁰ Even the “modest-looking,” barely solvent Lover is touched by the film’s alchemy.⁷¹ Although his costume remains resolutely brown wherever he goes in the restaurant, his books change color instead: from red to green to white to blue. This is because he is defined by his soon-to-prove fatal reading habit, rather than his desire for material goods.

Greenaway takes a moment to draw attention to these color mutations during the film’s opening sequence. As they prepare to enter the restaurant for the first time, Albert tells his wife, Georgina, “You’ve got smuts on your face and ash on your tits. For God’s sake—if you’re going to wear black—don’t smoke—you look like a tart in black.” To which Georgina replies, “It’s not black—it’s blue.” Albert, however, insists, “It’s black! And don’t smoke—it’s sloppy in a woman.”⁷² With costume color accented in this way, the audience is actively encouraged to settle the black/blue debate for themselves. Once Georgina leaves the subdued light of the car park and enters the kitchen, however, her dress and Albert’s sash turn green.

These color transmutations present the restaurant’s guests, even Albert, as not only desiring and consuming subjects (they wear high fashion and consume gourmet food), but also as material in another’s gold-creating, get-rich-quick experiment. Given the film’s anti-Thatcher polemic and Greenaway’s views on consumerism, it is not difficult to identify the off-screen alchemist as the Thatcher government and the get-rich-quick experiment as Thatcherism. Curiously, as mere components in another’s experiment,

Greenaway almost absolves his vapid diners of responsibility for their obsessive consumerism.

Alchemy and Food

By the time that professional playwrights began to engage with alchemy during the last decades of the sixteenth century, cooks had long been aware of, and made use of, alchemy's colors. A passion for tinting food in colors from the alchemical spectrum (red, black, white, blue, and green) can be traced back to the period in which alchemy originated, and it follows the same temporal and East-West journey: from ancient Greece to classical Rome to the medieval Middle East to medieval and early modern Europe. Only two recipe books survive from the ancient world: *Apicius* and *The Extracts of Apicius*. Parts of the former date from the first century and it contains "a great many . . . recipes and their culinary concepts" that are of "Greek origin."⁷³ *Apicius* advised its readers to boil leaf vegetables in soda to make them "emerald green; offered recipes for white and green sauces; advised washing pine nuts and almonds in 'silver' chalk" to make them "all equally white"; recommended drizzling green oil over dishes before they were served; and used *defrutum* (a syrup) made from dried figs to tint food and sauces.⁷⁴

Recipes in cookery books written over a period of nearly two millennia show that food was consistently tinted in the colors that Bacon describes as occurring during alchemical experiments. Like those cooks who came before them, medieval and early modern English cooks adopted a passion for artificially colored white, red, blue, black, and green food.⁷⁵ Although dishes were occasionally tinted in colors beyond this spectrum, such breaks with the norm were astonishingly rare. In addition, early moderns also decorated food in gold and silver leaf (the two purest metals in alchemy). Thus, color and precious metals were used to mesh food with alchemical processes. Hosts were able to use this strategy to metaphorically plunge their family and guests into gold-seeking experiments and to materially demonstrate both their extravagant wealth and their wealth-creating capability.⁷⁶ Greenway's food-rich, restaurant-based film appropriates this ancient alchemical color scheme in order to satirize a gold-lust that he associates with modern consumerism.

Given the alchemical subtext that Greenaway blends into his film's sets and costumes, it is not surprising that much of the food served in *Le Hollandaise* restaurant reflects this color scheme. In Greenaway's reimagining of early modern banquet food, Albert's table is dressed with dishes containing green grapes, red apples, and yellow (or gold) lemons; his dinner guests consume green lettuce and green asparagus; they drink red wine from ruby-red glasses; food is served in a white sauce; and Albert pours a tureen of white soup over a diner's head. When the Cook serves Georgina non-alchemically colored food—pink salmon mouse, for example—Albert corrects it by knocking a glass of red wine over the top. Greenaway, then, uses early modern culinary culture and its entanglement with a get-rich-quick philosophy to generate a film designed to castigate the form of avaricious consumerism prevalent in England during the 1980s.

