

THE GOOD HOUSEWIFE'S RECEIPT BOOK:  
GENDER IN THE EARLY-MODERN  
ENGLISH KITCHEN

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A Thesis  
Presented  
to the Faculty of  
California State University, Chico

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree Master of Arts in History

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GENDER IN THE EARLY-MODERN  
ENGLISH KITCHEN

A Thesis

by

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Spring 2014

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ABSTRACT

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“The Good Housewife’s Receipt Book” is a master’s thesis investigating the real and symbolic role of the middling-sort rural English housewife of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and the resulting gendered nature of ideas about household food production and domestic industry. This particular housewife identity, though a reality for only a narrow demographic, was symbolic of the lifecycle for the vast majority of early modern Englishwomen and colored how food, labor, and women were understood. A juxtaposition of three types of primary sources allows for a comparative evaluation of gender roles, utilizing male-published guidebooks and treatises on proper female behavior, multimedia popular culture sources featuring the housewife trope, and the handwritten receipt books and letters of the newly-literate housewife herself to fully illuminate the figure of the woman in the kitchen. The work focuses particularly on the

theoretical kitchen, rather than the physical, encompassing the knowledge of and ideas about housewifery in two parts, Recipes and Human Relations.

## INTRODUCTION

Who first fixed hir eyes vpon hyr apernestrings...straight foorth had a ready answer.

--John Grange, *The Golden Aphroditis*, 1577<sup>1</sup>

The English housewife, by the end of the sixteenth century, had taken on a specific and symbolic identity in early-modern culture. From the strings of her apron to the carving knife in her hand, from the hearth that she labored over to the ale that she brewed, the objects and places of rural, middle-class female duties were imbued with meaning for both the micro-level of everyday existence and the macro-level of English popular culture. As the duties of food production were dominated by the female housewife and were significant to the gender identity of Englishwomen of the period, these objects and places took on relative gendered attributes. The kitchen, in short, became a site of intense gendering. That gendering played an important role in shaping the identity of women, men, and society at large through the universal necessity of food and food production.

The role of the housewife during the period developed through an ongoing series of compromises between the behavioral dictates of male social and economic theory and the practical requirements of female laboring experience. Male theories about the housewife and her labor, evidenced in everything from treatises on female education

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<sup>1</sup> John Grange, *The golden Aphroditis a pleasant discourse, penned by Iohn Grange Gentleman, student in the common lavve of Englande. Wherevnto be annexed by the same authour asvvell certayne metres vpon sundry poyntes, as also diuers pamphlets in prose, which he intituleth his Garden: pleasant to the eare, and delightful to the reader, if he abuse not the scente of the floures* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1577), C II, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:6088:11](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:6088:11) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 11.

to theatrical comedies, played an unmistakably significant role in the creation of the housewife identity through their overwhelming control over female bodies and behaviors. However, housewife needs and opinions, developed through the networks of female culture, could contradict or confirm male ideas about female domestic production and were ultimately the determining factor in establishing the housewife role in practice. For example, while patriarchal society demanded female submission and silence, the housewife found that she needed to employ authoritative speech and confident decision making to direct or reprimand servants, allocate money for imported provisions, and mediate between the household and the husband, and so the housewife role became vocal and managerial within the realm of the kitchen even when women appeared otherwise outside of it. Though even humanist ideology still severely limited women's education (and therefore participation in the public realm of politics and economics), early-modern women utilized newly offered literacy to aid their own needs within the private household instead, attaining and sharing knowledge and maintaining familial and community ties through receipt books and letters and leaving behind a small cache of evidence that records this series of gender compromises from the female perspective. The housewife role that developed from the discourse between male society and female culture established a number of gendered attributes that extended from the woman herself to the spaces, acts, and products of her domestic labor, in total her "kitchen."

Investigating the parts of this symbolic kitchen through both female and male sources, from cooking advice to amusing anecdotes, together in turn fleshes out the form of this uniquely sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century female role and its meaning.



The kitchen of the Elizabethan and Stuart housewife took two primary forms, the ideological and the physical, according to my research. The evidence about the idea of the kitchen falls into two major categories: recipes, representing the knowledge and education of the housewife, and human relations, the relationship of the housewife with others and the place that she held within society. The physical kitchen as described in the sources similarly divides in two parts, inside the kitchen and the dining room, and outside the kitchen, from the manor yard to the marketplace. The physical kitchen was the practical manifestation of the concepts of the ideological kitchen. Together, they made up the central occupation of women, as wives, daughters, and servants, throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries. Given the great extent of the kitchen and its meanings, this thesis will address only the first portion, the ideological kitchen, in order to best serve the subject matter within the parameters of the project. Therefore, the kitchen analyzed herein is a theoretical one located in the concept of “housewifery,” a conceptual pantry of knowledge, expectations, and identity.

The height of the English housewife trope, both as an actual human manifestation and a popular culture reference, occurred in the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth century. While women may not have experienced the same Renaissance that had revolutionized male society during the period, as theorized by Margaret Ferguson, “they did at least have a Reformation,” a subtle distinction that leaves open the possibility of critical review of the institutional and social changes of the period.<sup>2</sup> While some of the methods and needs of food production carried over from the late Middle Ages, many new foods and techniques, as well as the

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Ferguson, “Moderation and its Discontents: Recent Work on Renaissance Women,” *Feminist Studies* 20, no. 2 (1994): 352 quoted in Eve Rachele Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

role of women in their production and meaning, evolved dramatically during this period. By the final decades of the century, this evolution had reached a pinnacle in both housewife authority and manorial self-sufficiency.

The trope of the good housewife in popular culture took on a stagnant, solidified form, but the middling-sort housewife continued her evolution throughout the seventeenth century, paralleling the changes in lifestyle and economic circumstances of the middle class. The middling sort, as used here, is an early-modern category that combined the overlapping middle class and lower gentry that shared philosophies, social situations, and lifestyles, particularly in rural areas. It was a common literary device in the Stuart era to compare the now well-cherished, hardworking sixteenth-century housewife to the new, spoiled and social-climbing seventeenth-century woman. While neither the sixteenth- nor seventeenth-century housewife was a completely accurate depiction of lived female experience, there are certain grains of truth in both modes. There was a definite change in the role and meaning of middling-sort women between the two periods, and “for some sections of the population, the death of Elizabeth did not signal the beginning of new powers and possibilities, but instead the restriction and confinement of existing roles.”<sup>3</sup> While the middle class as a whole may have prospered and expanded during the Stuart era, the authority and autonomy of the rural housewife appears to have in many ways declined simultaneously. A thorough critique of the iconic figure of the Elizabethan housewife and her evolution therefore has implications and worth for a study of female roles and relations throughout early-modern England.

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<sup>3</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 2.

While the most obvious category of description for the housewife is “woman,” it is only one of many categories that dictated the life, role, and duties of the English housewife in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Along with gender, “various familial, political, religious and social networks that included men” played key roles in the lifestyle and meaning of those who were responsible for food production during the era.<sup>4</sup> Housewives were not merely women who cooked. They were wives, mothers, siblings, daughters, masters, servants, church members, readers, writers, neighbors, and money earners, and each of those categories not only created the identity of the housewife but also created the meaning of cooking and eating. The housewife’s setting of living in rural areas and her role as mistress of a modest household based on her economic position in the middling sort determined her needs and duties regarding food production and their greater significance in English culture.

Economic and social rank were of immense importance in how Elizabethans and their descendents viewed themselves, and hence have become important for historians attempting to understand the early-modern English identity. Keith Wrightson has identified two different categories of Elizabethan, the official, formal vocabulary of “estates and degrees” and the “much cruder, less precise and perhaps more effective” language of “sorts” that appears to have been used in everyday life.<sup>5</sup> While the use of the word sort, “of a certain kind,” had a long history in English vernacular literature, its use specifically regarding class structure seems to have been a particular development of the

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<sup>4</sup> Laura Lunger Knoppers, “Introduction: Critical Framework and Issues” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Keith Wrightson, “‘Sorts of People’ in Tudor and Stuart England” in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800*, eds. Jonathon Barry and Christopher Brooks (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 30.

mid-to-late sixteenth century, mirroring society's changing focus on economic standing over familial lineage.<sup>6</sup> This new "criteria of differentiation" provided a flexible vocabulary that better fit the daily economic and social interactions of the Elizabethans that relied less on strict and seemingly arbitrary categories and more on immediate and fluid relations.<sup>7</sup> For historians of the period, this "authentic contemporary terminology," the language of sorts, in particular the middling sort, "leaps out from the sources as embodying the dynamism of social relations," as opposed to the more rigid conceptual boundaries of class.<sup>8</sup>

The language of sorts is particularly apt regarding the demographic of the rural middling sort, as it consists of both the economically successful non-gentles and the lower gentry, and it was the demographic of the good housewife, balancing social authority with the toil of rural living. Men of this sort were "expected to make themselves as self-sufficient as possible, working demesne farms, creating fish ponds, building dovecotes, and renovating or creating from scratch orchards and kitchen gardens."<sup>9</sup> Complementarily, the women of this sort expectedly learned the skills and performed the duties of food production necessary to physically and economically thrive in rural England, from brewing ale to raising poultry. The housewife was instrumental in the self-sufficiency of the manor, as acknowledged in the common proverb "A man need not to go a borrowing to his neighbour that hath these 3. A litle land well tild. A litle house well fild. A litle wife well wild."<sup>10</sup> She was not a frivolous and pampered aristocrat.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>9</sup> Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 207.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Robson, *The Choise of Change*, 1585, quoted in Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Collection of the Proverbs Found in*

Rather, the housewife was the key component in “a practical, working, rural economy that supplied its own wants, and serviced virtually all its own needs,” as evidenced in the handwritten receipt books wherein she recorded her knowledge and accomplishments.<sup>11</sup> These diverse and difficult tasks of self-sufficiency were the practical reality of the sixteenth-century family of the middling sort.

While the Elizabethan good housewife may have sparingly used the foreign commodities of the marketplace, such as dried currants and sugar, her location and economic status ensured that her focus was on home production. As the seventeenth century progressed, however, the middling sort had risen in both prominence and assets, and their lifestyle transformed accordingly. Commercial convenience foods, such as bread and ale, and increasing use of non-domestic foodstuffs had altered the landscape of English rural dining. Simultaneously, the increase in economic status had allowed the housewife more leisure time and more servants, while decreasing her direct responsibilities and authority in the kitchen. This change in food and dining did not occur without some bemoaning: conservative or nostalgic authors often disparaged the luxury of easier access to more expensive foodstuffs for both its upper-reaching decadence and its lack of self-reliance. In 1621, Ben Jonson commemorated Sir Robert Wroth in a poem for having preferred dining at home “with unbought provision blessed,” while authors like Gervase Markham and William Webb touted the value of English self-sufficiency.<sup>12</sup> For the nostalgic authors of the seventeenth century, “better is a hard crust in thine owne

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*English Literature and the Dictionaries of the Period* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 330.

<sup>11</sup> Hilary Spurling, ed., *Elinor Fettiplace's Receipt Book: Elizabethan Country House Cooking* (1608; London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 114.

<sup>12</sup> Thirsk, 195. Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife* (1615), ed. Michael R. Best (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986).

house, then a cram'd Capon in another Mans.”<sup>13</sup> The peak of the self-sufficient kitchen of the housewife during the later sixteenth century, though only a reality for a short time, continued to represent a specific ideal of Englishness and traditionalism that linked food to cultural identity.

The families of the middling sort, in their pursuit of self-sufficiency, “led a life of industry and independence in which every capacity of the women, mental, moral and physical” that they developed and tried in the course of daily life for the future betterment of themselves and their offspring.<sup>14</sup> From birth to death, the feminine identity was formed and challenged by the tasks of food production. While housewifery implies a married female head-of-house, it was an occupation that absorbed all other points of the lifecycle because of the essential nature of food production and its symbolic cultural importance. Housewifery was the subject of multiple pathways of education and identity, from female communication to servant relations to male philosophy.

The “archetype of the good woman” was strongly present in the male-authored philosophical treatises and how-to manuals of the period, enumerating the virtues in her endless toil within the walls of her home.<sup>15</sup> What male moralists endowed with virtue and meaning was, from the day-to-day experiences of the housewife, only the necessities for the survival and success of herself and her family. Authors and philosophers, from Castiglione to Richard Braithwaite, differed in the details of their opinions about female virtue and honor, but all placed great importance on the opinion “that a woman must act within the prescriptions for her class,” as women served as an

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<sup>13</sup> James Mabbe, *The Rogue or The Life of Guzman de Alfarache* as quoted in Tilley, 64.

<sup>14</sup> Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919; repr., London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1968), 92.

<sup>15</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 67.

extension of their husbands or fathers in the domestic sphere.<sup>16</sup> The worldview of the Elizabethan woman, therefore, was inherently “two-dimensional,” whereby her identity was formed through the complement and conflict between her position within her social and economic class, as dictated through male relatives and her education and experiences within female culture.<sup>17</sup> Alice Clark highlighted the polarizing dichotomy of early-modern female life as established by the overriding male societal standards, where

Women could be good, proceeding from virginity to marriage and maternity, and die after a virtuously spent widowhood. Or they could be wicked: scolds, whores, or witches. What they could not be, in theory, was independent, autonomous, and female-focused.<sup>18</sup>

While the “godly wife and matron” was a numerical minority and may not have encapsulated the majority of female lifestyles and occupations during the period, the English housewife was also a practical reality whose skills and duties in food production, medicine, and domestic industry had common threads of identity across the whole of female experience.<sup>19</sup>

From birth, daughters were raised with matrimony as their goal, though being a wife would only be one section of their lifecycle. For those of the middling sort and higher, parents of female children prioritized making money and goods available for marriage portions, highlighting the importance of marrying off their daughters.<sup>20</sup> In post-Reformation England, religious orders for women were no longer an option and marriage was the primary means to ensure adult economic stability. Despite the importance of

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<sup>16</sup> Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982), 34.

<sup>17</sup> Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Brooks, “Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort, 1550-1800” in *The Middling Sort of People*, 53.

marriage for early-modern women, there was little formal public provision for education and training in the skills necessary for successful housewifery, unlike the male networks of fostering and apprenticeship.<sup>21</sup> Young girls did not have the same degree of formal support as men to navigate the “dangerous passages” of domestic service, marriage, widowhood, and old age; they were armed only with the unregulated and uncertain assistance and advice from female relatives and male-authored publications.<sup>22</sup> These dangers and difficulties, Jonathan Barry theorizes, encouraged women to marry and remarry to maintain their safety and social standing, thereby “reinforcing the centrality of marriage.”<sup>23</sup>

Early-modern women, in addition to their contemporary male authors and theorists, seem to have “conceptualized female maturity mainly in terms of being married,” whereby she would assume new responsibilities and gain a new level of authority in the management of her household.<sup>24</sup> This was not merely a theoretical change in maturity, but represented a very real change in the physical and material makeup of daily life, from being instructed and supervised in household duties as a daughter or servant (possibly relegated to a single or few specific tasks) to the responsibility for the outcome of all domestic industries. The wife assumed a managerial role in the kitchen, supervising any servants, who were typically unmarried women, and making the majority of decisions regarding household production; subsequently, the married woman held a higher social status than the unmarried woman.<sup>25</sup> The household of the middling sort

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<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Barry, “Introduction” in *The Middling Sort of People*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>24</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 124.

<sup>25</sup> Michael R. Best, ed. in Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife* (1615; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), xxviii.



could typically employ enough servants to conduct the menial tasks associated with domestic production, allowing the wife to supervise the whole of production and, subsequently, to become an important part of the family economic unit.<sup>26</sup>

Women of the middling and lower orders clearly were involved with housewifery at all stages of the lifecycle, though with differing levels of authority and duties. Housewives, because of the essential nature of their work, also had specific meanings and duties in relation to the male lifecycle. Francis Bacon echoed the common sentiment that “wives are young men’s mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men’s nurses.”<sup>27</sup> The properties of food, from medicinal to economic, were utilized by men and women throughout their lives, and thus the producers of food would similarly have such use and meaning. The female housewife or housekeeper, whether wife, relative or servant, was a specific subset of feminine identity with particular gendered attributes. Mistress Quickly, of Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor*, appears on two occasions as Dr. Caius’s “dry nurse.” Despite not being the wife of Dr. Caius, she serves in the same capacity of household management, and therefore assumed the attributes of the housewife trope.<sup>28</sup> There are apparent specific gender relations between the head-of-house and the housewife that, though related, are transmutable and semi-independent of the gender relations between husbands and wives. The housewife archetype and its relationship to male culture, therefore, gendered the experiences and environment of Elizabethan and Stuart women throughout the lifecycle.

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<sup>26</sup> Clark, 11-12.

<sup>27</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Essays or Counsels*, 1612 in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, eds. J. Spedding, R.L. Ellis, and D.D. Heath, Vol. XII, 1864, pg. 103 as quoted in Tilley, 748.

<sup>28</sup> Wendy Wall, “‘Household Stuff’: The Sexual Politics of Domesticity and the Advent of English Comedy,” *English Literary History* 65, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1.

The Good Wife, the positive, submissive, industrious portrayal of the housewife in books and plays of the period, contrasts with the negatively-viewed stereotypes of the scold, the slob, and the cuckolding whore.<sup>29</sup> Her industry and nurturing were the key to English success, and she was ultimately “a conservative force, whose appeal is to tradition, not innovation.”<sup>30</sup> While some aspects of sixteenth-century English culture and society were rapidly evolving and changing with the spread of new religious, political, and literary ideas, gender relations overwhelmingly remained constrictive and bound to earlier traditions and mores.<sup>31</sup> Identification with traditional customs and values was a noticeable trait amongst the middling sort, who fused conservative gender ideology with economic and social ambition.<sup>32</sup> The women of the middling sort attempted to emulate the physical and spiritual characteristics of the Good Wife to both fulfill the conservative ideal of female behavior and to produce the household goods and environment that would enable economic growth and social mobility through domestic sales and hospitality.

