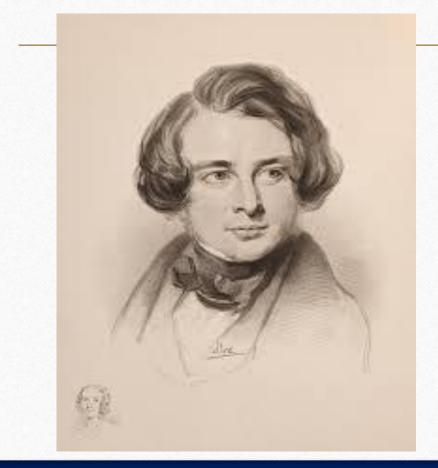
Food Security and the Literary Imagination

Jayne Elisabeth Archer (with Professors Howard Thomas and Richard Marggraf Turley [Aberystwyth University])



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- Oliver Twist (1837-38)
- 'Please, sir, I want some more'
- Three servings of 'thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays'
- Jonathan Swift, A Modest Proposal (1729)

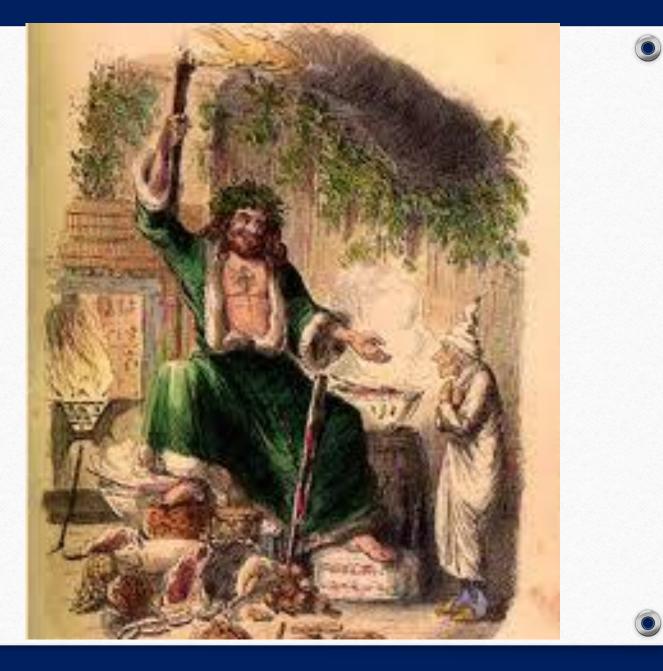




A Christmas Carol (1843)

Too much,

or not enough?







- A Tale of Two Cities (1859)
 - Set during the French Revolution (1789)
 - Includes the storming of the Bastille and alludes to the beginnings of the Terror

- Barnaby Rudge (1841)
 - Set during the Gordon Riots (London, June 1780)
 - Set amid the American War of Independence (1765-1783)
 - Describes the liberation and prisoners from London prisons, including Newgate





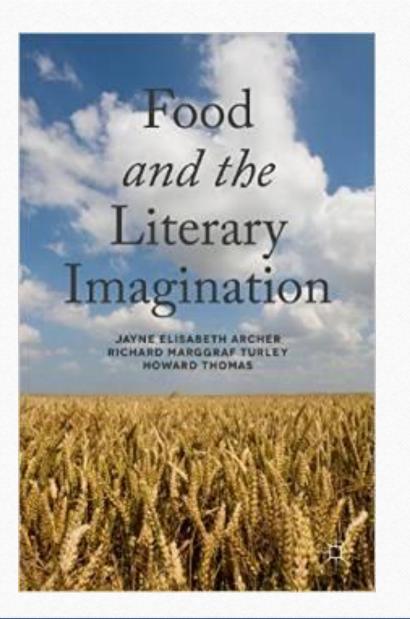
Food and the Literary Imagination

Chaucer

Shakespeare

Keats

George Eliot





" THE	STORY	OF	OUR	LIVES	FROM	YEAR	τo	YEAR."-SHAKESPEARE.
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ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1859.

PRICE 2d.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES. In Three Books.	limer intelligences may read in the feeble shining of this earth of ours, every thought and act, every vice and virtue, of every responsible crea-			
BY CHARLES DICKENS.	ture on it.			
	The Defarges, husband and wife, came lum-			
BOOK THE SECOND. THE GOLDEN THREAD.	bering under the starlight, in their public vehicle, to that gate of Paris whereunto their			
CHAPTER XVI. STILL KNITTING.	iourney naturally tended. There was the usual			
MADAME DEFARGE and monsieur her husband	stoppage at the barrier guard-house, and the			
returned amicably to the bosom of Saint Antoine,	usual lanterns came glancing forth for the usual			
while a speck in a blue cap toiled through the dark-	examination and inquiry. Monsieur Defarge			
ness, and through the dust, and down the weary	alighted : knowing one or two of the soldiery			

'Good and Bad Fungus'

pull quotients pushis

GOOD AND BAD FUNGUE.