“Gold—it needs more gold”

Drawing on the rich culinary element of Ford’s *Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, Greenaway identified food as the perfect weapon to deliver a scathing restaurant-based condemnation of the consumerism that he believed was destroying 1980s English society. In *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, he adapts the illicit desire and brutal revenge feast that he found in Ford, which the playwright used to critique his early modern society, into a narrative designed to condemn Thatcherism. Greenaway then stretched beyond Ford’s ingredients to incorporate the historic entanglement between food and alchemy. These additional elements provided the means to castigate the insatiable desire for material possessions, over moral and artistic wealth, and the hankering for quick and easy money that Greenaway firmly associates with capitalism and Thatcherism. They also provide the key to the film’s curious color palette.

Notes

1. Peter Greenaway, dir., *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, (Place Pictures (UK), 1990); John Ford, “Tis Pity She’s A Whore,” *John Ford “Tis Pity She’s A Whore and Other Plays: Oxford English Drama*, ed., Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 165-239.
2. Peter Greenaway, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover: Screenplay* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1989), 7.
3. Linda Hutcheon, *The Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
4. For Thatcherism, see note 22.
5. Marion Lomax, Introduction, “Tis Pity She’s a Whore,” by John Ford, *Tis Pity She’s A Whore and Other Plays: Oxford English Drama*, ed., Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xviii-xix.
6. Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford’s Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 75.
7. Consumerism: “the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of goods” (OED).
8. Hopkins, *John Ford’s Political Theatre*, 75, 96-7.
9. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 47.
10. For example, in Thomas Middleton’s *The Changeling*, (written c.1622) Antonio likens Isabella to a golden apple from the “orchard of the Hesperides” (E2r). In Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (c.1613), Tim says of a Welsh gentlewoman, “There’s nothing tastes so sweet as your Welsh mutton” (H1r). In Middleton’s *The Spanish Gypsy* (written c.1623) (co-written by John Ford, William Rowley, and Thomas Dekker), a female character is described as a “cherry-lip’d, sweet-mouth’d villaine” (D1r). In *Cupids Revenge* (1615), Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher write that women are “like Apples: If once they bruse / They will growe rotten through” (G4v). In Thomas D’Urfey’s *The Marriage-Hater Match’d* (1692) young “ignorant raw aukward” maids are described as unripe peaches, which are “green crude stuff, and only fit for Boys.” By comparison, D’Urfey likens “a Skilful Widow” to “the blushing velle[t] Peach, by Summer ripened, to indulge the taste” (E2r). Thomas Middleton, *The Changeling* (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1653); Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, (London: Francis Constable, 1630); Thomas Middleton, *The Spanish Gipsie*, (London: I.G., 1653); Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Cupids Revenge*, (London: Thomas Creede, 1615); Thomas D’Urfey, *The Marriage-Hater Match’d* (London: Richard Bentley, 1692). I have quoted from early modern texts that would have been in circulation when Ford wrote *Tis Pity She’s a Whore*. I have also given some examples from texts published later in the century to show that the tradition was a long-lived cliché.
11. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 66.
12. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 78.
13. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 78.

Templeman

14. Alfred Harbage's *Annals of English Drama 975-1700* includes 489 extant plays that were first performed between 1584 and 1642. In this count, I have included both printed and manuscript survivals. I have included plays that were performed in public and private playhouses and at Court. I have not included private performances in private houses, privately acted plays, closet drama, university productions, Latin plays, Royal Entertainments, or Morality plays and Interludes. Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama: 975-1700*, Rev. S. Schoenbaum, 3rd ed. Rev. Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

15. Chris Meads, *Banquets Set Forth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 1.

16. The Shakespearean plays in which meals (not simply food properties) are staged are as follows: *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *Timon of Athens*, *Titus Andronicus*, and possibly *The Winter's Tale*. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Shakespearean plays are taken from Shakespeare, William, *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt *et al* (London and New York: Norton, 1997). In the body of this essay, I have generally used modern editions of early modern plays.

17. Peter Holland, "Feasting and Starving: Staging Food in Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 145 (2009): 15.