The two-pronged goal of traditionalism paired with progress determined the content and style of female education in the middling sort. The 1598 English translation of Giovanni Bruto’s *The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education of a Yong Gentlewoman*, which recommended a strict and limited approach to educating women,

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<sup>29</sup> Surprisingly, the stereotype of the witch does not appear in the primary sources regarding housewifery consulted herein. While witchcraft certainly shared characteristics of housewife-related issues such as strife between women, women as medical practitioners, and female autonomy, both practical literature and popular culture on the housewife do not seem to have automatically included the witch in the stock of negative tropes.

<sup>30</sup> Ezell, 38.

<sup>31</sup> Knoppers, “Introduction,” 8.

<sup>32</sup> Barry, 18-19.

was dedicated to a woman of the middling sort rather than the aristocracy.<sup>33</sup> As Suzanne Hull explains, the book was dedicated to “a Mistress Marietta Catarea, who might have been more sympathetic to its warnings against learning from the middle class than a more liberal noblewoman.”<sup>34</sup> Throughout the century, educational theorists, when faced with the question of educating women, debated the balance between embracing the humanist ideal and retaining traditional modes of gender separation.<sup>35</sup> The rural, middling housewife, with her handwritten receipt book and reading list of how-to books, used moderate education and independent creativity and economy in the kitchen to employ humanist ideals in the domestic realm, and yet did not directly challenge the conservative ideas of women as solely private and domestic. While taking advantage of the few improvements begrudgingly available to women in the sixteenth century, the housewife remained firmly within the bracket of the patriarchal household; she had new outlets and avenues to pursue independent improvement and enrichment without risking the stability and safety of societal expectations.

Female culture—encapsulating the communication, activities, and goals shared by networks of female relatives, neighbors, and servants—reflected this balancing act between traditional ideology and individual hopes and desires. “Female culture,” as used in this thesis, is an amalgamation of the habits, friendships, and interests that developed in groups or communities of women that appear to share themes and characteristics across the sex. This culture of women developed and thrived in and around

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<sup>33</sup> Giovanni Bruto, *The necessarie, fit, and conuenient education of a yong gentlewoman written both in French and Italian, and translated into English by W. P. And now printed with the three languages together in one volume, for the better instruction of such as are desirous to studie those tongues*, trans. William Phiston (London: Adam Islip, 1598).

<sup>34</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Pamela Joseph Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 214.

the duties of the housewife, from the sharing of trusted medical remedies with relatives to neighbors travelling to market together to sell their domestic products. It is difficult to ascertain the content or extent of early-modern female culture, since it was often oral and existed underneath or in the absence of the overarching male-oriented public culture preserved over the centuries. Women, through literary acts such as recipe manuscripts and letters, themselves captured some of this elusive female culture on paper, and indirect references from public documents and male literature help to fill out the framework and content of female culture for modern historians.

These women's writings about their participation in and creation of female culture seemingly supported and often praised the conservative *status quo* yet served to subtly subvert the spheres of gender separation by commandeering the masculine tools of reading and writing.<sup>36</sup> Receipt books, female-authored handwritten manuscripts of practical recipes and advice for cookery and other domestic industries, are a unique way to view how housewives used literacy in their everyday lives at the end of the sixteenth century. Two comprehensive, representative examples used primarily in this thesis are the 1610 book of Mistress Sarah Longe from the Folger Shakespeare Library and the 1608 book of Elinor Fettiplace published by owner Hilary Spurling, though others will be referred to in passing.<sup>37</sup> While recipe books outwardly provided the means to maintain the *status quo* of women's relegation to the kitchen, they were also tools for personal creativity and ingenuity, class ambitions, and a legacy for female inheritance. However, female culture remained within boundaries acceptable to contemporary male society, and

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<sup>36</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Sarah Longe, "Appendix I: Mrs. Sarah Longe Her Receipt Booke," (1610) in Mary Anne Caton, ed., *Fooles and Fricassees: Food in Shakespeare's England*, The Folger Shakespeare Library (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999). Elinor Fettiplace, *Elinor Fettiplace's Receipt Book: Elizabethan Country House Cooking*, ed. Hilary Spurling (1608; London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

was in accordance with the moral and spiritual education of both men and women of the period. Early-modern social mores required men to instruct women in submission and conformity and relegate them to the private sphere, and there is no doubt that many men and women wholeheartedly believed in the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible and centuries of traditional gender oppression.<sup>38</sup> Other factors besides religious belief convinced women to remain within the confines of domestic subservience, from economic safety to the fear of social ostracism, “even love and respect for their husbands were often enough to convince conformists and rebels alike to stay within the structure of their male-dominated world.”<sup>39</sup> And, while some may have merely tolerated or withstood the boundaries of male dominance, other women embraced the acceptable though disparaged outlets of female culture and their meanings. While men mocked women and their concerns as “ignorant, pious, and irrational” in contrast with their beloved humanist and Renaissance ideals, “from women’s own point of view, they were guardians of the things that mattered: a world governed by common rights and communal responsibilities, linked by bonds of religion and morality, family and friendship.”<sup>40</sup>

Housewife identity and female culture was dictated by the confines and commands of masculine authority during this period in a number of media forms. “Popular culture,” as it appears throughout this thesis, is used as an umbrella term to represent these various media intended for consumption of entertainment, such as the many plays, ballads, songs, poems, chapbooks, and woodcut illustrations that flourished during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It does not imply or indicate any

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<sup>38</sup> Suzanne W. Hull, *Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, A Division of Sage Publications, 1996), 196.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 435.

restriction to certain classes or groups, other than how individual works were limited by the practicalities of consumption. For example, the audience of a particular chapbook was limited by price, literacy, and distribution, but its content is representative of general trends in the marketplace and can be tied to other forms of entertainment through shared themes, characters, and settings, many of which addressed and informed Elizabethan gender relations. In an increasingly literate society, traditional stories and sermons of gendered inequity found a new medium in print. Comedic songs and satires, philosophical treatises and translations on female behavior, and how-to manuals on cookery and household management delivered a clear picture of the virtues and vices expected of the English housewife. Though female contributions to the oral and literary dialogue may have contradicted or circumvented the dictates of male authority, ultimately “women had a limited range of scripts, or stories, by which they could understand their experiences.”<sup>41</sup>

Modern literary historians have identified two different forms of sixteenth-century women in literature: the idea of woman as a fantasized concept “made of air or thought” and the idea of woman as a record of the reality experienced by actual women of the Renaissance period, a distinction made by Stevie Davies using deliberate capitalization of the word Idea when referring to the first category.<sup>42</sup> The trope of the housewife, however, walked a fine line between the Idea and the reality. The housewife practiced the domestic arts in an extraordinary way for the survival and success of the household, and yet became an ideological parody of such duties and attributes that served as fodder for serious treatises and farcical comedies alike. These works featuring the Idea

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>42</sup> Stevie Davies, *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature: The Feminine Reclaimed* (Brighton, The Harvester Press, Limited, 1986), ix.

of the housewife, in turn, conversely informed the female readers who daily practiced the realities of housewifery. Social historians have attempted to separate the prescriptions and ideals of literature from actual practice, contemporary sources reveal that the two “were not wholly distinct,” and instead the acceptance or rejection of these “normative notions” can be viewed as an ongoing discourse between real-life actors and culturally-provided scripts.<sup>43</sup>

Literary forms could be used by both scholars and everyday folks alike to “investigate the social struggles surrounding community-formation and definitions of Englishness” through the common experiences of gendered domesticity.<sup>44</sup> The setting of the home environment, with its carefully coded and ritualized occupants and objects, included all members of society in their defined roles. The roles echoed clearly in the standing and interactions throughout early-modern society, and focusing on the micro-environment of the home allowed authors and the audience to thoroughly evaluate the makeup of their world. William Gouge in 1622 implored readers to directly utilize this comparison by terming the household “a little commonwealth” wherein the occupants could evaluate and test actions and relations for application in the public arena, and the household setting in many plays and stories provided the same, if slightly more subtle, function.<sup>45</sup>

Margaret Ezell divides the published works featuring women as the focus of entertainment into four categories based on their treatment of the subject: “celebrations of

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<sup>43</sup> Amanda Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England*, Studies in History (London: The Royal Historical Society in association with The Boydell Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>44</sup> Wall, “Household,” 32.

<sup>45</sup> William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties eight treatises* (London: 1622), 18, quoted in Erica Longfellow, “Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 319, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/499790>.

the virtues of the Good Wife, histories of famous women, satires on the general nature of women, and defenses refuting the satires.”<sup>46</sup> Those featuring the housewife, the kitchen, and food production are almost exclusively of the first and third types, a combination of serious scholarship establishing the virtues and acerbic comedy illustrating the vices of housewife behavior. Men’s writing instructed women on their expected behaviors and theorized on their identities and implications in male society. These academic works established the female role within a male society directly in literary advice for women, like John Brinsley’s 1645 *A looking-glasse for good vvomen, held forth by way of counsell and advice to such of that sex and quality, as in the simplicity of their hearts, are led away to the imbracing or looking towards any of the dangerous errors of the times, specially that of the separation*, or in moral and religious evaluations of society or humanity, as in Samuel Purchas’s 1619 *Purchas his pilgrim Microcosmus, or the historie of man. Relating the wonders of his generation, vanities in his degeneration, necessity of his regeneration. Meditated on the words of David. Psal. 39.5. Verily, euery man at his best state is altogether vanitie*.<sup>47</sup> Male-authored sources could also indirectly establish this role by describing women acting in the prescribed manner; William Harrison’s 1577 *The Description of England* was a source in this category that was particularly useful for this thesis since it described the standards of both household and social structure and food

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<sup>46</sup> Ezell, 36.

<sup>47</sup> John Brinsley, *A looking-glasse for good vvomen, held forth by way of counsell and advice to such of that sex and quality, as in the simplicity of their hearts, are led away to the imbracing or looking towards any of the dangerous errors of the times, specially that of the separation* (London: John Field for Ralph Smith, 1645). Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrim Microcosmus, or the historie of man. Relating the wonders of his generation, vanities in his degeneration, necessity of his regeneration. Meditated on the words of David. Psal. 39.5. Verily, euery man at his best state is altogether vanitie* (London: William Stansby for Henry Fetherstone, 1619).



and food production.<sup>48</sup> Often this male philosophy was “a life different from what women might have described” in print or experienced in the day-to-day operations of their household.<sup>49</sup> Only a few of the housewife’s own attempts to contemplate, create, and record her environment have survived, in the forms of private writings such as receipt books and personal letters, “whereas a barrage of instructions, jest books, fictional literature, ballads, advice books, and letters—all written by men—descend to us today.”<sup>50</sup>

The female-authored texts here are chosen by necessity, the default options of easily accessible, relevant works such as the select manuscripts that have been digitized or transcribed by their owners. By contrast, the more well-known male texts are chosen out of a much larger range of options, and have therefore been selected by both their relevance to the topic and their popularity and readership within the period. Additionally, primary sources of both authorial genders have been accessed indirectly, though not ideally, through compilations and quotations recorded by modern scholars who have had access to these early printed and manuscript works.

When dealing with the subject of women in the domestic environment, male authors found a need to repeatedly assert their dominance through both literal proscriptions and by illustrating the differences between positive and negative behavior in female characters, “suggesting a continuous need to hammer home their positions.”<sup>51</sup> While fictional literature of the time “offers ample evidence that women were in fact prepared to be far less passive, in love or in anger,” male-authored treatises on subjects as varied as religion and cookery consistently preach a message of female subservience and

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<sup>48</sup> William Harrison, *The Description of England* (1577), ed. Georges Edelen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press for Folger Shakespeare Library, 1968).

<sup>49</sup> Hull, *Women*, 23.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-195.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

strict adherence.<sup>52</sup> In contrasting though complementary form, early-modern comedy relied heavily on the depiction of women as “nagging, disobedient, garrulous, overdressed, oversexed, drunken, and bawdy,” acting in direct disobedience to the dictates of male authority.<sup>53</sup> While it cannot be fully determined how often women acted in obedient versus disobedient manners, it is clear that the literature of the time established a strict dichotomy between the two, heavily loaded with value judgments and implications.

Despite the firm opinions on female inferiority and subservience laid down in male-authored works, their “intellectual position” based on philosophy, religion, and tradition was often “contrary to empirical reality,” where women proved successful in the limited endeavors allowed to them, such as literacy and money management.<sup>54</sup> For scholars and philosophers of the period, “the attempt to define ‘woman’ was an endlessly fascinating intellectual pursuit” that required integration or rejection of the observed female actions.<sup>55</sup> The creation of the Church of England and the subsequent removal of female iconography and religious orders from Reformation Christianity had forced male authors to focus on other aspects of feminine identity, particularly in relation to economics, such as property rights, marriage portions, household management, domestic production, and the limits of female participation in business, and gender attributes were transformed accordingly.<sup>56</sup> While the Reformation and its subsequent influence on gender relations played a significant role in the world of the kitchen, this thesis unfortunately only briefly touches upon this complex topic. Where unavoidable, generic religious

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<sup>52</sup> Best in Markham, xxvii.

<sup>53</sup> Hull, *Women*, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Steve Davies, 1.

principles and beliefs are presented here if they are necessary for understanding the economic, social, and cultural role of the housewife, but in-depth evaluation of the variances, subtleties, and controversies surrounding the evolution of Christianity's effects on female work is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this work focuses on the primarily secular treatises, rather than the more purely religious texts, particularly those that equated feminine virtue and piety with the complex physical and mental labors of household production.

If philosophical texts or religious sermons could not convince women to toe the line established by the male cultural hierarchy, "there were always jests and facetious barbs to press home the point," through the various forms of entertainment.<sup>57</sup> There was a distinct concern that women were unable or unwilling to conform to the expectations of society and performance of their duties without "constant prodding," and popular culture reflects this through the shaming of nonconformist and disobedient women in comedy.<sup>58</sup> The domestic setting was ideal for comedic explorations of "gender, speech, sexuality, and community," and unsurprisingly figures in a number of major early English comedies, such as 1575 *Gammer Gvrtons Nedle* and 1602 *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.<sup>59</sup> While other plays utilize the housewife trope through characters, scenes, and lines, and are appropriately referenced in this thesis, *Gammer Gvrtons* and *Merry Wives* are overwhelmingly useful as they were significant plays from the period that have the housewife and her kitchen as the heart of the plot and setting.

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<sup>57</sup> Hull, *Women*, 40-41.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Wall, "Household," 35. William Stevenson, *Gammer Gvrtons Nedle* (1575), ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford, 1920). William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, ed. Giorgio Melchiori (1602; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2000).

The enjoyment of the parody of the housewife was not limited, however, to the expected common male audience. Women read, listened to, and even created the housewife trope, participating “in perpetuating this misogynistic oral culture. Women as well as men told jokes of female imbecility, cunning, and frailty,” such as in the jokes written by Dame Sarah Cowper in the late-seventeenth century.<sup>60</sup> Scholars enjoyed the ribald and acerbic genre of comedy as well, as the first colloquial play at Cambridge, *Gammer Gvrtons Nedle*, was performed in the mid-sixteenth century, where “a playwright chose to entertain a group of academics tutored in Latin models with a play centering on a housewife and her domestic mischances.”<sup>61</sup> At a glance, the rural, crude widow Gurton and her associates seem far removed from the lives of Cambridge students. However, they could relate to the premise through remembrance of their mothers, nurses, and servants, and recognized their own role within the domestic micro-environment. The comedic stereotypes of housewife behavior seem to have been well established before this early English comedy through ballads, poetry, and stories, and clearly thrived because of their universal relevancy. An exceedingly useful tool for investigating these deeply entrenched, frequently employed stereotypes is through the popular collections of proverbs and dictionaries that highlight common colloquial phrases. Morris Palmer Tilley’s 1950 *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Collection of the Proverbs Found in English Literature and the Dictionaries of the Period* is an excellent resource for accessing a multitude of these proverb collections, such as James Howell’s 1659 *Paroimiographia Proverbs, or, Old sayed savves & adages in English (or the Saxon tounge), Italian,*

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<sup>60</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 204.

<sup>61</sup> Wall, “Household,” 3.

*French, and Spanish, whereunto the British for their great antiquity and weight are added* and Randle Cotgrave's 1611 *A dictionarie of the French and English tongues*.<sup>62</sup>

The most directly relevant primary sources on the topic of this thesis were those written describing or instructing food production and housewife behavior. These were authored by both men and women, although only those by men were published in print during the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Female-authored receipt books, exemplified by Sarah Longe and Elinor Fettiplace, letters, and prayers stand as record of the domestic activities of the household as interpreted by the women who performed them. Typically, these practical writings focus on preserving the knowledge necessary to perform housewifely duties, and allusions to gender are limited in scope or sub-textual. Male instructional books on cookery, such as Gervase Markham's 1615 *The English Housewife*, used the raw material of female receipt collections and oral traditions and interlaced them with opinions on female behavior and the implications of their work on English society at large.<sup>63</sup> Descriptive texts like William Harrison's *Description of England* and translated foreign works like *Epulario* and *Maison Rustique* added further meaning and importance to the household accomplishments described by women in their private writings.<sup>64</sup> Other direct evidence of kitchens and domestic production can be found in archeological findings, court testimony, wills and other legal documents, and tax

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<sup>62</sup> Tilley. James Howell, *Paroimiographia Proverbs, or, Old sayed savves & adages in English (or the Saxon tounge), Italian, French, and Spanish, whereunto the British for their great antiquity and weight are added* (London: J.G., 1659). Randle Cotgrave, *A dictionarie of the French and English tongues* (London: Adam Islip, 1611).

<sup>63</sup> Hull, *Women*, 171.