South of the most important doesness of corn bolan to remove the domaining timbers when and other agricultural crops are owing to the the new work was done; pet the depent as attacks of microscopic fungs. These have been rapidly goined strength, that the brane was divided late four earth, these stacking the ulimotely pulled down. Some of my books flower, as assest (sendo segretum), those attach base securify ling the grain, as pergreebrand (sendo fatish); have securify lingermines of its estimation hand; three attacking the loaves and shaff, as rust others were so much affected that the harms re-(area rulige); and those attacking the straw, sombled tinder, and, when the volumes wave na corn-mildere (puccinia grammia). Smint opened, fell sat in dust or fragments." halls, pepper-brand, or hight, is a proving A spories of barges called racidium is some matter compying the inside of the grain of what bacchandian in its taskes, and is grainly wheat, and when emission under the micro-them pays frequent visits to odhes and places using a found to consist of scinute halls, from like the London Decks, where it is and "he millions of which may exist in a single genin, page his acoutlenne visits, and is in even worse and each of these contains assurings little edour than the environment. An instance is resports. In this discuss the much rotals their lated of a gestleman who, having a cask of wine form and appearance, but the parasitie fungue rather too event for innardiate use, directed that has a porellistly field wheat, and hence is called |it should be placed is a collar, that the speciacity stiming rost. Dest-brand is a nexty provine, it contained might be decomposed by age; at having no encel, formal in ents and haviny, and the end of three years he directed his bother to shows used complemently before the ripering of accertain the state of the want, when, on at-the error. Baser ways that is one one handed and sixty thousandle part of a square inch he counted herty-size spores of this fixages. Has is on seange powder exading from the inner shall was found to be completely filled with a fungous makes, and forming yellow or brown spats and production, so firm that if was nectonary to use histoloss in variana parts of ours plants. It is an ano for its removal. This appeared to have atautians relied red gars, red mins, red mat, grown lion, or to have here muticled by, the and not van. Minkew is copposed to be marilar chromaposing particles of the wise, the cash state of the same disease. These fangi which are developed in the inte- where it was supported by the fangue.

care we mental if, had the particips twate waterreted, and a new flight of stairs, the depend lawing readeved it unsals to go from the groundfloor to the bedrooms. Every premultion was

being scripty, and carried up to the stillage

- Published in Dickens' periodical All the Year Round, 6 August 1859
- Followed an instalment of A Tale of Two Cities, 'Still Knitting'
- Describes the effect of consuming food contaminated with a variety of toxins, including ergot of rye, mildew and fungi