18. This masking problem is one that slips between stage, film, and portraiture. In an interview with Marcia Pally, Greenaway claims it first appeared in European table painting, in which painters also had to arrange "people around a table so that no one is obliterated by anyone else." Marcia Pally and Peter Greenaway, "Cinema as the Total Art Form: An Interview with Peter Greenaway," *Cinéaste* 18.3 (1991): 45. For more information on early modern rehearsal techniques see Tiffany Stern's *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); and Scott McMillin's "The Sharer and His Boy: Rehearsing Shakespeare's Women," *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*, eds. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), Ch. 11.

19. Michel Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 21.

20. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 12-13.

21. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 12.

22. Margaret Thatcher led the English Conservative Party between 1975 and 1990 and was Prime Minister from May 1979 to November 1990. Nigel Lawson, Thatcher's Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1983 to 1989, describes Thatcherite ideals as free markets, financial discipline, firm control over public expenditure, tax cuts, nationalism, "Victorian values" (of the Samuel Smiles self-help variety, which claimed that poverty was caused largely by irresponsible habits), privatization and a dash of populism (Lawson 64; Cohen and Major 611). Nigel Lawson, *The View from No. 11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London: Bantam, 1992); M. J. Cohen and John Major, eds., *History in Quotations* (London: Cassell, 2004).

23. When being interviewed by Stephanie McBride, Greenaway said, "one of the reasons I wrote *The Cook* was my anger at the Thatcherite condition, which created an unequal and very unjust world which was very philistine, very much concerned with the price of everything and the value of very little. So I created this appalling character, Albert Speaker [whose name is an allusion to the Speaker of the House of Commons] to embody that. He is an extreme case who commits an extreme act, on the grounds that it is an anti-consumer indictment—that after we have eaten everything else up, we should end up eating each other. Albert Speaker picks up a book and asks, "Does this earn money?" as if this is the sole purpose of literature. This seemed to me to be very relevant to the Thatcherite condition. For her, relevance was the sheer commercialism of all activity." Stephanie McBride and Peter Greenaway, "G is for Greenaway," *Circa Art Magazine*, 62 (1992): 55-6.

24. Albert expects his wife to be a conspicuous consumer. He tells his dinner guests that Georgina spends £400 a week on clothes; she has a petrol allowance of £40 a week; she wears beautiful things; and she eats in the best restaurants. Under pressure to perform, Georgina adds that she goes the best hairdresser; she goes to a good dentist; and she goes to a good gynecologist. Conspicuously absent the list of expenses are books and art-related expenses. Greenaway's message about the philistine nature of consumerism is very clear. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 46.

25. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 16.

26. Greenaway plays games with his viewers and readers by dropping several hints that his film is based on a source text. Calling his restaurant after a sauce, *Le Hollandaise*, is one

“Gold—it needs more gold”