<sup>64</sup> Giovanne de Rosselli, *Epulario, or The Italian banquet wherein is shewed the maner how to dresse and prepare all kind of flesh, foules or fishes. As also how to make sauces, tartes, pies, &c. After the maner of all countries. With an addition of many other profitable and necessary things. Translated out of Italian into English* (London: Adam Islip, 1598). Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault, *Maison Rustique or, The Countrie Farme*, trans. Richard Surflet (London: Edm. Bollifant, 1600).

information, and in this thesis information from these sources is typically limited to what has been accessed through the work of other scholars.

According to Sara Mendelson, the “two-dimensional” identity of early-modern women, with their struggle to mentally balance the dueling forces of gender and social class, has “created conceptual confusion among present-day historians.”<sup>65</sup>

Historians of Tudor and Stuart England have often evaluated women of the period as a semi-homogenous group devoid of social or economic relations, rather than recognizing that sex was only one of many categories of identification. However, beginning with Alice Clark’s foundational 1919 *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* and carried on by the development of gender history in the late-twentieth century,

greater sensitivity to issues of gender and family have alerted historians to the need for a social analysis in which gender, age and position in the life-cycle are integrated with notions of class derived from birth, occupation or wealth.<sup>66</sup>

Gradually, this integration of gender with the rest of the major categories of historical study has produced a plethora of works that have uncovered the various aspects of female and male life in the early-modern period. A study of the housewife in particular, until now only covered as portions of larger works on women or indirectly in economic or literary histories, continues the trend of gender integration. In addition, this work intends to pair the housewife identity with the resultant gendering of her worksite, the kitchen. The housewife, while clearly a manifestation of gender role assignation, cannot be separated from the cultural, economic, social, and material aspects of her lifestyle and environs. While much of the information about the duties and activities of Elizabethan and Stuart housewives and working women has been uncovered, these facts have not

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<sup>65</sup> Mendelson, 6.

<sup>66</sup> Barry, 3.

been fully evaluated in terms of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gender attributes, gender relations, and culture at large.

Alice Clark chose to focus on establishing the economic history of women of the middling and lower sorts, which she concluded was of the highest importance because “bread,” or economic survival, was essential not only for her life but for her maternal and spiritual functions as well.<sup>67</sup> Clark established the seventeenth century as a watershed era for the development of women’s work, following the changes in middling-class female status and duties in response to rising capital accumulation, from the self-sufficient Elizabethan housewife to a split between “the idle bourgeois woman or the drudge of poor men” accompanied by the consumption of commercial goods at the end of the century.<sup>68</sup> She also acknowledged “the absence of knowledge regarding women’s position in the years preceding the Seventeenth Century.”<sup>69</sup> This is an absence that in many ways has not been filled to this day. While there are glimpses of this pre-“watershed” period scattered throughout works on seventeenth-century women and on other Elizabethan topics, there are very few pieces that have synthesized the information available and the approach pioneered by Clark to create a clearer picture of the lives and meaning of women in the sixteenth century. It is vital to evaluate the elusive Elizabethan housewife in order to better understand the changes and developments in gender roles throughout the early-modern and modern periods, that moment of specific identities and duties, before they were disturbed and evolved by the turmoil of the seventeenth century.

Finally, historians have debated on whether there is enough solidarity or commonality amongst women of the period to view them as a categorical whole. This

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<sup>67</sup> Clark, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 259.

<sup>69</sup> Clark, preface on unnumbered first page.

debate is compounded by issues regarding primary evidence, as there is much more evidence on elite women yet, due to the “inegalitarian” nature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, “it may appear reasonable to assume that the difference in outlook between women of the highest and lowest ranks was as great as the disparity in their income.”<sup>70</sup> Scholarship evaluating “this elite minority” can veer into antiquarianism of questionable value to the historical field.<sup>71</sup> While this work does not intend to evaluate or analyze any group beyond the lower gentry and middling sort rural housewives, this particular demographic proves a useful tool in demonstrating broader themes in Elizabethan and Stuart society, as can be seen in a wide variety of primary sources as well as relevant modern scholarship. While Mendelson and Crawford are correct to highlight that “those who were engaged in rural farming production, the wives of prosperous farmers, were a more limited proportion of the female population” than Alice Clark theorized, focus on this particular minority avoids antiquarianism because the middling housewife took on symbolic attributes that extended in meaningful ways onto larger early-modern culture.<sup>72</sup> Wendy Wall’s “dual inquiry” into early-modern syrup, one of the housewife’s many domestic commodities, demonstrated how an investigation into a combination of the theoretical and practical use of material goods can reveal both “early modern ways of being in the world” and the cultural meaning of those ways of being.<sup>73</sup> This thesis, in turn, attempts to extend this investigation of the “sheer uncanniness of the early modern everyday, that is, the reward for focusing on something as banal—and as

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<sup>70</sup> Mendelson, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 303.

<sup>73</sup> Wendy Wall, “Just a Spoonful of Sugar: Syrup and Domesticity in Early Modern England,” *Modern Philology* 104, no. 2 (November 2006): 152, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/511711>.



literary—as syrup” onto the housewife and all of her domestic production.<sup>74</sup> The Elizabethan housewife was both banal and literary, practical and theoretical, real and symbolic. A gendered analysis of her cultural, social, and economic meaning is a particularly fruitful way to uncover the surprisingly significant impact of this everyday figure in early-modern England.

Women’s work in the sixteenth century was made up of a wide variety of domestic industries that resulted in the production of nearly all of the goods necessary for the period’s standard of living. In the gendered division of household labor that had carried over from the Middle Ages, many of those fields that in following centuries became professionalized were considered “specially suited to the genius of women, and were accordingly allotted to them,” such as brewing, baking, and medicine.<sup>75</sup> The contemporary sources make it clear that these domestic industries were intentionally assigned to women, and subsequently developed distinctly gendered attributes. Historians have often failed to fully investigate the effects and meanings of this gender-assigned division of labor, “assuming women’s work complemented that of men, and could be subsumed within male occupations.”<sup>76</sup> For the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English, women’s labor roles were natural and important factors in the makeup of gender identity, and should be studied as such. The skill and craft of the housewife manifested in “her body...designed for domesticity: she was ‘a House builded for Generation and Gestation,’” according to Samuel Purchas in his 1619 *historie of man*.<sup>77</sup> By the end of the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>75</sup> Clark, 285.

<sup>76</sup> Jane Whittle, “Housewives and Servants in Rural England, 1440-1650: Evidence of Women’s Work from Probate Documents,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series* 15 (2005): 52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679362>

<sup>77</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 67 and Purchas, 474, Early English Books Online,

seventeenth century, however, the housewife had lost her hardiness and productive abilities, “deigned...only for an easie Life, and to perform the tender Offices of Love,” supporting Alice Clark’s seventeenth-century watershed theory.<sup>78</sup>

For the hardworking housewife of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, the oft-repeated phrase “a vvomans vvork is never done” (which was printed as a song title in 1660) was particularly apt in two ways.<sup>79</sup> Her tasks were numerous and complex, and each season required different types and phases of domestic production, so that the housewife was busy daily throughout the year. In addition, women continued to perform the tasks of housewifery throughout their lifespan, even during old age when men might retire.<sup>80</sup> Patriarchal society viewed women’s work entirely differently than men’s work, trivializing and devaluing female labor so that it had to be performed and endured without complaint or excuse throughout the lifecycle. Her work had positive and negative meanings and repercussions in the economic, social, and familial world around her, despite the way it was belittled.

All women, despite social class, assumed “responsibility for child-care and housewifery,” although their actual duties may have differed based on economic status: where the lowest sorts carried on additional outside jobs; middling sorts often assisted

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[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:15791:253)

2003&res\_id=xri:eebo&rft\_id=xri:eebo:image:15791:253 (accessed November 14, 2013), image 253.

<sup>78</sup> John Pechey, *A General Treatise of the Diseases of Maids, Bigbellied Women, Child-bed-women, and Widows, Together with the Best Methods of Preventing Or Curing the Same* (1696), preface quoted in Mendelson and Crawford, 67. This thesis does not intend to compare early modern women’s work with that of other time periods nor engage in the “golden age debate.” It is outside the scope of this piece and is irrelevant to the argument presented herein.

<sup>79</sup> *A vvomans vvork is never done Here is a song for maids to sing, both in the winter and the spring; it is such a pretty conceited thing, which will much pleasure to them bring. Maids may sit still, go, or run, but a womans work is never done. To a delicate northern tune, A womans work is never done, or, The beds making* (London: John Andrews, 1660), Early English Books Online,

[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:198652)

2003&res\_id=xri:eebo&rft\_id=xri:eebo:image:198652 (accessed November 14, 2013).

<sup>80</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 189.

their husbands in business; and the highest elites often supervised, rather than directly performed many duties.<sup>81</sup> Labeling only the lowest orders of women as “labouring,” therefore, is highly problematic, as it devalues the work of housewifery performed by women of the middling and upper sorts in much the same manner as early-modern men.<sup>82</sup> Instead, highlighting the utility and importance of housewifery to the Elizabethan society and economy recognizes all women of the period through “all kind of labors without exception, that become maids of their location, of whatsoever degree they be, rich or poor, noble or unnoble, fair or foul.”<sup>83</sup> All women strove to portray the same image of the “good Houswife,” with “the foot on the Cradle, and the hand on the Distaff” lauded in the 1659 *Paroimiographia Proverbs* collections, contributing to her social standing through her family and to her economic standing through her domestic production.<sup>84</sup>

The self-sufficient rural household of the middling sort and lower gentry consisted of multiple individual domestic industries under the management of the housewife. Jane Whittle argues that these “key forms of women’s work...should be understood as by-employments within the household, treated as occupations rather than integral elements of a vaguely defined domestic economy,” emphasizing the unique importance and specialized skills of each domestic product.<sup>85</sup> Contemporary literary evidence enumerates the many domestic industries required for the function of the rural early-modern household, yet this

is both incomplete, and too comprehensive, as a picture of what real women did. On the one hand some obvious tasks are omitted or only briefly

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Becon, *Workes* Part I (1560-1564), 368 quoted in Hull, *Women*, 148.

<sup>84</sup> Howell, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:62](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:62) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 62.

<sup>85</sup> Whittle, 53.

mentioned, such as child care, fetching water and fuel, and laundry. On the other, it would be a mistake to imagine that all rural women carried out all these tasks.<sup>86</sup>

However, as Mendelson and Crawford state, simply enumerating the many duties required of the housewife

fail[s] to illuminate the multiple connections between different domains in which women functioned. Nor does a list convey the dynamic quality of female activities, the continual transformation of objects from one form to another, the constant circulation of possessions and commodities from one woman or household to another.<sup>87</sup>

A list also fails to identify how those products, skills, and tools of domestic production themselves became signifiers of gendered roles, relations, and spaces. Women's work, with its numerous individual but interrelated duties, was difficult to recognize and define, unlike men's occupations. Sir Hugh Evans, in Shakespeare's 1602 *Merry Wives of Windsor*, struggled to describe Dr. Caius's housekeeper, Mistress Quickly, to Simple, saying "there dwells one Mistress Quickly; which is in the manner of his nurse, or his dry nurse, or his cook, or his laundry, his washer and his wringer."<sup>88</sup> It is nearly impossible to look at only a single aspect of housewifery, as the many duties of wives, daughters, and servants bled into one another in a cycle of production with the kitchen at its center. It is also important to note, when reviewing the list of domestic industries, that the housewife was not alone in the kitchen; it was simply beyond human ability for one person to accomplish all of the tasks required for the survival of the manor.<sup>89</sup> Even so, the ideal Elizabethan women trudged on, attempting to fulfill the needs of the house as best as she could despite the impossibilities of her goal. When Simple interrupts Mistress Quickly's

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>87</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 221.

<sup>88</sup> Shakespeare, 1.2.2-5.

<sup>89</sup> G. E. Fussell, "Countrywomen in Old England," *Agricultural History* 50, no. 1 (Jan 1976): 176.

rambling list of her duties with an awestruck “’Tis a great charge to come under one body’s hand,” she replies with a sarcastic “Are you avised o’that? You shall find it a great charge.”<sup>90</sup> “To be up early, and down late” was the necessary schedule of the busy housewife, laboring at all hours for the survival of her household.<sup>91</sup>

The housewife of the middling sort, with her access to adequate resources and manageable number of servants, “came closest to achieving a closed system of production.”<sup>92</sup> With the social emphasis on and the practical necessity of self-sufficiency within the middling rural household, the housewife would attempt as many of these domestic by-employments as was feasible between herself and her servants, and substitute the rest with available substitutes. Mendelson and Crawford describe men and women of the lowest sorts as having “a multiple occupational subsistence identity,” and the same can be said for the rural housewife, who found it necessary to manufacture multiple goods for consumption or profit in order to make her household economically feasible, instead of relying on the commercial or imported goods of the larger cities.<sup>93</sup> Her production of goods and services was incredibly valuable, as “she who furnishes by her industry milk and cheese, eggs and pork, fruit and vegetables for the consumption of her family, has produced exactly the same goods...than if she had produced them for the market...makes absolutely no difference to their real value.”<sup>94</sup> The Elizabethan housewife contributed to both the basic survival and economic success of her family in a very tangible and recognizable way, whether her domestic products were consumed by her household or sold at market for “egg money.” The high employment of female

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<sup>90</sup> Shakespeare, 1.4.92-95.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 1.4.95.

<sup>92</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 303.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>94</sup> Clark, 291.

servants, particularly in households that could only afford a small number of servants like many of the middling households, “demonstrates that on a practical level at least, women’s work was valued: why else bother to pay for an extra woman’s labour?”<sup>95</sup>

Unfortunately for the housewife, recognition of the economic value of her work did not guarantee recognition of the value of the woman. Instead, the housewife in appears in popular culture as nagging, vain, stupid, and idle, sometimes because she was not fulfilling the duties of housewifery, but other times *despite* her industrious performance and the economic and social value of her work. Gammer Gurton’s manservant Hodge is quick to accuse his mistress of idleness and idiocy when her needle comes up missing, crying “What deuill had you els to do, ye kept ich wot no sheepe,” and “By gogs soule I think you wold loes your ars, and it were loose.”<sup>96</sup> Hodge could neither understand nor appreciate the value of Gammer’s work, though the loss of her needle clearly affected and impeded his lifestyle, as it was not the same as the recognized, validated occupations in rural English society, like his labor in the fields.

This did not permit, however, housewives to slack on their duties simply because they were not considered “work.” On the contrary, “a cleane fyngerd huswyfe and an ydel, folke saie,” the negative stereotypes in a collection of proverbs that John Heywood framed in a dialogue about marriage in 1546, threatened the household structure and survival, opposing the hardworking Good Wife who would willingly dirty her hands in the kitchen.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, her overly-gentle nature or unwillingness to dirty

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<sup>95</sup> Whittle, 73.

<sup>96</sup> Stevenson, 11.

<sup>97</sup> John Heywood, *A dialogue conteinyng the nomber in effect of all the prouerbes in the englishe tongue compacte in a matter concernyng two maner of mariages, made and set foorth by Iohn Heywood* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1546), Part I Chapter X Page 4, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:6443:13](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:6443:13) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 13.

her hands, “marres her household,” thereby transferring the judgment on her character onto her physical workspace, a common saying recorded in Randle Cotgrave’s French dictionary in 1611.<sup>98</sup> The physical realm of kitchen, hall, and manor yard were the spaces of the housewife’s domain, and yet they were also spaces of interaction with others and in doing so were an extension of the woman. This was not merely in the big picture of marring an entire household, but in the everyday annoyances caused by domestic work, such as described by Andrew Boorde, where “swepyng of howses and chambers ought not to be done as long as any honest man is within the precyncts of the howse, for the dust doth putryfy the ayre making it dence.”<sup>99</sup>

The belittling of female work mirrored the belittling of female attributes that was so prevalent in the male-authored treatises, supported by both religious doctrine and the classical texts revered by Renaissance scholars. In Book Five of *Republic*, Socrates scathingly dismisses the validity of women’s household work: “Need I waste time in speaking of the art of weaving, and the management of pancakes and preserves, in which womankind does really appear to be great.” Socrates concluded that, though women excel over men in the areas of housewifery, they are still generally considered inferior to men.<sup>100</sup> He not only rejected female work as a field for comparison, but rejected the “positive value” of women’s work as a whole, which “makes it impossible to praise women for ‘womanly’ qualities.”<sup>101</sup> William Stevenson’s field laborer Hodge, much like Socrates, also quickly dismissed the value of female duties, and yet “Hodge’s sense of the insignificance of women’s work...is glaringly at odds with the trauma that the lost needle

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<sup>98</sup> Cotgrave, “Femme,” Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:216](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:216) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 216.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Molly Harrison, *The Kitchen in History* (Reading: Osprey Publishing Limited, 1972), 59.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Benson, 185.

<sup>101</sup> Benson, 186.

causes.”<sup>102</sup> The experienced value and utility of housewife duties in everyday subsistence was often at odds with the trivializing message of both scholarly and entertaining works, and echoed the academic debates over the abilities and value of women overall.

As the housewife’s perceived value was tied up with her performance in domestic production, her economic potential determined much of her worth as a potential spouse in the marriage market. Many popular books and common phrases were occupied with the selection and the keeping of a wife. Authors like Gervase Markham described what they considered an ideal wife through styles like how-to guidebooks and collections of letters.<sup>103</sup> The hypothetical bride described for a young man by Markham in *Hobsons Horse-load of Letters* was idealized with the practical in mind. The fictional young man extols the virtues of his intended as such using a merchant ship metaphor: “she is not all sail, beautiful flags and tackling, but freighted with rich merchandise to which th’other serve but as necessary instruments.”<sup>104</sup> Markham and others of his ilk, while subscribing to the conventional theories of female subservience and insufficiency, were occupied primarily with the reality of her participation in the household economy, participation which placed her in economic partnership with her husband.<sup>105</sup> The ultimate conflict experienced by the husband was what he *saw*—woman as capable, hardworking, and essential—versus what he *knew*—woman as childlike, subordinate, and limited in her abilities and understanding.