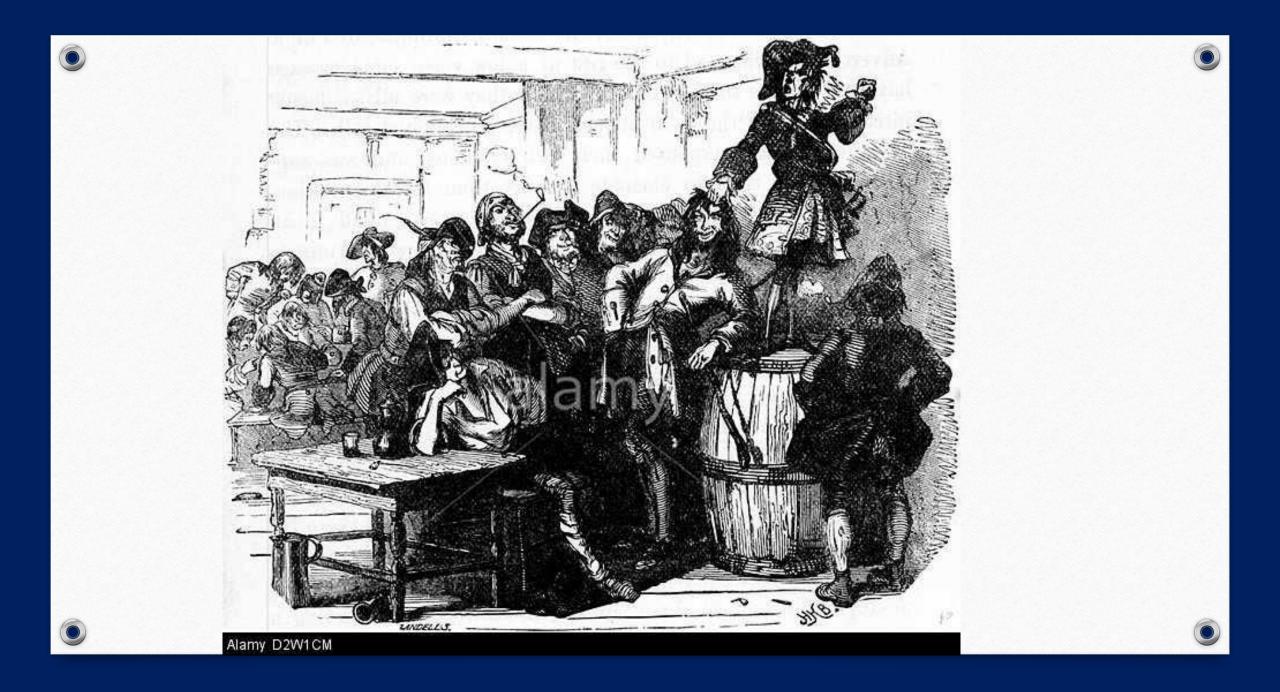


'A diseased state of rye and other grasses, called ergot, is owing to a fungus which causes the ovary of the grain to become dark coloured, and project from the chaff in the form of a spur; and hence its name of spurred rye. The nutritious part of the grain is destroyed, and it acquires highly injurious properties.'

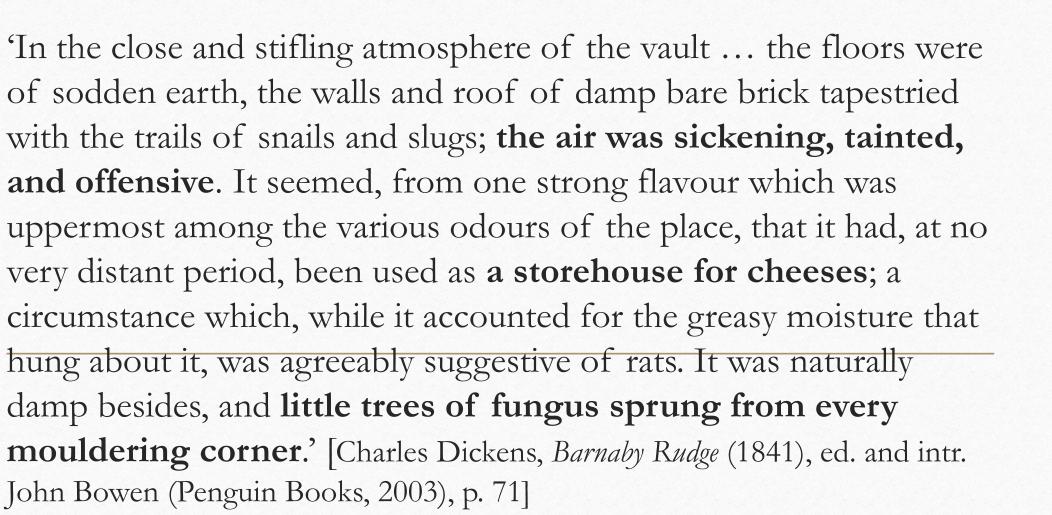
The fungus called 'racodium' is said to be attracted to casks of wine, and another fungus, 'Agaricus muscarius', is used 'in decoction, as an intoxicating liquor': 'when they drink it they are seized with convulsions in all their limbs, followed by that sort of raving which accompanies a burning fever'.