- example. A more specific nod to *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is the number of times that the word heart is used in the film: Albert describes his wife as having “a heart of gold and a body to match”; he describes himself as having “a heart of gold and a great deal of money to match”; and Pup, the kitchen boy, sings “Create in me a clean heart.” Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 12-13, 9.
27. Lomax, Introduction, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, xviii-xix.
 28. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 63.
 29. Charles Hagan and Peter Greenaway, “Peter Greenaway and the Erotics of Form: An Interview with Charles Hagan,” *Aperture*, 121 (1990): 73.
 30. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 88.
 31. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 85.
 32. Seneca, “Thyestes” *Seneca: Six Tragedies*, ed., Emily Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 202.
 33. Seneca, “Thyestes,” 206, 209.
 34. William Shakespeare, “Titus Andronicus,” in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Shakespeare*, eds., Stephen Greenblatt et al. (London and New York: Norton, 1997), 371-434.
 35. Citing stage directions as evidence, Raymond J Rice contends that Tamora does not eat from the pie in this scene. However, this ignores dialogue-based evidence that suggests she does: when Tamora asks for her sons, Titus replies, “Why, there they are, both baked in this pie/ Whereof their mother daintily hath fed, / Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred.” Raymond J. Rice, “Cannibalism and the Act of Revenge,” *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 44 (2004): 314 n.2; Shakespeare, *Titus*, 5.3.59-61.
 36. Rice, “Cannibalism and the Act of Revenge,” 300.
 37. Rice, “Cannibalism and the Act of Revenge,” 299.
 38. Rather, Margaret Thatcher claimed, there is a “living tapestry of men and women and people and the beauty of that tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves and each of us prepared to turn round and help by our own efforts those who are unfortunate.” Keay, Douglas, Interview with Margaret Thatcher: “Aids, Education and the Year 2000!” *Woman's Own*, 31 Oct. 1987, 8-10.
 39. Thomas Middleton, “The Bloody Banquet,” *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, gen. eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2007), 5.1.145-209.
 40. McBride and Greenaway, “G is for Greenaway,” 55-6. In “Of Revenge” (written c.1597), Francis Bacon describes revenge as “a kind of wild justice.” Francis Bacon, “Of Revenge,” in *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 347.
 41. McBride and Greenaway, “G is for Greenaway,” 52.
 42. Ronald De Feo, “Fantasy in Crimson,” *Art News*, 89 (1990): 31. The painting depicts the officers of the St. George Militia at dinner sitting around a table laden with food. The original picture measures 175cm by 234cm.
 43. Orange designated the House of Orange, and blue and white represented the Netherlands's national colors. Jean M. Troop, “Frans Hals' Military Company Group Portraits, 1616-1639.” <https://caans-acaen.ca/Journal/issues_online/Issue_VIII_ii_IX_i_1987_88/Troop.pdf>, 39.
 44. Marcia Pally and Peter Greenaway, “Cinema as the Total Art Form: An Interview with Peter Greenaway,” *Cinéaste*, 18.3 (1991): 8.
 45. Beatrice Fink, “‘sadean Savouries’ in Peter Greenaway’s *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*,” *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 23.1 (2001): 101.
 46. Fink, “‘sadean Savouries,” 101.
 47. Fink, “‘sadean Savouries,” 102.
 48. Nicholas O. Pagan, “*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*: Making Sense of Postmodernism,” *South Atlantic Review*, 60.1 (1995): 52.
 49. Fink, “sadean Savouries,” 99. Greenaway has drawn attention to several biblical allusions in the film: the 51st Psalm, the presence of a character named Eden, “the lovers who make love naked amid the food and foliage of the kitchen recall Adam and Eve. When they leave, they go to the book depository, the Tree of Knowledge. They are driven there in a van of red rotting meat, which can suggest their journey through hell.” Pally and Greenaway, “Cinema as the Total Art Form,” 8.
 50. Maria Angel and Zoë Sofia, “Cooking up Intestinal Economies and the Aesthetics of Specular Orality,” *Cultural Studies*, 10.3 (1996): 478.