Popular sayings on housewives were not limited to ridicule during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, recognizing the actual worth of women in their

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<sup>102</sup> Wall, “Household,” 7.

<sup>103</sup> Best in Markham, xxii.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., xxvi.



society. The proverb “a vertuous dame is worth a Diademe” was not merely a lovely turn of phrase, it alluded to both the moral and economic value of having a hardworking, productive woman in the house.<sup>106</sup> A woman endowed with the knowledge and skills of domestic production that prompted Robert Crowley to pen “The Womans Lesson” in 1549:

Be thou modest, sober and wise  
and learn the poyntes of houswyfry  
And men shal have the in such price  
That thou shalt not need a dowry.<sup>107</sup>

A husband could utilize the economic earning potential and skill set of the housewife in two primary ways: in combination with his own husbandry or by deputizing her in his stead. The tropes of the Good Wife and Good Husband implied a symbiotic partnership that insisted on “a division of labors instead of one party working in order to maintain the idle ease of the other. The Good Husband does not cheat his family of either his money or himself.”<sup>108</sup> The reality, however, could be quite the opposite, where a particularly ambitious or single-minded husband entrusted his wife to manage his affairs while he pursued a career, attended his studies, or climbed the social ladder at Court. This double burden of duties was borne admirably by the wife of Peter Heylin in 1681 when the “discreet and active lady, looked both after her Housewifery within doors, and the Husbandry without; thereby freeing him from that care and trouble which otherwise would have hindered his laborious Pen.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Cotgrave, “Femme,” image 216.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Hull, *Chaste*, 54.

<sup>108</sup> Ezell, 102.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Heylin, *The Historical and Miscellaneous Tracts of; and an account of the life of the Author*, (London: 1681), 18-19 quoted in Clark, 54.

The utility of a wife, and therein her worth, was noted not only in her presence but in her absence. There was no other lack akin to the lack of a wife in the early-modern man's life.<sup>110</sup> She had been termed his "earthly treasure," a proverb recorded by Thomas Draxe in his multilingual treasury in 1616.<sup>111</sup> Subsequently, in order to express the high value of a missing object it was compared to the good housewife, here by George Chapman in his play *Monsieur D'Oliue* in 1606, for "the value of a good Wife (as all good things else) are better knowne by their want, then by their fruition."<sup>112</sup>

Ultimately, the worth of an individual wife during the early-modern era was determined by the opinion of the men in her life, particularly her husband. A wife could be "the best or worst fortune that can betide a man thro'out the whole train of his life," given both her ability to sufficiently manage her household and her husband's economic and emotional views of her and her work.<sup>113</sup> For those who personally viewed women and their accomplishments as vital and commendable, "The houses were no weme[n] were, ought to bee esteemed as vast Deserts, or untilled lands."<sup>114</sup> But for the avowed woman-hater or the disgruntled husband, "the wife brings but two merrie days to her

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<sup>110</sup> Heywood, Part II Chapter XI Page 3, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:6443:46](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:6443:46) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 46.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas Draxe, *Bibliotheca scholastica instructissima. Or, A treasury of ancient adagies, and sententious prouerbes selected out of the English, Greeke, Latine, French, Italian and Spanish. Ranked in alphabeticall order, and suited to one and the same sense. Published by Thomas Draxe Batch. in Diuinitie* (London: Apud Ioannem Billium, 1616), 231, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:16202:120](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:16202:120) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 120.

<sup>112</sup> George Chapman, *Monsieur D'Oliue A comedie, as it vvas sundrie times acted by her Maiesties children at the Blacke-Friers*, (London: Thomas Creede for William Holmes, 1606), E 2, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:8136:18](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:8136:18) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 18.

<sup>113</sup> Howell (1655), quoted in Tilley, 431.

<sup>114</sup> *A vvomans vvooorth, defended against all the men in the world Proouing them to be more perfect, excellent, and absolute in all vertuous actions, then any man of what qualitie soeuer. Written by one that hath heard much, seene much, but knowes a great deale more*, trans. Anthony Gibson (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1599), quoted in Ezell, 37.

husband, the one when she is married, the other when she is buried.”<sup>115</sup> Men’s opinions on the worth of women and female labor, whether from husbands, public officials, or published authors, informed how women saw themselves and the products of their domestic labor, and how everyone understood and interpreted food, food production, and dining. The questions of how, who, and why food was produced was as much an ongoing gender, social, and cultural discourse as it was the practical matter of economics and available resources.

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<sup>115</sup> Bartholomew Young, *The Civile Conversation of M. Steeven Guazzo* (1586), 309, quoted in Tilley, 725.

## CHAPTER I

### RECIPES

Food production and the kitchen came in two forms, the ideological and the physical, the first being the knowledge and ideas that informed the housewife's work. The ideological kitchen, the subject of this thesis, is herein is divided into two major areas of kitchen knowledge and conduct, recipes and human relations. Housewives acquired recipes, the knowledge of how to produce and manage foodstuffs, during their education as children and cemented that knowledge through their adult actions and interactions.

Education for girls was a subject of great controversy during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. While strict gender roles carried over from the Middle Ages, Renaissance humanism combined with the practicalities of housewifery to encourage education and literacy for women throughout the middling sort. Their education was consequently limited in both scope and depth. Female physiology, at least according to contemporary scholars and religious leaders, naturally limited the learning abilities of women, "for the Female, through the cold and moist of their Sex, cannot be indowed with so profound a judgment."<sup>116</sup> Parents of daughters, therefore, needed to be

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<sup>116</sup> T. Chamberlayne, *The Complete Midwives Practice Enlarg'd* (1659) quoted in Mendelson and Crawford, 28.

cautious in the content of their education and in their careful supervision. As Hull states, parenting guidebooks of the period showed that “the properly raised daughter had not only *prescriptions* for her behavior but *restrictions* on her activities much beyond those suggested for her brothers.”<sup>117</sup>

The length of education, the subjects considered appropriate for reading and writing, and the importance placed on learning were strikingly different for men and women: “not only did men and women acquire literacy at different rates during this period; the specific practices of expression and interpretation in which each was instructed were designed to form them as male and female subjects.”<sup>118</sup> What, where, and how individuals read and wrote “became sex-specific, indicators of the relative status of men and women, with different levels and forms of literacy assigned to each.”<sup>119</sup> This carefully delineated gendered education and its lessons of “expression and interpretation helped to create systematic difference between men and women but also created openings for inventive contestation.”<sup>120</sup> Female culture, like that recorded in handwritten receipt books, developed in these openings, fostered by the new opportunities for communication and spread of ideas through literacy.

Thomas More, a voice for pro-female education in early-modern England, offered the girls in his care a classical humanist education. The potential controversy in such an education was metered by the fact that More “believed that the goal of education for both sexes was spiritual rather than political,” and therefore “appeared to conform to

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<sup>117</sup> Hull, *Women*, 135.

<sup>118</sup> Sanders, 1.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 3.

woman's traditional private role."<sup>121</sup> More intended to give his female pupils "spiritual and ethical autonomy, which the hierarchy of marriage did not require them to sacrifice or compromise."<sup>122</sup> Others, however, were highly concerned with the danger of the self-authority of women, and believed that the parents and tutors of girls needed to "keep close watch...and repeatedly interfere to remind her of the precepts she has been taught. The learned lady may respond well to prompting, but she cannot be relied on to recognize dangerous situations on her own."<sup>123</sup> Ultimately, as long as education aided women rather than distracted from or counteracted their expected duties, families accepted it as an asset in many households of the middle class and lower gentry. The widespread use and production of receipt books proved the utility of women's education for the middling sort, whether male-authored publications or produced within the home. This education for the rural, middling housewife included reading in English, writing in the simplistic italic style, and basic accounting.

"English practicality" was a major force behind the increase in female literacy during the period as evidenced by the books deemed acceptable for female readers, half of which were the practical guidebooks on a variety of subjects from childrearing to gardening to home remedies.<sup>124</sup> Not every genre of knowledge or skills was available to the housewife, but Gervase Markham in his 1615 *The English Housewife* and in similar treatises on female duties found it her virtue to be "generally skilful in all the worthy knowledges which do belong to her vocation."<sup>125</sup> While scholars and English society alike believed that women were incapable of understanding complex scholarship, they

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<sup>121</sup> Benson, 157.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>124</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 132.

<sup>125</sup> Markham, 8.

were expected to be fully capable of successfully grasping and utilizing the education deemed appropriate for their class, location, age, and sex. Girls typically received a basic education in reading and possibly writing alongside their brothers at first; from there, “a combination of personal initiative and social and economic circumstances explains how most women moved from the standard of writing competence they reached at the end of the period of their schooling to the level they practised as adults.”<sup>126</sup>

The most common motivations for women to continue learning and using her knowledge once she left home were her practical and spiritual duties in the household. This motivation to embrace literacy led women to “continue reading and writing in solitude or to forge informal networks,” augmenting traditional female culture.<sup>127</sup> It also led women to study works that were not strictly essential to her duties, both serious treatises and fanciful romances, a luxury afforded particularly to the landed middling sort.<sup>128</sup> Literacy allowed the housewife to improve her domestic productivity *and* enhance her personal life, while for the most part staying within the acceptable gender boundaries that relegated the woman to the private realm.

The economic and numerical growth of the middle class encouraged the corresponding growth of the publication industry, responding to their drive to improve and excel. The women of this rising group read almost solely in the vernacular English, and this large influx of English-only readers was met with increasing publication of female-appropriate vernacular works and a decrease in classical and French

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<sup>126</sup> Caroline Bowden, “Women in Educational Spaces” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 91.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 217.

publications.<sup>129</sup> From 1560 to 1640, the number of titles printed annually in England doubled, tripled, and finally quadrupled, increasing in number of books, reprints, and subjects to include a greater diversity of readers.<sup>130</sup>

Despite this, evidence of women reading is difficult to ascertain. It is clear through the publishing record that these vernacular books, including those marketed directly to women, “found their way into Elizabethan and Stuart households, but rarely were considered important enough to be listed in their library catalogs” or wills.<sup>131</sup> Many of the types of books aimed at or acceptable for women clearly held little monetary or sentimental value. In addition, women’s opinions and commentary on what they read were undervalued by literate males, due both to their less sophisticated education and “the moral value accorded to female silence.”<sup>132</sup> Accordingly, women of the middling sort were seemingly reluctant to leave marginalia in the books they read, given the mores of both their gender and class.<sup>133</sup> This does not mean, however, that women did not actively participate in what they read, but rather that their participation differed from men’s due to both these societal expectations and the subject matter of their books. For example, various herbals in the Folger Shakespeare Library contain dried physical examples of the herbs pressed between the pages, as was recommended in Sir Hugh Plat’s 1594 *The Jewell House of Art and Nature*, illustrating how even women unable to write could engage in a form of discourse with their reading materials.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 138.

<sup>130</sup> Marcy L. North, “Women, the Material Book and Early Printing” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 73.

<sup>131</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, xi.

<sup>132</sup> Edith Snook, “Reading Women” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 40.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Jean Miller, Francie Owens, and Rachel Doggett, *The Housewife’s Rich Cabinet: Remedies, Recipes, & Helpful Hints* (Washington D. C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1997), 103.



Reading was quite expectedly a highly gendered activity, as established by the educational models of the period. Female readers had to contend “with the belief that women’s bodies and minds were designed by God for a domestic life,” and this ingrained worldview “informed how, why and what women read.”<sup>135</sup> As Eve Rachele Sanders interpreted in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590), “the female reader forms her identity by disassociating herself from evil and epitomizing truth”; an identity in keeping with the spiritual and moral uprightness of the Good Wife trope formed through carefully selected reading.<sup>136</sup> Female-specific practical publication genres like mother’s advice literature, exemplified by the 1591 literary success *A Crystall Glass for Christian Women*, spawned from the humanist tradition of father’s advice literature and expanded rapidly with the commercial success of such female-targeted works.<sup>137</sup>

Whereas reading was a commonly accepted subject for girls’ education, learning to write was an elective skill that depended upon the opinion of the individual family. Reading was an easily controlled, passive skill, but writing could threaten the subjective status quo by allowing women to actively create and form networks independent of male control. It is difficult to ascertain the literacy rate of women in the middling sort, as many were taught to read along with the other practical skills of housewifery, such as needlework, spinning, and home remedies, but were “not usually taught the skill that is capable of measurement at all,” writing.<sup>138</sup> Like reading, lessons in writing for women were limited in content, scope, circumstance, style, and ultimately the beliefs of their parents. These restraints, however, “did not keep women from seeking or

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Sanders, 30.

<sup>137</sup> North, 73.

<sup>138</sup> Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1981), 34-35.

exercising scribal skills altogether.”<sup>139</sup> Similar, also, was the fact that the exercise of those skills as an adult was subject to the ambition and desire of the individual woman, illustrated by the “significant discrepancies in levels of scribal competence” visible in the female-authored manuscripts and letters.<sup>140</sup>

While many styles of handwriting were in practice during the early-modern period, educators typically limited women to the “Italick Hand,” the simplistic hand that is the forerunner to modern cursive, which contemporary guidebook *The guide to penmanship* deemed “a Hand Generally known and most easie to attain, we recommend it to the imitation of Women-kind.”<sup>141</sup> While writing for both genders during the period was a physically laborious task, female writers were singled out as particularly insufficient to use more difficult hands like secretary, which was the standard for male writers in the sixteenth century, based on common stereotypes about the “weaker” sex.<sup>142</sup> Scholars such as Erasmus mocked women’s subsequent inferior writing in a vicious cycle perpetuated by her rudimentary education and limitation to the simplistic feminine Italian hand.<sup>143</sup>

Unsurprisingly, women as professional authors only made up .5% of all published first editions from 1601 to 1640, given the combination of limited writing skills and the overwhelming pressure for women to remain within the private sector of society.<sup>144</sup> Instead, women used their rising literacy within their dictated environment and to serve their own purposes, through practical avenues such as receipt books, diaries, and letters. By restricting her writing to private matters, the housewife both protected her

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<sup>139</sup> Sanders, 167.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>141</sup> Edward Cocker (London, 1664) quoted in Heather Wolfe, “Women’s Handwriting” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 23.

<sup>142</sup> Heather Wolfe, “Women’s Handwriting” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 29.

<sup>143</sup> Sanders, 168.

<sup>144</sup> Knoppers, “Introduction,” 10.

highly valued reputation and utilized her literacy most efficiently. Public writing, wherein women stepped beyond the parameters established in contemporary educational theory, could endanger female authors with accusations of “engag[ing] in illicit affairs,” or “violating feminine ‘modesty.’”<sup>145</sup>

Writing, when used to the housewife’s advantage, could bolster her priceless reputation. In particular, letters served a multitude of purposes; written communication could arrange marriages and business contracts, maintain ties with family and friends, and advance social and political agendas. Writing in all forms allowed literate women an unmatched level of personal identity and growth while at the same time serving the practical purposes of housewifery which for the most part did not threaten established gender relations. Letters, in particular, were “the chief written form through which women exerted power and influence.”<sup>146</sup> Additionally, hand-written female-authored manuscripts such as commonplace or receipt books, poetry and prose, and religious texts also often circulated through networks of female culture.

The content of middling Elizabethan housewife writings is minimal and imminently practical in keeping with the busy lifestyle and social mores of her class and gender. Rather than focusing on their own daily affairs and emotions, women tended to use writing to aid and transmit their domestic and spiritual duties through letters, diaries, autobiographies, and recipes books. The audiences of these handwritten works were typically closed groups of primarily female family and friends. Commonplace books and receipt books that contain the knowledge of cookery and domestic production “reveal not only women’s roles within the household but also their participation in larger

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<sup>145</sup> Sanders, 171 and Angeline Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 153-154, quoted in Ezell, 63.

<sup>146</sup> James Daybell, “Letters” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 187.

communities.”<sup>147</sup> They serve as a record not only of the individual housewife’s knowledge, duties, and activities, but as a record of female culture and its perpetuation via networks of written communication. By transmitting and compiling the recipes and advice of other women’s manuscripts, oral recipes, and male publications, the literacy of rural housewives of the middling sort like Mrs. Sarah Longe connected her kitchen to other women with whom she associated and to the culture of cookery at large, which included everyone from the orchardists importing new crops from the Continent to the humble widow administering a well-tested remedy for a stomach ailment.<sup>148</sup> Many Elizabethan female writers intended their works to be read and utilized by future generations as well, passing on knowledge of cookery, medicine, childrearing, and religion. Literacy could pass on physical possessions as well through wills. While few retired men bothered to make wills once their children were grown and well established, older wives and widows frequently wrote wills to pass on personal affects, from kerchiefs and petticoats to pots and spoons, to favored relatives, servants, and friends.<sup>149</sup>

Early-modern women’s writing reveals multiple layers of information for historians. Even the female-authored works with a practical focus, like the receipt book, reveal a complexity of beliefs, opinions, and ideas expressed both within and between the words of the manuscript. By asking gender questions about this content within a relevant temporal and situational framework, the information in literary sources like the female-authored manuscripts can reveal the gender attributes and identities ascribed to by the authors themselves and the categories they represent. Literate housewives speak for their

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<sup>147</sup> Heidi Brayman Hackel, “Introduction” to “Appendix I: Mrs. Sarah Longe Her Receipt Booke,” (1610) in Caton, 101.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, 115.

sex and their social and economic class in addition to their individual selves through their symbolic position in Elizabethan culture. This compromise between multiple identities experienced by Tudor and Stuart women has been termed “double-voicing” by historians, wherein “they embody dominant cultural prescripts, and yet voice individual identity and dissent” through writing.<sup>150</sup>

The middling housewife and her handwritten receipt book have a unique place and purpose in the female literate culture of the middling and lower sorts through their shared experiences creating and communicating in the kitchen. The mistress of the house taught her servants to read alongside her daughters, and both would use her compiled book of recipes and her household records on a daily basis as essential tools in kitchen duties. Literacy certainly played a role in how women constructed and viewed themselves in the kitchen by the end of the sixteenth century, and that in turn influenced their roles in social interactions and cultural appearances elsewhere. For the semi-literate, the published works of men like Gervase Markham and the oral knowledge passed down from traditional channels served the same purpose, and it is difficult to ascertain if there are any resultant differences.