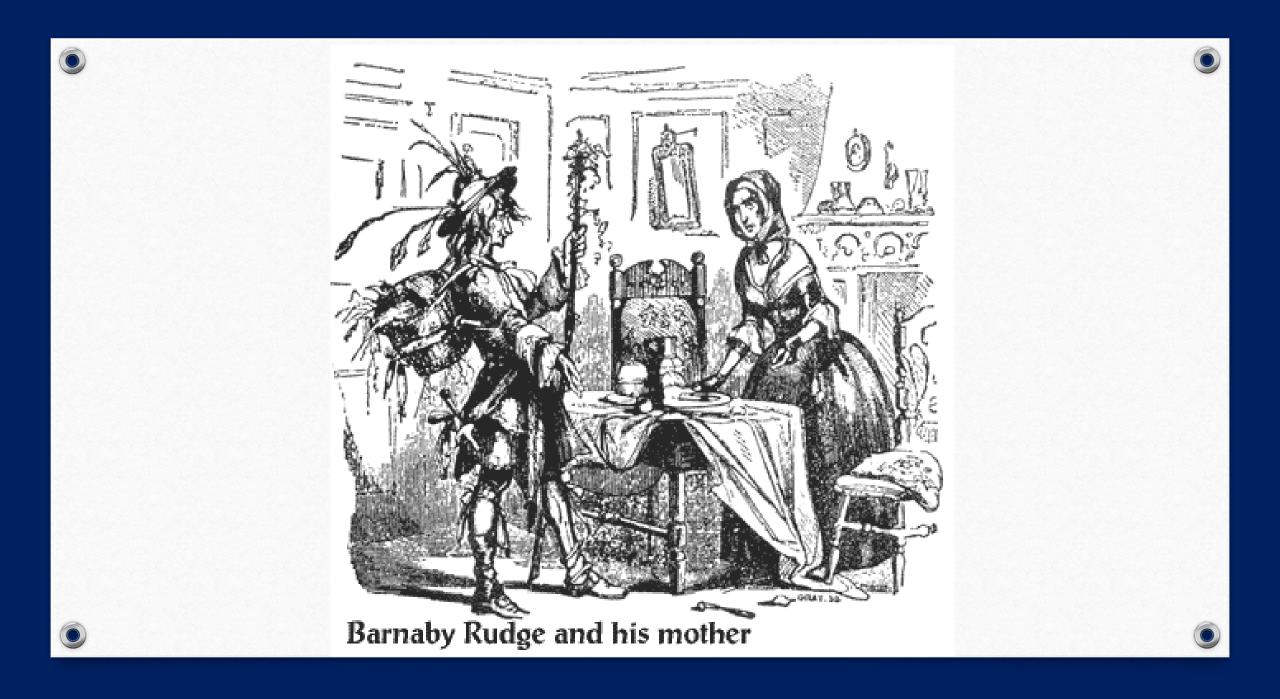


The Gordon Riots as Food Riot

- The professed objective is to compel Parliament to repeal recent, pro-Catholic legislation, but 'under the noisy revel of the public-house, there lurked unseen and dangerous matter' (p. 328)
- The rioters anticipate 'an altered state of society' (p. 331)
- 'The mob raged and roared, like a mad monster' (p. 408)
- The rioters gather in St George's Fields and march north, crossing the Thames, to storm Westminster, the public prisons (including Newgate) and key strategic sites of civic and national governance







The Mob as Deadly Harvest

- Blue Cockade = corncockle
- The execution of rioters: 'Such was the wholesome growth of the seed sown by the law, that this kind of harvest was usually looked for, as a matter of course.' (p. 636)
- Hugh's dying curse against his father: 'On that black tree, of which I am the ripened fruit, I do invoke the curse of all its victims, past, present, and to come.' (p, 646)
- 'Mr Dennis [the hangman] might have been likened to a farmer ruminating among his crops, and enjoying by anticipation the bountiful gifts of Providence. Look where he would, some heap of ruins afforded him rich promise of a working off; the whole town appeared to have been ploughed, and sown, and nurtured by most genial weather; and a goodly harvest was at hand.' (p. 582)





The Fiery Lake

• 'The gutters of the street and every crack and fissure in the stones, ran with **scorching spirit**; which, being dammed up by busy hands, **overflowed** the road and pavement; and formed a great pool, in which the people dropped down dead by dozens. They lay in heaps all round the fearful pond ... and drank until they died ... others sprang up from the fiery draught, and **danced**, half in mad triumph, and half in the agony of suffocation, until they fell, and steeped their corpses in the liquor that had killed them. Nor was this even the worst or most appalling kind of death that happened on this fatal night ...' (p. 569)







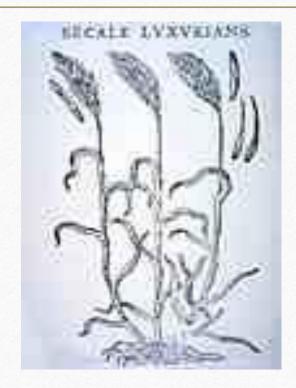






History as Haunting

- A Tale of Two Cities (1859)
- Revisits many motifs, including the mob devouring a lake of wine; the executioner as reaper; contaminated food supply; dancing madness and frenzied selfdestruction
- The citizens of St Antoine are suffering from ergotism (black grains)





Some Thoughts

- The role of the food riot in driving political and social change; it is predictable and unpredictable
- The role of medicine (including history of medicine) and plant science in informing literary analysis
- The need to respect knowledge and practices acquired through experience
- The demented and dying