Templeman

51. Pagan, "Making Sense of Postmodernism," 52.
52. Ruth D. Johnston, "The Staging of the Bourgeois Imagery in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*," *Cinema Journal*, 41.2 (2002): 31.
53. Nita Rollins, "Greenaway-Gaultier: Old Masters, Fashion Slaves," *Cinema Journal*, 35.1 (1995): 69.
54. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 22.
55. Eugenie Brinkema, "Rot's Progress: Gastronomy According to Peter Greenaway," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 21.5 (2010): 87.
56. Brinkema, "Rot's Progress," 95 n. 13; Pagan "Making Sense of Postmodernism," 52.
57. Fiona C. Black, "A Miserable Feast: Dishing up the Biblical Body in *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*," *Biblical Interpretations*, 14.1-2 (2006): 112.
58. Robert of Chester, who completed a translation of the Arab alchemical text entitled *Book of the Composition of Alchemy* on 11 February 1144, is credited with introducing alchemy into Latin Europe. E.J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (New York: Dover, 1990), 25, 105-6.
59. Roger Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, (London: Thomas Creede, 1597), B2v.
60. Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, B3r.
61. Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, B4v-C1r.
62. Early texts on alchemy include: George Ripley's *The Compound of Alchymy* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1591); Roger Bacon's *The Mirror of Alchimy*; Timothie Willis's *The Search of Causes Containing a Theophysical Investigation of the Possibilitie of Transmutatorie Alchemie* (London: John Legatt, 1616); John Baptista Lambye's translation of *A Reuelation of the Secret Spirit Declaring the Most Concealed Secret of Alchymie*, trans. in English, R.N.E., (London: Jhn Haviland, 1623); and Francis Bacon's *Of the Advancement and Proficiency of Learning* (Oxford: Leon Lichfield, 1640).
63. Ben Jonson, "The Alchemist," *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington et al, (New York and London: Norton & Company, 2002), 868-959.
64. Jonson, *Alchemist*, 2.2.26-7.
65. Jonson, *Alchemist*, 2.5.20-23.
66. Jonson, *Alchemist*, 2.3.104-5.
67. Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, B4v-C1r.
68. Alchemists contended that all metals were formed from one seed and that Nature worked "continuously up to gold; so that, in a sense, all other metals [were] gold in the making." Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, A3v; Stanley H. Redgrove, *Alchemy: Ancient and Modern* (London: William Rider & Son, 1922), 28.
69. Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, A3v-A4r.
70. Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, B4v-C1r.
71. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 22.
72. Greenaway, *Screenplay*, 14.
73. Christopher Grocock and Sally Grainger, eds., *Apicius* (Totnes, Devon: Prospect Books, 2006), 17.
74. Grocock and Grainger, *Apicius*, 27, 159, 229, 153, 151, 335.
75. The earliest extant culinary manual in the Arabic language, the *Kitāb al-Tabikh*, which was compiled by Ibn Sayyār Al Warrāq, demonstrates that by the late tenth century Arab cooks were coloring their food in these same colors (57, 62, 90, 91, 98). Medieval and early modern English cooks and diners took up this food-coloring fetish with a passion. *The Good Wife's Guide* (c. 1392-4) offered recipes for dishes such as "black stew of hare," "green soup of eels," "yellow soup," "yellow sauce," "white sauce," "silver pasties," "red cider apples roasted and topped with white comfits," and compote topped with white and red comfits (260-4). *The Booke of Cokery* (1510) included recipes for white dishes; dishes colored "blewe" with turnsole, or half "blewe" and half "whyte"; and tri-colored dishes that used sanders, saffron, and "herbes" to create a "grene" "parte" (c4r, c5r, h3r). Red and white was a popular combination for food. *A Booke of Cookerie* (1597), for example, offered a recipe for "Gellie both white and redde" (f2r-f3r). For a period of about two-thousand years, then, cooks from diverse cultures tinted food from the same spectrum of colors: white, red, yellow, green, peacock blue, and black. They achieved these vibrant shades by using plant dyes such as saffron, which tinted food yellow and red; sanders and turnsole, which colored food bright blue; herbs—such as spinach, mint, and parsley—to color dishes green; curds, wheat starch, and blanched almonds to create very white dishes; and spices, fried onions, currants, raisins, prunes, and dates to create black sauces and dishes. Al Warrāq, Ibn Sayyār, *Kitāb al-Tabikh: A Baghdad Cookery Book: The Book of Dishes*, ed. and trans. Charles Perry, (Totnes, Devon:

“Gold—it needs more gold”

Prospect, 2005); *The Good Wife's Guide: A Medieval Household Book*, trans. Gina L. Greco and Christine M. Rose, trans. of *Le Ménagier de Paris*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009); *The Boke of Cokery* (London: W. de Worde, c.1510); *A Booke of Cookerie, otherwise called the Good Huswifes Handmaid* (London: E. Alde, 1597).

76. Although food historians, such as Bridget Henisch and Christopher Woolgar, have drawn attention to the colorful nature of medieval and early modern English food, the connection between the range of colors selected and alchemy has so far been overlooked. Woolgar suggests that color was used solely to make a decorative point and, thus, he posits that fish dishes may have been served in green sauces simply to reflect their “watery origins” (21-2). However, this argument is undermined by the fact that birds and other meats were also served in green sauces. T. Sara Peterson has connected certain aspects of Middle Eastern cookery with alchemy, but, with regard to tinting food, her focus is solely on gold, or yellow, colored dishes (21). Bridget Ann Henisch, *Fast and Feast in Medieval Society* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); Christopher Woolgar, “Fast and Feast: Conspicuous Consumption and the Diet of the Nobility in the Fifteenth Century,” *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England*, ed., Michael Hicks (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001); T. Sarah Peterson, *Acquired Taste: The French Origins of Modern Cooking* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994).

Sally J. Templeman obtained a doctorate in English Literature from the University of Exeter in 2013. She taught on BA modules at the university for several years and still does some occasional teaching there.