The housewife’s written recipes, letters, and other documents related to the kitchen offer a unique window into women’s experiences of marriage, motherhood, and domestic responsibility. The writings of the “patriarch’s wife,” the literate mistress of the manor, suggest that she “had definite views on the roles of women in marriage and society,” and that her audience, almost solely female, concurred.<sup>151</sup> On the surface it is

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<sup>150</sup> Knoppers, “Introduction,” 14. For a more thorough discussion of “double-voicing,” Knoppers recommends Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, eds., *This Double Voice: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England* (Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>151</sup> Ezell, 100.

difficult to ascertain how illiterate or semi-illiterate women, especially of the lower orders like the servants on the manor, felt about these same subjects.<sup>152</sup> Female-authored manuscripts and relevant male-authored guidebooks, however, illustrate that these women shared in the same day-to-day lifestyle and that the importance of the housewife figure idealized in popular culture had a strong influence on their identities as well.

While education in reading and writing was optional and depended upon the opinions and opportunities of the individual family, education in housewifery was common to women of every sort, “from which neither wealth nor greatness [could] totally absolve them.”<sup>153</sup> Elite women lowered themselves to learn the dirty work of practical housekeeping and servant girls adopted the skills that would give them future autonomy as the head of their own household. However, housewife duties were par for the course for women of the middling sort, and in many ways they defined the duties and identities of housewifery. In other ways, however, middle-class housewives did not neatly fit the category any more than upper class or lower class ladies, such as wives of merchants whose work assisting her husband in business could supersede her direct involvement in housewifery. Location, vocation, religious beliefs, and material circumstances determined how women used their education, but all women shared a common basic education in housewifery despite these differences.

This goes hand-in-hand with the belief that marriage was the ideal state for women, noticeable even in the nomenclature “housewife” and “housewifery.” The ability to successfully manage a household and perform the necessary duties of food production

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<sup>152</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 127.

<sup>153</sup> Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts* (1673) quoted in Mendelson, 7.

was implicit in marriage vows that required women to “serve and keep” her husband.<sup>154</sup> Cookery and other skills of housewifery tied directly to marriage, and therefore to religious duty as well. If an Elizabethan prospective spouse was lacking in the knowledge of housewifery, she endangered her position in society along with her basic survival. The multiple and various domestic industries taught to women of all sorts prepared a woman for this societal expectation, and her labor during her education as a daughter, apprentice, or servant and her labor as a married woman differed only in the level of authority and supervising responsibility and the addition of “sexual work,” those tasks related to child-bearing and child-rearing.<sup>155</sup>

Women’s practical writing and men’s commentary on women “testify to the existence of female networks of knowledge exchange” that were responsible for girls’ education in housewifery.<sup>156</sup> Women transmitted and practiced both written and oral knowledge in kitchens, stillrooms, gardens, and barns, transforming the spaces of food production into educational spaces rife with connotations of gender attributes.<sup>157</sup> The overwhelming majority of this knowledge exchange took place within the home of the girl, taught by mothers, older sisters, and other female servants and relatives, and the tasks of domestic production, “the countless minutiae that made up family living – were taught from early childhood.”<sup>158</sup> A girl’s education often continued informally through her experience as a servant in a larger middling or upper class household, where the job would require her to learn the more complex tasks of a prosperous self-sufficient

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<sup>154</sup> Markham, 60.

<sup>155</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 108.

<sup>156</sup> Bowden, 92.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Hull, *Women*, 144.

household, such as brewing and cheese-making.<sup>159</sup> Teenage girls of the middling sort, particularly urban, could gain further knowledge before marriage as a formal apprentice in housewifery, and the noble equivalent of such further education was a fostership in “the homes of well-connected kinswoman” where a girl simultaneously perfected the skills of housewifery and sought a husband for whom she would practice them.<sup>160</sup> In all cases, basic housewife education at home and additional knowledge from outside sources prepared girls for lifelong success as wives, mothers, and widows by providing them with a means to support themselves with the necessities of life in any situation.<sup>161</sup>

Authors contrasted the trivialized knowledge of housework and domestic production given to girls with the lauded education in the classics given to boys of the same period, as highlighted by Wendy Wall in her examination of *Gammer Gvrtons Nedle* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, particularly in the scene of Mistress Quickly’s interruption of a Latin lesson.<sup>162</sup> Mistress Quickly’s education in housewifery and the young William’s studies in Latin serve entirely different purposes and each are necessary for the labors they performed, but the striking differences between them keep the two from understanding one another: when William is called upon by Sir Hugh to recognize the word “*caret*,” Quickly hears carrot, “a good root.”<sup>163</sup> Evans mocks the dry nurse for her lack of knowledge in the classical language, “‘oman, art thou lunatics? Hast thou no understandings for thy cases, and the numbers of the genders? Thou art as foolish Christian creatures as I would desires,” though she would not have been educated in such

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<sup>159</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 91.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>162</sup> Wall, “Household,” 1.

<sup>163</sup> Shakespeare, 4.1.46-47.



a subject.<sup>164</sup> The sex-based division of knowledge was essential to the division of labors accorded to early-modern men and women, and the “content of the curricula” for both communicated their gender roles, even when not stated outright.<sup>165</sup>

Such division in labor and knowledge, however, did not preclude female instruction in reading and writing, when those skills were directed toward practical texts and spiritual treatises that similarly reflected their gender roles. Utilized in these ways, literacy was complementary rather than contrasting with education in housewifery. Jane Tutoff sent her daughter to her cousin Nathaniel Bacon to be tutored in both the housewifely and literary arts, requesting in a letter for him to “let her lern to wryt & to rede & to cast account” as well as “to wash & to bru & to backe & to dress meat & drink & so I trust she shal prove a great good huswyf.”<sup>166</sup> For Jane Tutoff and many other parents in the middling sort during this period, literacy was a new weapon in the female domestic artillery that they wished to give to their daughters. The rise in female literacy throughout the early-modern period reflects how undeniably useful housewives and female servants found reading, writing, and basic mathematics in their daily lives. Nearly a century later, Hannah Woolley describes “writing as a household art” that was essential in female education as part of the “laudible Sciences of housewifery” in her popular *The Gentlewomans Companion* alongside recipes for cookery and distillation.<sup>167</sup> Even other housewife duties could serve as forms of literacy from marzipan letters, as part of the dessert course, to labeling rank and status through meat apportioning.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 4.1.61-64.

<sup>165</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 91.

<sup>166</sup> Wolfe, 23.

<sup>167</sup> Hannah Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion* (1673), 9 quoted in Wendy Wall, “Women in the Household,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 97-98.

<sup>168</sup> Wall, “Women,” 105.

Chief amongst all the housewife duties was cooking, a skill used daily and relevant to all households despite economic and social status and location. Gervase Markham acknowledges its primacy at the start of his chapter on cookery: “To speak then of the outward and active knowledges which belong to our English housewife, I hold the first and most principal to be a perfect skill and Knowledge in cookery, together with all the secrets belonging to the same, because it is a duty really belonging to a woman.”<sup>169</sup> Cookery, related food production, and the kitchen were at the center of both daily work and female education, and all other products and processes were ultimately optional and could be acquired elsewhere or lived without. Markham states, and the written record of housewife typically concurs, at the beginning of the chapter following cookery that “many other pretty secrets there are belonging unto curious housewives, but non more necessary than these already rehearsed, except such as shall hereafter follow in their places.”<sup>170</sup> Women learned to prioritize and manage their time and energy as part of their education in domestic industry and household authority.

As food was essential to life, so too were the housewives and their substitutes, and seemingly everyone had an opinion about housewifery and food production from male authors lecturing on proper marital roles to playwrights like Shakespeare glorifying eating and drinking in verse. These opinions, however, did not value the knowledge of food production enough to call for civic or social legislation and regulation of the education of girls in housewifery. The content and method of early education of children by their mothers seemingly did not require “any provision apart from the casual

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<sup>169</sup> Markham, 60.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

arrangements of family life” and the practical experience thereafter.<sup>171</sup> Though housewifery did not share in the economic and legal benefits of traditional male education, its amorphous tutelage allowed for individual tailoring of curriculum based on location, household needs, and social status. All women shared a basic knowledge of domestic production of goods and services conveyed through a series of channels of female communication. Women used vertical and horizontal, as well as generational, networks to pass on knowledge of cookery and other household arts that had been accumulated through experience, experimentation, and education. Each economic tier and social setting had traditional networks for knowledge sharing, such as parent to child, mistress to servant, and friend to friend, and yet all remained within the private, female-dominated sphere.<sup>172</sup> Literacy was a means to transfer this knowledge: women wrote to each other in letters and to their children in manuscripts. Men also used rising female literacy to convey their input on housewifery and other household matters, and the middle class was particularly susceptible to following the “patriarchal authority described in how-to-live books” in their effort to emulate and surpass the gentry.<sup>173</sup> Ultimately, the patriarch of the family held “final responsibility for seeing that their daughters were raised in an appropriate fashion,” even though education of girls in both academic and practical subjects took place through female networks.<sup>174</sup>

Mothers of all classes were deeply concerned with the raising of their children, whether they were their sole caretakers or if some of their care was the responsibility of servants, and their concern for the health, education, and development of

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<sup>171</sup> Clark, 242.

<sup>172</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 203.

<sup>173</sup> Hull, *Women*, 24.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

their offspring is evident in their letters and diaries, and in the popularity of mother's advice books.<sup>175</sup> Contemporary published and manuscript sources also reveal a "maternalistic" approach to the education and management of servants as well, encouraging housewives to educate their servants in both literacy and domestic production and to fulfill their spiritual and emotional needs.<sup>176</sup> Women wrote to their female friends and family members, both near and far, sharing their recipes and thoughts on food production that imply both necessity and personal enjoyment. For example Elinor Fettiplace collected multiple recipes for fruit preservation and candying that show both personal interest in recipes of that sort and a network of friends who shared in that enthusiasm.<sup>177</sup>

There was certainly a long oral tradition in housewifery, as widespread female literacy was a relatively new phenomenon and the sites of female culture such as the marketplace and the doorway fostered oral communication between neighbors, friends, and close family, whether that communication was a new recipe for pottage or local gossip. Speech was the primary medium that women utilized to transfer ideas and lessons on cookery, medicine, and other housewifely arts that had been discovered through "collective feminine experience."<sup>178</sup> Handwritten receipt books cataloguing this information are a small window into this collective oral tradition which may or may not encapsulate the entirety of domestic knowledge. The "bare bones" style of women's recipe writing, which offers little commentary and left open for interpretation many specifics for both proportions and use, could be fleshed out in oral lessons and one-on-

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<sup>175</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 309.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>177</sup> Spurling, 179.

<sup>178</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 217.

one education. During the sixteenth century oral education was an important tool for the working Elizabethan housewife, but in subsequent generations this tradition was subsumed by the rise of literacy and the changes in production, illustrated in the disappearance widespread knowledge of midwifery.<sup>179</sup>

The early-modern woman used writing to extend these networks of oral communication, maintaining personal ties with faraway female relatives and friends through the sharing of private thoughts and ideas that would typically be relegated to the household along with the housewife. Letters allowed women to continue to receive advice from their mothers and other trusted female relatives whether spiritual or practical, as both the spiritual and physical health of the household were the domain of women.<sup>180</sup> Female-authored manuscripts sometimes mimicked male published works, such as poetry and translations, but at other times were the basis for men's capitalization on female literacy, in the case of receipt books.<sup>181</sup> Private did not mean disposable or devalued, however; "unlike virtually any other form of inheritance" these manuscripts were passed from one generation to the next along female lines, passed to a daughter, goddaughter, daughter-in-law, or niece.<sup>182</sup> The next generation had the opportunity to both use and add to the knowledge contained therein, and commonplace or receipt books show additions in multiple hands that stretch through the decades as a uniquely female legacy.<sup>183</sup>

Though cookery was the jurisdiction of women, male-authored guidebooks were a significant source of information for female readers. Many Elizabethan women accepted this apparent contradiction with little difficulty, though male authors often

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<sup>179</sup> Clark, 266.

<sup>180</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 228.

<sup>181</sup> Hull, *Women*, 25.

<sup>182</sup> Spurling, xi.

<sup>183</sup> Ezell, 67.

reminded readers that they had no personal experience of food preparation. John Partridge, in his 1573 *The Treasurie of Commodious Conceits, & Hidden Secrets, and may be called, the huswiues closet, of healthfull prouision*, is depicted in the frontispiece writing the book, but never actually practicing his advice. Nonetheless, as Hull claims, “in that time this was perfectly normal; instructions were expected to come from men.”<sup>184</sup> Female manuscript authors could transcribe “recipes from a wide variety of sources” in the same method as male guidebooks, “but men were considered the authorities” because of both their sex and their status as respected professionals.<sup>185</sup> Women may have been acknowledged by male authors as appropriately the expert practitioners of the household industries, but those authors still felt the need to advise or dictate to those supposed experts for both personal economic gain and maintaining male social dominance.

Although household manuals à la Partridge or Markham focused on the housewife rather than male counterpart and her daily reality in a way typically ignored by male philosophers and theorists, these manuals were not devoid of commentary and concern about how the content would affect the lives of husbands. These were not the individual husbands’ direct viewpoints, but rather the idealized behaviors that would ensure the desired relationship with the husband and domestic lifestyle. Therefore, two food worlds existed simultaneously: the ideas written by food writers about food and food production as a whole and the experiences of female cooks at the individual level.<sup>186</sup> Women daily had to navigate between the two, reaching for social ideals and compromising with economic and situational realities, picking and choosing which parts of male-authored publications they would utilize. Simply because men were writing these

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<sup>184</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 17-18.

<sup>185</sup> Miller, 20.

<sup>186</sup> Thirsk, x.

books did not mean that they were unhelpful; the publication and republication record is testimony that the target audience of these works found them of some use. Guidebooks like Estienne and Liébault's *Maison Rustique* were written "with noticeable respect for women and the many jobs they performed on the farm," and served as a trustworthy source of information on multiple subjects.<sup>187</sup> The multiple editions and endless sequels attest to how useful and entertaining readers found a number of these male-authored guidebooks, as do the female-authored publications in later decades that shared the same content and style, like those by Hannah Woolley. Whether the majority of female readers agreed with all of the sentiments, conclusions, and opinions of the authors that accompanied the recipes and household hints, however, is much more difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain.

Printed guidebooks specifically targeted the housewife of the middling sort whose rural life of self-sufficiency required knowledge of a wide variety of industries. She had servants and a sufficiently-sized manor to warrant brewing, baking, and other major crafts, yet she herself was involved directly in the practical mechanics of household processes.<sup>188</sup> How-to-live books for women "appear to be written (or translated) for the less sophisticated and marginally educated women of the gentry or the growing commercial families."<sup>189</sup> This is evident even in the titles of cookery and medicine books, advertising advice for the "Gentlewoman" and "Country Cookmaid."<sup>190</sup> Publishers were capitalizing on the rising economic status of the middling sort and the increasing female literacy by producing books about women's primary duties—cooking,

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>188</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 138.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Spufford, *Small*, 61.

childrearing, and medicine—that acknowledged their desire to imitate or improve upon their betters while remaining conscious of the economic and social constraints of their class.<sup>191</sup>

The genre of practical female-targeted literature only arose in the 1570s, with Partridge's 1573 *Treasurie* as the first published English cookbook, inspired by the success of William Warde's translation of Alexis Piedmont's *The Secrets* a decade and a half earlier.<sup>192</sup> Its success inspired many male authors to turn their pen to female matters, and the examples of the genre included in this thesis include Thomas Tusser's 1580 *Fiue Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie* (which included an entire section devoted to female instruction), John Partridge's 1588 *The widowes treasure*, Hugh Plat's 1608 *Delightes for ladies*, and most useful and comprehensive of them all, Gervase Markham's 1615 *The English Housewife*. While almost invisible prior to 1570, female readers were acknowledged in large numbers in many frontispieces, dedications, and advertisements throughout the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and many books of unisex interest were republished under new, feminine titles.<sup>193</sup>

Male works were popular amongst their target audience because they fulfilled the rural middling housewife's need for practical, diverse, straightforward instruction and advice. For example, Markham's 1615 *English Housewife* was popular because it was comprehensive and well-structured, and Thomas Tusser's *Fiue Hundred Pointes* was easy to read and easy to remember for the landowners and their hardworking wives throughout their year of seasonal tasks.<sup>194</sup> The particular economic and physical situation

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<sup>191</sup> Wall, "Women," 102.

<sup>192</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 9 and Thirsk, 50.

<sup>193</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 9-10.

<sup>194</sup> Best, ix, and Caton, 58.



of the rural middling household combined with that demographic's emphasis on self-sufficiency and traditionalism valued this practical, useful advice throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries. In response to these consumer values, receipt books written by both genders limited fanciful practices to a few cosmetic recipes and the banqueting decorations necessary for good hospitality. In contrast, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, "practical housewifery shared pages with superficial frivolities" like limning and making artificial jewels, supporting Clark's observations about the changes in female labor that occurred during the seventeenth century and emphasizing the particular character of Elizabethan practical publications.<sup>195</sup>

One way that male-authored receipt books aided the housewife was in the introduction of new or foreign ingredients and techniques. The male author's ability to travel and interact with a wider variety of people and places allowed for contact with new food ideas. This brought changes in cooking methods, such as broiling from France, and the use of new continental varieties of produce. William Warde's translation of the Italian *The Secrets* in 1558, while primarily a work of physic, introduced new techniques that would later become common or fashionable methods in the kitchen.<sup>196</sup> *Maison Rustique*, translated in 1600, served as a direct source of influence on housewife author and reader Elinor Fettiplace, who was given a copy by Sir Henry Danvers in 1624, and her receipt book shows its influence in European-style recipes.<sup>197</sup>

Published receipt books may have included newfangled or foreign recipes, but they typically did not include some of the less glamorous, basic stock recipes of the

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<sup>195</sup> Miller, 24.

<sup>196</sup> Thirsk, 50.

<sup>197</sup> Spurling, 16.

English diet for a couple of reasons.<sup>198</sup> First and foremost, common dishes like pottage simply lacked the fantasy, curiosity, and appeal of marmalades and candied flowers, and so were less marketable. Also, they were not always necessary to include since it was assumed that readers would have already learned the basics of cookery through the normal channels of female education.<sup>199</sup> In contrast, home manuscripts by female authors did include these basic, reliable recipes, and served to hold that knowledge for both servants and children alike. The published books also did not have the individuality and personality of the individual home manuscripts as a side-effect of their mass-produced, professional, widely applicable style. Even when the faux-source of the male-authored cookbook is the Queen of England, as in the 1655 *The Queens Closet Opened*, the book gives “no references to favourite dishes of the queen: no habits, preferences, dislikes, or actual records of her own practice.”<sup>200</sup>

This sense of detachment from personal detail partially stemmed from the fact that the authors were male, and therefore looking from the outside in. Their sources of information were unnamed and unacknowledged women who taught housewifery through their words, both oral and manuscript, like the anonymous “honourable Countess” of Markham’s *English Housewife*.<sup>201</sup> Markham, like many of the other male authors of cookery books who took credit for assembling and publishing that gleaned knowledge, was nothing more than a glorified editor who drew more from other sources than was common even for the cut-and-paste style of the early-modern era.<sup>202</sup> However, it

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<sup>198</sup> Hull, *Women*, 168.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton’s Eve* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 102.

<sup>201</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 215 and Best in Markham, xvii.

<sup>202</sup> Best, xvii

was his abilities as a professional author and editor that created the readable, practical, cohesive work that was so useful for his audience in their daily work in the kitchen.<sup>203</sup> Popular published works on housewifery topics like Markham's went through multiple reprints and were read by thousands, while the handwritten receipt books of the Elizabethan housewife were read by only a few and were used until they wore out in only a few generations; the survival of some today is rather fortuitous and accidental.<sup>204</sup> While aimed at the same audience and following the same formula, the male authors took a private, feminine form of communication and made it available for public consumption. Even the titles of published guidebooks hinted at this literary voyeurism into the private world of the household, using terms like closet, cabinet, jewels, and secrets to describe the knowledge typically shared between close female relatives and friends in a private setting that had been uncovered and put on display.<sup>205</sup> Some modern scholars have attempted to place women's unpublished writing, such as that regarding household affairs, in the same category (public) as that of men's published texts on similar topics, in order to "reverse the traditional marginalization of women's texts."<sup>206</sup> A side-by-side comparison, however, reveals distinct differences in perspective and audience that necessitates the public/private delineation in order to understand these texts and their meaning in Elizabethan society and to the housewife herself.

Despite the fact that her knowledge had been commercialized, the housewife's knowledge and skill continued to be relegated to the private world, represented by the kitchen, in these works. The male-authored cookery books for women took what could be

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>204</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 16.

<sup>205</sup> Knoppers, *Politicizing*, 94.

<sup>206</sup> Erica Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 317.

construed as independent spaces, duties, and ideas and subsumed them under the single name of housewife, much in the same way that philosophical treatises by men created an “aggregate effect....an amorphous collection of discrete disciplines and popular prejudices, the patriarchal paradigm was an organically connected system of thought which was self-referential and self-validating.”<sup>207</sup> The published philosophical and practical works relied on one another for validation, yet in reality the authority of the housewife often operated in opposition to the patriarchal paradigm. Thomas Trevelyon illustrated the expectations for wifely behavior within that paradigm in his 1608 *Miscellany*. Image 1 shows a husband and wife side by side with the husband physically guiding his wife, accompanied by a biblical quotation from Ecclesiastics that validated male concern about wayward or “wicked” wives. Later Trevelyon highlighted several vices in the form of housewives performing their duties, “Boasting” in image 3 and “Malice” in image 8, exemplifying the friction between patriarchal spousal ideals and practical application in housewife labor. Similarly, the male-authored texts imbued the housewife’s positive actions with “domestic virtues,” meanings important for the maintenance of national, social, and gender identities in Elizabethan England.<sup>208</sup> Women themselves confirmed the values and significance placed on the model established by male authors, who both informed and were informed by these works, and this is evidenced by the publishing record of the last quarter of the seventeenth century, wherein the first generation of women to publish commonplace or receipt books did so following the style and content established by men.<sup>209</sup> These published female works of the seventeenth century are useful in comparison to the female manuscripts and male

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<sup>207</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 72.

<sup>208</sup> Knoppers, *Politicizing*, 99.

<sup>209</sup> Hull, *Women*, 23.

publications of the previous generation, as they are a middle ground between the two, entwining patriarchal beliefs with the private bent of female culture. Examples used in this thesis include Hannah Woolley's 1675 *The Queen-like Closet* and Dorothy Leigh's 1636 *The mothers blessing*, which show how women's beliefs about marriage, community, and the kitchen were filtered through male-controlled editing and publishing.<sup>210</sup>

While it has been theorized that women of the middle class relied more heavily on the instructions in male-authored guidebooks than women of the gentry, the existence of extant receipt books like that of both Mistress Sarah Longe and Lady Elinor Fettiplace and their differences from published books testify to the agency, ingenuity, commonality, and ambition of all middling-sort housewives.<sup>211</sup> None of these recipe books written by women or families, however, were published until well into the seventeenth century, and they remained a private, personalized source of information that resembled but was different from male published versions.<sup>212</sup> Sarah Longe's handwritten book, like others of its type, "served as both a guide to and a record of" her duties and responsibilities in her household, and therefore are very useful for historians to analyze what women did, how they felt about what they did, and how society affected what they did.<sup>213</sup> Early-modern cooks compromised and integrated the differences between the lessons taught by male-led society from books and the food traditions of their individual

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<sup>210</sup> Hannah Woolley, "Appendix II: To Serve in Noble or Great Houses" in *the Queen-like Closet* (London, 1675) in Caton. Dorothy Leigh, *The mothers blessing. Or, The godly counsell of a gentle-woman, not long since deceased, left behinde her for her children. Containing many good exhortations, and good admonitions profitable for all parents to leave as a legacie to their children* (London: Thomas Lambert, 1636).

<sup>211</sup> Hull, *Chaste*, 37.

<sup>212</sup> Hull, *Women*, 59.

<sup>213</sup> Hackel, 99.

families every day in the kitchen.<sup>214</sup> The food they produced, therefore, was a material result of this intellectual and ideological amalgamation that was prepared by women and consumed by all. The receipt books and other writings on food production are a record of this working compromise, allowing modern scholars to compare the material world described therein with other forms of evidence. For instance, Longe's recipe book, in comparison to Markham's, kept the special recipes for syrups and marmalades, but did not record any of the elaborate banqueting decorations and added recipes for basic foods like pottage that were essential for everyday cooking but not glamorous enough to make the pages of a commercial publication. The housewife's handwritten recipe book seems to "fit with what we know of the domestic circumstances of the middling sorts and their betters."<sup>215</sup> Ultimately, they were practical tools that reflected the needs of the middling housewife and her family, which was a compromise between frugality and ambition as occasion and opportunity dictated.

The receipt books and other female writings reveal a housewife identity that is parallel, though not identical, to that established in the published male treatises and guidebooks. Both viewed the housewife as essential to the function of society and capable of performing her numerous tasks well, but the two differed in the relationships with other members of society and spaces within the home. The authoritative, creative, slightly subversive housewife captured in her own words also often appeared in poetry, comedy, and ballads as an alternative form of Good Housewife than that laid out in male teachings.<sup>216</sup> This female-authored housewife identity was in keeping with the values and

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<sup>214</sup> Thirsk, ix.

<sup>215</sup> Mary E. Fissell, "Women in Healing Spaces" in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, 155.

<sup>216</sup> Ezell, 126.

ideals women emphasized in female culture. Female culture focused on women's roles in spiritual and "fundamental concerns: giving birth, childrearing, and sustaining life. From women's own perspective, they preserved a culture with important life-enhancing values" while men focused on earthly concerns like politics.<sup>217</sup> Similarly, in female-authored receipt books, women are concerned with the quality and meaning of their domestic duties and products themselves, while men have imbued their actions with additional attributes regarding female subservience, English heritage, and effect on the social and economic balance. Female culture and the housewife identity had a unique ability to cross social and economic barriers in a way that men's could not, both horizontally and vertically, whereby they "shared models of thought and behavior that set them apart as a group from men."<sup>218</sup>

The housewife figure and her ability to transmit ideas of female culture through recipes could also cross temporal boundaries as a unique form of female inheritance, whether oral or written. Sara Pennell has identified "relations forged across generational *and* social boundaries," as "central to the manuscript recipe book."<sup>219</sup> The passing down of manuscript receipt books was part of the overall tradition of mothers educating daughters and preparing them for their future as wives, mothers, and housekeepers. Many recipe books, like that of Mary Granville from the mid-seventeenth century in the Folger Shakespeare Library, were passed from mother to daughter when the daughter married.<sup>220</sup> Others were inherited at the original author's death. The receipt books were generational, also, in that they were living documents that were added to and

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<sup>217</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 204.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 202-203.

<sup>219</sup> Emphasis added. Knoppers, *Politicizing*, 103.

<sup>220</sup> Caton, 30.

edited by their various owners in response to individual taste and experimentation. The Elinor Fettiplace receipt book, for example, includes additions in several different hands after the original scribe, as well as marginalia on the original recipes as well, “reflecting the empiricism, clarity and confidence of the time, if not of a particular personality.”<sup>221</sup>

As the receipt book was a living document assembled over multiple lifetimes and shaped by daily use, it appears to be “lacking a narrative frame” and organization, though the individual recipes follow a recognizable formula shared with published recipe books.<sup>222</sup> These receipt books were typically austere and utilitarian, lacking the decorative artwork and flowery prose of professional published books or female-authored creative writing; Lady Fettiplace’s book is absent of decoration save the “exuberant twiddles and curlicues executed round her name and rank of the inside cover.”<sup>223</sup> These books were tools, not hobbies, and fit within the busy lives of the working housewife. As such, they fit within the conservative ideal of the housewife that emphasized the busy nature of women’s work to run her household. The receipt book author, therefore, did not face the persecution that female authors who attempted to write professionally or for pleasure experienced.<sup>224</sup>

Even the act of writing the receipt book was labor intensive and a testament to the hard work that faced a rural housewife in all aspects of her life. The majority of manuscript recipe books “include one or more time-intensive recipes for making black ink out of rainwater (or beer, wine, or vinegar), gall nuts and copperas (iron sulphate or

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<sup>221</sup> Spurling, 30.

<sup>222</sup> Fissell, 155.

<sup>223</sup> Spurling, 9-10.

<sup>224</sup> Ezell, 94.



vitriol).”<sup>225</sup> While Elinor Fettiplace had enough resources to have the main body of her receipt book written out by the scribe Anthony Bridges, who apprenticed in her father’s house, and only the marginalia is written in her own hand, Sarah Longe wrote her entire book in her own hand, and her writing reveals the expected limitations of her education.<sup>226</sup> For traditionally female jobs, such as midwifery, medicine, and cookery, “knowledge came from experience and observation as much as from books.”<sup>227</sup>

Knowledge in the kitchen, the root of recipes, came through experience, experimentation, and creativity. Receipt book authors added notes and marginalia to the standard recipe formula, clarifying and editing instructions. Sarah Longe in 1610 warns herself and other prospective bakers to “have a care that you scald not the ye[e]st w.<sup>th</sup> the Creame when you mingle the Cake,” with the authority of one who has experienced such pitfalls.<sup>228</sup> For Sarah and housewives like her, it was vital to be well versed in preservation of produce and meats to survive the harsh winter months, and she wrote of dried cherries that “will keepe all the yeare” in a sure manner.<sup>229</sup> Food recipes and medicinal recipes were often one and the same, and experience proved what could preserve and restore the health of the household, as when in 1608 Elinor Fettiplace testified that the recipe for herbal meat broth “did help mee when I was extreme short breathed.”<sup>230</sup>

Experience in the kitchen could be derived from experimentation with new foods, processes, and recipes from sources like foreign cookbooks or a friend’s

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<sup>225</sup> Wolfe, 29.

<sup>226</sup> Spurling, 21.

<sup>227</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 203.

<sup>228</sup> Longe, 103-104.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>230</sup> Fettiplace, 64.

recommendation. Many housewives embraced the challenge of experimenting in the kitchen with the “inquiring, empirical, skeptical, in short Baconian bent” of the period’s scholars and scientists.<sup>231</sup> This was quite the masculine endeavor, and Ben Jonson described the professional male cook as a creator, “the *Man o’ men*,” who “paints, he carves, he builds, he fortifies, Makes *Citadels* of curious fowle and fish.”<sup>232</sup> Middling and lower gentry women followed suit in their own kitchens, as recorded in their handwritten recipes by adding ingredients, customizing flavors, and suggesting alternative methods.<sup>233</sup>

This experimentation was an area that could provide creative fulfillment for the housewife who was in many ways confined to her home: the creation of elaborate confections and planning of important dinner parties “demonstrated that domestic work could serve as something more than a form of female subjection. Rather than placing a premium on productive labour and naturalized hierarchies, these books grant practitioners the freedom to use their imaginations.”<sup>234</sup> The readers of Sarah Longe’s recipe for gooseberry cakes could “cut them off what fashion [they] please,” making room for choices and preferences within the limitations of the kitchen.<sup>235</sup> The experiments and creative arts in the kitchen were approved by men, as it did not upset the overall status quo. Markham assures his audience, when introducing the subject of new styles of meat preparation, that women “may make any other whatsoever; altering the taste by the alteration of the compounds as she shall see occasion.”<sup>236</sup> As long as resources and household relationships allowed, women could express themselves in a number of ways

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<sup>231</sup> Spurling, 10.

<sup>232</sup> Wall, “Women,” 102.

<sup>233</sup> Spurling, 29.

<sup>234</sup> Wall, “Women,” 103-104.

<sup>235</sup> Longe, 105.

<sup>236</sup> Markham, 81.

in the kitchen. For example, testing out a new recipe for a decadent marmalade gleaned from a local gentlewoman allowed a middle-class housewife to indulge in expensive refined sugar, showcase her own agricultural endeavors in growing fruit, engage in oral or written discourse with a woman above her station, make choices in what ingredients to use or substitute based on preference as much as availability, and ultimately distribute, consume, or reserve her end product as she saw fit. Cooking and cook books were not limited to the dull, monotonous staples like pottage and roast meats, but provided avenues to ingenuity, experimentation, and personal expression.

Knowledge of food production and domestic industry, represented by recipes, was necessary to the physical, mental, and, ultimately, spiritual survival of the rural, middle class Elizabethan housewife. The duties of the housewife were directly tied to a woman's duties as a Christian and as a member of her society; she was taught to

alway be doying of some good workes that the deuil may fynde the alway occupied, for as in a standing water are engendred wormes, right so in an idel body are engendered ydel thoughtes. Here maie thou see yt of idelnes commeth damnatio[n] & of good workes and labour commeth salvation.<sup>237</sup>

Being a good housewife was essential for being a good Christian, and being a good Christian was essential for being a good housewife, and in both offices they were pressured to remain subservient and within the boundaries established by early-modern social custom. In religious practice "they ought to be but hearers and believers, or at most but modest persuaders," and in housewifery they were to serve at the command of the male head of house and only to assume small measures of authority and independence at his request.<sup>238</sup> Religious teachings confirmed the seclusion and exclusion of women within the home, and the kitchen, and the housewife's dutiful practice of both religion

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<sup>237</sup> Anthony Fitzherbert, *Boke of Husbandry* (1534), quoted in Clark, 47.

<sup>238</sup> Markham, 7.

and domestic production cyclically confirmed the teachings of her faith. Clues about female religious practice in various sources such as letters, marginalia, and embroidery confirm that many individually found strength or comfort in Christianity, yet “the more they accepted the church and its teachings, the more they tightened their own bonds.”<sup>239</sup>

The need to incorporate spiritual thoughts and practices into daily life affected the structure and meaning of the housewife’s daily routine. Women would often pray morning and evening and read some Scriptures and other religious texts within their already busy schedule, meaning that “she made a habit of rising several hours before the rest of the household” in order to fulfill both her practical and spiritual expectations.<sup>240</sup> Sometimes women were mocked by men for their devotion and piety, as in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Women Pleas’d*, first performed in the first decade of the seventeenth century and published in the folio of 1647, where Penurio notes that dinner was delayed because Lopez’s wife “is praying heartily upon her knees Sir, That Heaven would send her a good bearing dinner.”<sup>241</sup> However, it was also believed that they would be rewarded for such actions, as Shakespeare’s Master Evans in the guise of a satyr commands Bead to grant “a maid that, ere she sleep has thrice her prayers said” with sound sleep and to punish one who sleeps without thinking of her sins “pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides and shins.”<sup>242</sup>

Proper Christian conduct and piety was taught alongside literacy and housewifery, passed from mother to daughter through traditional education channels, and

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<sup>239</sup> Hull, *Women*, 197.

<sup>240</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 227.

<sup>241</sup> Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Women’s Pleas’d: A Tragy-Comedy*, 1647, ed. A. R. Waller, Cambridge English Classics: The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher Vol. VIII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), 243.

<sup>242</sup> Shakespeare, 5.5.49-54.

“secular tasks and religious concerns were often combined in the same milieu,” whether embroidering religious scenes or charitably nursing servants.<sup>243</sup> It was the responsibility of the housewife to see not only to her own spiritual health, but to that of her husband, children, and servants in a “household form of piety [that] was distinctively female.”<sup>244</sup> Women were also responsible for the other tasks of domestic work that nourished the health and welfare of the family as well, medical care and cookery, enriching the feminine gendering of religious piety with a particularly maternal flavor.

Though marriage was an ideal and honorable state, both spiritually and socially, the necessities of running the household sometimes required the housewife to be a shrew and contrary to her husband and her religion, according to a phrase in the 1670 edition of John Ray’s collection of proverbs.<sup>245</sup> A woman had to carefully balance her words, thoughts, and actions to stay within her prescribed role and to please her husband and her society; language that was uncomely could deform the soul and shame the household.<sup>246</sup> The bad housewife in many plays and ballads was a scold, a shrew, and a gossip, along with her laziness and sluttiness, and the uncomely speech of some women led to the saying “to scold like butter-wives,” recorded in John Clarke’s encyclopedia of English and Latin proverbs in 1639.<sup>247</sup> Housewife duties could correspond with or

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<sup>243</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 228.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>245</sup> John Ray, *A collection of English proverbs digested into a convenient method for the speedy finding any one upon occasion : with short annotations : whereunto are added local proverbs with their explications, old proverbial rhytmes, less known or exotick proverbial sentences, and Scottish proverbs* (Cambridge: John Hayes for W. Morden, 1670), 48, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:96632:29](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:96632:29) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 29.

<sup>246</sup> Markham, 7.

<sup>247</sup> John Clarke, “Rixosus” in *Paroemiologia Anglo-Latina in usum scholarum concinnata. Or proverbs English, and Latine, methodically disposed according to the common-place heads, in Erasmus his adages. Very use-ful and delightful for all sorts of men, on all occasions. More especially profitable for scholars for the attaining elegancie, sublimitie, and varietie of the best expressions* (London: Felix Kyngston for Robert Mylbourne, 1639), 275, Early English Books Online,

contradict a woman's spiritual values and duties, and advice in multiple forms, from a mother's correspondence to a favorite cookbook could help guide individual women in maintaining the compromise between religion and work. Evidence of the ideals and proscriptions for female behavior, like piety, is present in the recipes alongside the evidence of their physical duties and symbolic identity. Together the three represent the knowledge of the housewife and are recorded in the oral, manuscript, and published recipes.

## CHAPTER II

### HUMAN RELATIONS

Women, through their work in the kitchen, took part in multiple relationships and social networks. At all times and in all household labors, the housewife represented her family, her household, and her place in society. Many contemporary authors used “the snail or tortoise as a suitable emblem for women because these creatures carried their house upon their backs,” metaphorically expressing the way that a woman was a representative of her household in her interactions with people and settings of all types.<sup>248</sup> In that way, the housewife carried the private, domestic world of the kitchen with her into the outside world, dictating how she interacted with servants or guests, in the dairy barn or the marketplace. The organization of the kitchen space in the middling household, both as a physical site of production and as a repository of knowledge, “underpinned patterns of integration, rather than separation, of the sexes during everyday life.”<sup>249</sup> This pattern of integration required a complex social theory of appropriate relationships between the housewife and early-modern society, from England at large to her next-door neighbor, which each individual woman accepted or rejected on a case-by-case basis. Together, knowledge of production (recipes) and knowledge of proper conduct (human relations) formed the theoretical kitchen and dictated how the

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<sup>248</sup> Flather, 23.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 44.

housewife dealt with the objects and processes of the physical kitchen and imbued them with additional layers of meaning.

From serving guests at the dinner table to treating an ill servant with homemade distillations, the Elizabethan housewife made and maintained the position of her family within English society. This was a continuous process, wherein the housewife's busy schedule of manufacturing and industry paralleled the "constant activity" necessary for the middle-class household to maintain its economic and social standing.<sup>250</sup> According to Jonathon Barry, the middle class defined itself through "a vocabulary of differentiation" of morality and conservatism that "distinguish[ed] the class as a whole from those above or below them."<sup>251</sup> Using the tools of their literacy and education, the growing economic middle focused on "the classic virtues—industry, thrift, self-discipline, credit-worthiness—which brought success (measured as much by maintenance of social position and independence as upward mobility)."<sup>252</sup> William Harrison, in his broad-spectrum 1577 *Description of England*, acknowledged that many in the middle class, such as the yeomen, "have a certain pre-eminence and more estimation than laborers and the common sort of artificers, and these commonly live wealthily, keep good houses, and travail to get riches," yet they differed from the elite sort because of their focus on material goods and manufacturing.<sup>253</sup>

Plays and other works of fiction followed suit with "the development of citizen comedy" that utilized the setting of the middle-class household.<sup>254</sup> This setting

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<sup>250</sup> Barry, 24.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> William Harrison, 117.

<sup>254</sup> Jeanne Addison Roberts, *Shakespeare's English Comedy: The Merry Wives of Windsor in Context* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 56.



was unique and featured its own set of tropes and follies, such as the crafty, gossiping housewife. Yet the content and approach of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Gammer Gvrtons Nedle*, and other domestic comedies were clearly accessible, relatable, and enjoyable for an Elizabethan audience of all levels of society. The characterization of women as strong and capable, even when up to no good, acknowledged the importance of the “nostalgic ideal of the ordinary yet authoritative world of women” in the making of the middling sort.<sup>255</sup> Whatever antics and chaotic events occurred during the plot of the comedy, they were ultimately resolved through a return to the established order of paternalism and respectability, wherein the competent housewife served her husband and his ambitions well. The removal of the threat to this conservative balance, represented by the urban interloper, was “a victory for middle-class morality.”<sup>256</sup>

Middle-class identity, expressed by authors like Gervase Markham, “was caught between a love for old, established values, and a fascination for things new,” an endless battle from whence they developed a distinctive identity in regards to food and to life as a whole.<sup>257</sup> For instance, the purpose of Markham’s *English Housewife* was to provide a broad-spectrum guide to nearly every aspect of the conservative middle-class value of self-sufficiency, up to dying wool and making malt, tasks which by this point were commercial products well within the economic means of the class. Within the self-sufficient recipes and instructions, however, Markham provided avenues to embrace new culinary and domestic trends, such as expensive imported sugar, newly cultivated Continental produce like citrus, and French methods of broiling meat. Joan Thirsk highlights the 1585 recipe book *The Widowes Treasure* as “a guide to plain

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<sup>255</sup> Wall, “Household,” 34.

<sup>256</sup> Roberts, 78.

<sup>257</sup> Best, xi.

cooking...without grand pretensions.”<sup>258</sup> This is not because the guidebook was merely old-fashioned and out-of-touch, but because the pretensions of the middle class were conservative attributes like respectability, frugality, and self-sufficiency, attributes that would also lead to advancement, but through alternative pathways and alternative beliefs about food, developed by the middling sort themselves in commerce and social interactions. The merchant or yeoman landowner took pride in surviving on only two or three dishes when alone, and providing a modest, though satisfying, spread if entertaining guests.<sup>259</sup> Unlike the gentry, middle-class households were willing to experiment with improving poor off-cuts of meat when serving themselves, and yet could put on a pleasurable and impressive banquet when appropriate.<sup>260</sup>

Having a wife and daughters well-trained in housewifery was a distinct advantage both in the ability to survive by self-sufficient and difficult means and to provide hospitality and care in interactions with those of higher and lower social rank. The balance of these needs was in many ways unique to the middling sort, and subsequently the value of women in some ways was higher in this class given their importance in these necessary tasks. Therefore, some families of the middling rank even preferred daughters, and the class as a whole was less inclined to take part in the intense importance laid on male offspring by the noble families concerned with birthright and patrilineage.<sup>261</sup> While all daughters were raised to be wives, from the aristocracy to the peasantry, raising daughters to uphold middle-class values and improve familial standing dictated particular skills for successful marriage, and “the class a girl was expected to

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<sup>258</sup> Thirsk, *Food*, 214.

<sup>259</sup> William Harrison, 128-129.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>261</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 82.

marry into defined her education.”<sup>262</sup> Courtship and matchmaking in the middling sort was fluid, ambiguous, and “fell somewhere between élite and plebian ideals, sharing some characteristics with each. Young women often had a say in the choice between suitors, although parents insisted on becoming actively involved at an earlier stage than in the case of plebian families.”<sup>263</sup> Women in the middling sort shared in the economic and educational opportunities of women of the upper ranks, and this manifested in the kitchen many ways, from exotic ingredients in special occasion recipes, like gold leaf, to keeping extensive household accounts. Middling housewives also had the opportunity to engage in business alongside their husbands and fathers in a meaningful and authoritative way, unlike those of other classes. However, the fluidity of middle-class identity also meant while they “enjoyed a more secure economic position than their plebian counterparts, they were not invulnerable to hardship. The death of a husband could reduce his wife to the poorer ranks of society.”<sup>264</sup>

That is not to say that the middle class was indistinct from the lower orders. As Spufford elucidates, “it is certainly safe to say that the ‘average’ yeoman was an entirely distinct being from his fictional neighbour, the ‘average’ husbandman, who could still not be confused with the ‘average’ labourer in the same village.”<sup>265</sup> The middle class meant those “whose relative prosperity distinguished them from about one-third of the population who lived in poverty,” though the prosperity within the class varied a great deal as well, with some rivaling the wealth of the gentry and some only nominally above

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<sup>262</sup> Hull, *Women*, 136.

<sup>263</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 113.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>265</sup> Spufford, *Contrasting*, 38-39.

the peasantry.<sup>266</sup> The actions of the middle class intentionally distinguished them from those of the lower sorts, including in the way they related to food and the housewife. The housewife determined the diet of her servants, and maintained its clear distinction from her own family's diet, such as in choosing which dishes were appropriate leftovers for cold suppers and which could be passed on to servants.<sup>267</sup> Their words were also appropriately different from the other classes, utilizing their self-written vocabulary of differentiation, represented by Shakespeare as speaking in prose, rather than verse.<sup>268</sup>

The middle class wanted to differentiate itself from the higher-ups as well, claiming that it was "better be the head of the yeomanrie than the tayl of the gentrie."<sup>269</sup> It was necessary to make this artificial distinction between the two, as there was no natural "rigid line of demarcation...because while the younger sons of the gentry engaged in trade, the daughters of wealthy tradesmen were eagerly sought as brides by an impoverished aristocracy. Therefore the manners and customs of the two groups gradually approximated to each other."<sup>270</sup> Though "the higher a woman's social rank, the less likely she was to engage directly in the manual work of housewifery," by focusing her time and effort on domestic production, the middling sort of woman, whether middle class or lower gentry by birth, clearly defined herself as other than the leisurely nobility and identified with the commercial and material setting of her class.<sup>271</sup>

The contrasting urban nobility also perceived the rural middling sort, which in many ways included the tail of the gentry, as distinct as well. Edward Dowden theorizes

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<sup>266</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 5.

<sup>267</sup> William Harrison, 129.

<sup>268</sup> Roberts, 53.

<sup>269</sup> Clarke, 138, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:8454:79](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:8454:79) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 79.

<sup>270</sup> Clark, 14.

<sup>271</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 302.

that Shakespeare's *Merry Wives* was written "expressly for the barbarian aristocrats...wished to see the interior life of country gentlemen of the middle-class, and to see the women of the middle-class with their excellent bourgeois morals, and rough, jocose ways."<sup>272</sup> True or not, the play and others like it juxtapose the pleasurable lifestyle and urban liberality of the nobility with the daily toil and deliberate morality of the rural household. Some members of the middling sort wished to avoid such accusations of incivility, and were more affected by the prescriptive literature than those of higher or lower rank in their desire to improve their economic and social standing.<sup>273</sup>

The middling sort existed within the larger idea of the Great Chain of Being, wherein all English men and women found their appropriate places in early-modern society. While those of the lower and upper sorts were both dictated by their birth, the fortunes of those in the middle class were determined by their work throughout the lifecycle.<sup>274</sup> By the late Elizabethan period, the middle class as a whole was on "a wave of unprecedented prosperity" that had pushed the boundary between the middle and upper classes, which was particularly striking in London's urban boom of apprentices and tradesmen.<sup>275</sup> In the countryside, however, the rise of the middle class would more likely appear as the blending of the lifestyles of the upper middle class and lower gentry. Rural villagers would view their middle-class neighbors "in their own localities as either belonging to or else aligned with 'the better sort.'"<sup>276</sup> William Harrison noted this permeable boundary in his *Description of England*, where through thriftiness and smart purchases, good household management of production and servants, and education,

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<sup>272</sup> Quoted in Roberts, 52.

<sup>273</sup> Hull, *Women*, 20.

<sup>274</sup> Barry, 15.

<sup>275</sup> Brooks, "Apprenticeship," 69.

<sup>276</sup> Wrightson, 44.

middle-class families “do make them by those means to become gentlemen.”<sup>277</sup>

Throughout his life and according to agricultural and economic circumstances and choices, the yeoman farmer and land owner could vary in prominence from barely above the subsistence living of the lowest sorts to rivaling the wealth and influence of his ennobled neighbors.<sup>278</sup> Accordingly, Mrs. Sarah Longe and Lady Elinor Fettiplace, our two primary receipt book authors, and their families shared a lifestyle and duties despite their technical categorical differences from birth. For instance, as female heads of significantly-sized households Sarah and Elinor had the duty and resources to distill and dispense medicine, often with expensive ingredients, to family, staff, and neighbors in need. Their receipts for “Sirrope of Violets” are remarkably similar, containing large quantities of the flower and precious refined sugar, a remedy which could be used for a fever.<sup>279</sup>

A woman’s place within the Great Chain of Being depended for the most part upon both her father and her husband in the simplest sense. However, while they demarcated her position in the Chain, she was not considered equal to them. This societal structure insisted that women had a “subhuman nature” that was confirmed by “their proverbial affinities with the animal world.”<sup>280</sup> Much like the literary balancing between philosophical treatises on the incapacity of women versus the evidence of their abilities and accomplishments, women’s theoretical position as women was at odds with the reality of their position as a member of a specific social and economic group. Sometimes women’s inheritance or widowhood created a case of conflicting claims, and “authorities

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<sup>277</sup> William Harrison, 118.

<sup>278</sup> Barry, 14.

<sup>279</sup> Longe, 111-112. Fettiplace, 98.

<sup>280</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 61.

had to decide whether to safeguard property rights at the expense of gender order, or sacrifice women's proprietary interests so as to maintain female subordination, or contrive a compromise between the two."<sup>281</sup> In the case of author and housewife Elinor Fettiplace whose first husband was knighted, "she remained her Ladyship long after she...had been remarried to a commoner and widowed for a second time."<sup>282</sup> Fettiplace used cookery to maintain her own status as a gentlewoman in her relationships with noble family and friends regardless of married standing. Sir Henry Danvers gifted her with a copy of *Maison Rustique* in 1624, and Sir Walter Raleigh shared two medicinal tobacco recipes that she preserved in her book.<sup>283</sup>

The social status of women was the subject of continuous physical and philosophical discourse. While it was popular to treat them as a single entity of gender, the lifestyle of women individually highlighted the clear differences in their economic and social situations; "the more comfortable lifestyles of some women depended on the exploitation of others," and women of the same rank competed over resources like "sexual partners and social ascendancy."<sup>284</sup> While male authors categorically lambasted the female sex, differing social requirements and domestic responsibilities made such theories impractical. Indeed, their living experience was often more similar to men of the same class (and loyalty to such was strongly cultivated) than to any idea of universal womanhood. Women of each sort interacted so frequently with one another that their differences were apparent from firsthand observation. For the middle-class housewife, poorer women were servants to manage, more well-off gentry were to be envied,

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>282</sup> Spurling, 9.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 96. Fettiplace, 187.

<sup>284</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 75.

emulated, or distained, and middle-class urbanites were available for comparison and contrast. Class determined a wide variety of circumstances, such as “the age at which women married...the number of children they were likely to bear, the size and constituents of their households, the range of tasks included in their daily responsibilities, and even their deportment towards husbands and in-laws.”<sup>285</sup>

Women of the middling sort were not necessarily content to stay within the confines of their allotted station, however. The ambition of women for themselves and their husbands was so well renowned that Christopher Marlowe wrote in 1598 that “all women are ambitious naturallie.”<sup>286</sup> Everything from manners to malt making became tools for the middling housewife to raise her lot in life, and proper behavior for both her current place and her desired place within the Great Chain was communicated in her education alongside practical subjects.”<sup>287</sup> Accordingly, Suzanne Hull theorizes that “the majority of books for women,” such as the how-to guidebooks on cookery, medicine, and manners, “provided ladders to respectability and acceptance, a contribution toward the upward mobility that was possible in the Renaissance.”<sup>288</sup>

Everything from needlework to cookery to writing could provide means by which the middle-class woman could reach beyond her station in the Great Chain, and both male-authored guidebooks and female-authored household commonplace books offered these lessons of domestic social climbing.<sup>289</sup> While a “gentleman’s wife did much the same sort of thing as a farmer’s,” contributing to a basic sense of female culture, the

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>286</sup> Christopher Marlowe and George Chapman, *Hero and Leander* (London: Felix Kingston for Paule Linley, 1598), C 3, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:5206:11](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:5206:11) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 11.

<sup>287</sup> Hull, *Women*, 144.

<sup>288</sup> *Chaste*, 139.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 138-139.



difference was in the details of duties, responsibilities, and societal expectations.<sup>290</sup> The lifestyle of a gentlewoman (or middling woman with upper-class aspirations) depended upon “her ability to employ the labour of other women,” everywhere from elaborate dressing in the bedchamber to authority and management in the kitchen; survival, self sufficiency, and success depended upon daily interactions with women throughout the Great Chain.<sup>291</sup> Everything from proper table manners to the very dishes and utensils used to serve meals could indicate and improve the hostess’s standing. William Harrison used the contents of the kitchen cupboard to indicate the improving situation for even farmers, who in the lifetime of the previous generation had went from wood and only a little pewter dishware to “a faire garnish of pewter...a silver salt, a bowl for wine (if not an whole rest), and a dozen of spoons to furnish up the suit.”<sup>292</sup> Probate inventories, particularly for the urban middle class, show a remarkable increase in quality and quantity of physical household goods that were “the product of female labour, and all of which required further female labour to maintain.”<sup>293</sup>

Skill in cookery was a commendable attribute for women of all classes, rather than being limited to women of less-than-gentle birth. However, *what* they cooked and *how* they cooked was determined by their station—gentlewomen received commendation for generous hospitality and the candies and marmalades that they distributed to friends, the middling sort applauded housewives for frugality and ingenuity with their resources, and women of the lowest sorts served best in kitchens of the higher orders, following

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<sup>290</sup> Fussell, 175.

<sup>291</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 303.

<sup>292</sup> William Harrison, 202.

<sup>293</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 307.

directions as cooks, bakers, and housekeepers.<sup>294</sup> Receipt books acknowledged these class-determined culinary roles, as in Hannah Woolley's 1675 *The Queen-like Closet* which addresses the various kitchen roles in the third person save "To the Gentlewomen who have the Charge of the Sweet-Meats, and such like Repasts," which is addressed directly to the female head of house who personally undertook this task befitting her station.<sup>295</sup> Rural middling and upper-class women had additional challenges in both resources and responsibilities, while at the same time they hoped to apply the ambitions and styles of urban dining.<sup>296</sup> The deeds of the self-sufficient Good Housewife provided the means to mimic or substitute the fashions and requirements of Elizabethan cookery. Sarah Longe clearly identified with her place in the middle class with her title "Mistress," yet she also gazed upward by saving a recipe she received from Lady Parsons, acknowledging a biscuit recipe liked by King James and his queen, and using gold leaf in her cookery.<sup>297</sup> Elinor Fettiplace, too, reached beyond her station with "The Lord of Devonshire His Pudding," both in contact with a man in good political fortune and in the rich ingredients it contained: manchet, dates, raisins, currants, marrow, cream, eggs, cinnamon, nutmeg, and sugar.<sup>298</sup>

Many people had access to knowledge of upper-class foods, whether as servants, farmers, or landowners, or through social and literary contact with their betters.<sup>299</sup> Manors, villages, towns, and marketplaces were microcosms of discourse on food and food production. A popular literary motif was the tale of a king, especially

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<sup>294</sup> Spurling, 164.

<sup>295</sup> Woolley, 123.

<sup>296</sup> Spurling, 10.

<sup>297</sup> Hackel, 99.

<sup>298</sup> Spurling, 213.

<sup>299</sup> Thirsk, 19.

Henry VIII, in disguise who enjoyed a meal with common folk, paralleling the gift exchange and avenue of income of providing produce, recipes, and domestic products to noble and royal households.<sup>300</sup> These expensive goods and services recorded in recipes published in male-authored guidebooks—in narrative form with pictures of exotic ingredients—served as fantasy for the literate housewife of lesser means.<sup>301</sup>

Authors nominally published these books for “Ladies and Gentlewomen,” though often their true audience was the middling housewife who desired to emulate such culinary luxuries and dining behaviors.<sup>302</sup> The middling sort used cooking-related tools, everything from courtesy manuals to decorative trenchers, to guide their table manners and dinner conversations in socially beneficial ways.<sup>303</sup> The diligent consideration of cooking and dining choices by social climbing middle-class merchants and lower gentry created a paradox of noble emulation and deliberate differentiation that urban aristocracy might identify with disdain.<sup>304</sup>

These “country cousins” of the urban aristocracy were highlighted comically in *Gammer Gvrtons Nedle* and other domestic rural plays with a stereotypical “conventional rustic speech.”<sup>305</sup> Playwrights and balladeers highlighted, and often mocked, the country folk of all stations, portraying them as less-intelligent and less-socially adept. There was a hint of jealousy as well, however, of the supposedly simple life of the country manor in John Lyly’s 1584 *Sapho and Phao* for “sweete life seldom

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<sup>300</sup> Spufford, *Small*, 222-224.

<sup>301</sup> Hull, *Women*, 170-171.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>303</sup> Caton, 81.

<sup>304</sup> Spurling, 7.

<sup>305</sup> Brett-Smith, vii.

found vnder a golde[n] couert, ofte[n] vnder a thached cotage.”<sup>306</sup> It was easy, of course, for the elite to romanticize in poetry and theatre a rural, often subsistence-level, living from the comfort of the overflowing noble table. However, more serious texts too, like Harrison’s *Description of England*, praised the restrained but pleasant practices of the rural non-gentles, such as their moderation in dining. Middle-class morality plus middle-class economic advancement prompted a somewhat reluctant acknowledgement of the value of their lifestyle. While economic and social historians have focused more on the rising urban merchants, the landowning farmers and yeomen were the numerical majority of the middling sort and had their own effects on the culture at large.<sup>307</sup> Rural rank depended upon the acquisition and proper maintenance of land, which the middling sort excelled at through a combination of “ownership, freehold and other tenancies and subtenancies of land in bewildering fashion.”<sup>308</sup>

Housewives played their own role in land value and economic growth through the successful use of land resources to raise dairy animals and poultry and grow herbs and produce, and the judicious marketing of excess goods. The Good Housewife was most often portrayed in a country setting, where she was “nothing but a continuall stirring about business and huswifery, till shee be laid in her grave, and then she rests from her labour.”<sup>309</sup> Authors contrasted her opposite the “Fine Dame” who labored little and leisured much, particularly associated with urban, elite living.<sup>310</sup> While the elite woman could survive on “halfe a pease a day,” this was because she did not labor as her middle-

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<sup>306</sup> John Lyly, *Sapho and Phao played beefore the Queenes Maiestie on Shroue-tewsdays by Her Maiesties children and the boyes of Paules* (London: Thomas Cadman, 1584), A 3, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:27855:3](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:27855:3) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 3.

<sup>307</sup> Barry, 24.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>309</sup> Wye Saltonstall, *Picturae Loquentes*, 2nd ed. (1635), quoted in Ezell, 38.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

class counterpart did.<sup>311</sup> Some moral philosophers became champions of country simplistic eating, and held it up in positive contrast against the elaborate banqueting of urban elites.<sup>312</sup> Particularly famous was the parable of *The Country Mouse and the City Mouse*, which highlighted the differences between the two diets in areas like sugar consumption, a foreign product of great expense.<sup>313</sup> It is the influence of urban luxury, represented by the wily or malignant outsider in plays and stories, that causes trouble amidst the everyday calm, contentment, and industry of rural life. By ejecting outside influence, middle-class order is restored, and the housewife reigns supreme over an orderly kitchen. Familial love, neighborly goodwill, and a return to domestic productivity characterize the endings of domestic comedies like *Merry Wives* and *Gammer Gvrtton*.<sup>314</sup>

Country life also had implications on national identity. The lifestyle of the stereotypical rural middling household, the model of self-sufficiency, came to represent the English ideal of food and food production. Preferences for local specialties such as manor-produced cheese, long the staple of the laborer's diet, became fashionable as both a point of personal pride and proof of national sentiment. Regional differences are prominent in both the records of diets and agriculture, as well as in national-focusing works like William Harrison's *Description of England*.<sup>315</sup> Common sentiment praised the English diet, as in "there is more good victualls in England then in seven other kingdomes."<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> John Lyly, *Entertainment at Harefield* (1602), quoted in Tilley, 282.

<sup>312</sup> Caton, 89.

<sup>313</sup> Spufford, *Small*, 57.

<sup>314</sup> Roberts, 81.

<sup>315</sup> Thirsk, *Fooles*, 14.

<sup>316</sup> Clarke, "Copiae," 74, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:8454:47](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:8454:47) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 47.

That is not to say that the common English diet consisted of purely English foods. The sixteenth century brought a number of new food trends that altered the basic diet for many English men and women, such as the rise of produce consumption in the meat-and-bread dominated cuisine. This new love of fruit, both fresh and dried, and vegetables was not only new but foreign as well, as new commodities and plant varieties were brought to the English table from the Continent and, later, the New World. However, literary sources show a distinct effort to absorb new products and fads into the English culinary identity. While currants were an imported commodity that first arrived in the early fifteenth century, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Italians wondered if the English used currants even for dyeing cloth because they imported them in such large quantities.<sup>317</sup> Currants and raisins feature prominently in all of the receipt books reviewed, both male- and female-authored, reflecting the process of widespread adoption and acculturation of foreign commodities into the English diet. Exotic European cooking methods also found their way into the English housewife's kitchen; while Gervase Markham remarks on the distinctly foreign influence of "compound fricassees" or "quelquechose," he includes an entire section of fricassee recipes as essential knowledge for his *English Housewife*.<sup>318</sup> Cooks and diners of all sorts adopted and subsumed foreign ingredients and recipes into the English diet. Though it was fashionable to use these exotic foodstuffs and styles, authors like William Harrison commended the rural lower and middling sorts for hospitable tables absent of foreign

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<sup>317</sup> Thirsk, 27.

<sup>318</sup> Markham, 67.

influence, “merry without malice and plain without inward Italian or French craft and subtlety.”<sup>319</sup>

The self-sufficiency and hospitality at the table, of course, required the skill and craft of the housewife. Therefore, a house fully equipped with a capable cook and hostess was necessary for the maintenance of English culinary and social identity. With her ability to lead her household and community in self-sufficiency through domestic production, “Gervase Markham’s *English Housewife* locates housewifery as part of a national ethic uniting classes and regions...the English home can be insulated from professionalization and the market.”<sup>320</sup> This vision of the housewife as the bearer of national unity is almost exclusively relegated to the sweeping generalizations of male authors, whereas female authors and their private-use commonplace books focused on the individual woman. While Markham (as shown above) needed to remark on the foreign source of fricassees and how that might be problematic for maintenance of the English culinary identity, Sarah Longe recorded a recipe for “a white ffrigasy” with only a concern that when frying together the eggs and chicken “fry them not too long after your Eggs be in, for they will Curdle.”<sup>321</sup> Published male authors like Harrison in *Description of England*, Markham in *The English Housewife*, and the other well-known authors who dabbled in the subject of food production had established themselves as voices that determined the character of the nation in their broad generalizations about the meaning of food and other cultural representatives, layering a national symbolism on the everyday lifestyle of the average housewife. The author-housewife, who practiced the craft she

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<sup>319</sup> William Harrison, 131.

<sup>320</sup> Wall, “Women,” 104.

<sup>321</sup> Longe, 116.

described, however, appears to have found no such need to add these dramatic, national statements in her record of household work.

Wendy Wall's theory of housewifery's "discursive link to particular national and sexual identities" explains the housewife's prominence in both specifically English guidebooks and specifically English comedies.<sup>322</sup> The English cookery guidebook served to both establish and maintain a national culinary identity through the work of women in the kitchen. A national cookbook was necessary to fulfill the needs of a country portrayed as unique and requiring individual tailoring, rather than simply relying on foreign sources like *Maison Rustique*.<sup>323</sup> According to these authors, it was more virtuous for the housewife to eat and serve a diet "esteemed for the familiar acquaintance she hath with it, than for the strangeness and rarity it bringeth from other countries."<sup>324</sup> Once again, the housewife is a conservative ideal, here the bastion of nostalgic for an untainted, strong nation.

Plays and stories set in England tend to share this idea of the rural middling household as idyllically English. *Merry Wives* and *Gammer Gvrton* are "peculiarly English" comedies, with common themes such as: "the theme of cuckoldry, the suspected infidelity of wives, and the element of opposition between rural virtue and the cheating of city sharpers."<sup>325</sup> These themes appealed to audiences of all sorts, from the groundlings at the Globe who identified with the daily struggles and joys of the characters to the removed but still intrigued Cambridge University students. The domestic setting and foibles of *Gammer Gvrtons Nedle* is "the sole representative of the vernacular University

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<sup>322</sup> Wall, "Household," 2.

<sup>323</sup> Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman* (1613), quoted in Best in Markham, xx.

<sup>324</sup> Markham, 8.

<sup>325</sup> Roberts, 59.



comedy in England” during this period, free of foreign language and foreign themes.<sup>326</sup> Similarly, the 1597 *Merry Wives of Windsor* is thoroughly English in its relation to Shakespeare’s histories and in its familiar domestic setting, the representative middling household, breaking from the mold of Shakespeare’s foreign-set comedies.<sup>327</sup> These plays were not renowned for their clever prose or unique characters (though the genre does not necessarily exclude the possibility), but rather for their use of the familiar tropes, plots, and stereotypical attributes that kept with the long-established traditions of English sayings and songs. These thoroughly English comedies helped to confirm and establish the English national identity by situating it within the kitchen, table, and household. This worked because, as has been shown, these tropes were relevant to and representative of people of all stations.

At the individual level, the housewife’s primary relationship to negotiate was with her husband. Her lifestyle, duties, and place within society were dictated by his social standing, economic means, and place of residency. Everyone had an opinion about this important relationship and its proper attributes, and it was a subject for everything from jokes to formal essays. Most were in agreement, however, on the basic concept of a wife’s subservience to her husband. Even with the acknowledgment of the housewife’s equality in domestic production and responsibility, her relegation to the home and traditional religious and cultural beliefs ensured that she was “nonetheless subordinate to him.”<sup>328</sup> This did not mean that the wife was insignificant or incapable, despite such portrayal in comedies; in practice the housewife was “her husband’s invaluable

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<sup>326</sup> Brett-Smith, vi-vii.

<sup>327</sup> Roberts, 52.

<sup>328</sup> Markham, xxiii.

lieutenant,” as household accounts and personal letters reveal.<sup>329</sup> It was a constant discourse and compromise between the authority of the husband and the authority of the wife both between each other and with the other members of their household, and it inspired a host of patriarchal literature from spiritual, philosophical, and practical writers to defend the position of the middle-class male.<sup>330</sup>

The wife was a valuable member of the middle-class man’s household, particularly because men of that sort viewed their economic situation as tied their position as householders, a status that “laid the foundation for social, cultural and political independence” as a result of economic self-sufficiency.<sup>331</sup> The male head-of-house was the public figure that represented the home within society, but he “relied on the private efforts of wife, children and servants—not least to give him the time for public activity.”<sup>332</sup> Here the wife displayed her prowess as lieutenant, accomplishing the needs of her household as dictated by her husband, whether that is assisting him in his business, maintaining the manor while he is away, or by managing his children and servants in a manner befitting their situation. The essential nature of housewifery could in some ways raise the individual lower or middling wife in the esteem of her husband in a practical sense of equity that was not an option for women of the highest ranks, while still remaining within the constraints of technical subservience.<sup>333</sup> The wife’s role and responsibilities ultimately depended upon the will and whim of her husband or father, and was an ongoing series of compromises and confrontations through everyday experience;

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<sup>329</sup> Clark, 159.

<sup>330</sup> Christopher Brooks, “Professions, Ideology and the Middling Sort in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries” in *The Middling Sort of People*, 124.

<sup>331</sup> Barry, 2-3.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>333</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 131.

preferably, however, the woman was to be both literally and figuratively silent on her end of the conversation.<sup>334</sup> To ensure a functional marital relationship within a patriarchal society, the husband both created the setting of the relationship through his home and property and molded his wife to fit within that desired space; as the proverb Randle Cotgrave included in his 1611 French dictionary advised, “purchase a house readie made, but let thy wife be of thine owne making.”<sup>335</sup>

As highlighted by Suzanne Hull, this was possible because of the discrepancies in population between males and females: a male deficit meant that “it was a buyer’s market for men seeking wives. Men could lay down the rules for the behavior of their women.”<sup>336</sup> Each man could “chuse and use his owne wife” as best fit with his personality and needs.<sup>337</sup> The question was not whether the male was dominant, but rather how the relationship of subservience fit the individual family’s religious, social, and economic needs. Literature offered advice on how best to accommodate those needs.<sup>338</sup> It was the duty of the wife to conform to the personality of her husband and meet his and his household’s needs, deliberately altering her own identity as necessary. In the kitchen this could manifest in a number of ways, from large issues like how to choose, train, and supervise servants to small details like altering recipes to suit the husband’s taste preferences.

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<sup>334</sup> Ezell, 3.

<sup>335</sup> Cotgrave, “Maison,” [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:299](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:299) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 299.

<sup>336</sup> *Women*, 18.

<sup>337</sup> Draxe, 231, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:16202:121](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:16202:121), image 121.

<sup>338</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 132.

The Elizabethan patriarch had unrivalled authority within his family in a way that extended into every part of his wife's life, including her physical body.<sup>339</sup>

Expectedly, some men took this power to extremes, and the hard work of middling housewives did not guarantee greater appreciation by husbands. According to Mendelson and Crawford, "a major ground for violent marital conflict was the husband's belief that his wife was not working to her full capacity."<sup>340</sup> Violence against housewives if their work was deemed insufficient or their behavior intractable was an expected consequence, for "the wood of a Crabb, is good for a Drabb that will not her Husband obey."<sup>341</sup> Spenser's *Faerie Queene* places the two female responses to patriarchal dictates in opposition, submission and defiance, in the characters of Pastorella and Mirabella, the first as virtue and the second as vice.<sup>342</sup>

In some situations, submission to the will of the husband meant a life of servitude. While husbands and families typically expected all women to work, both fictional and non-fictional sources indicate that some women married husbands who did not recognize a difference between a wife and a slave in both expectations and lifestyle, taking control of her body and her work beyond the norm. Beaumont and Fletcher's Isabella mourns her loss of personhood upon becoming a wife, for "the great content of being made a Mistriss" revealed itself to be in truth "a Slave subject to wants and hungers."<sup>343</sup> While it was within the right of husband to be able to dictate such drudgery, other treatises encouraged men to treat wives with more respect and care in order to

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<sup>339</sup> Ezell, 3.

<sup>340</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 147.

<sup>341</sup> Howell, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:98489:15](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:98489:15) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 15.

<sup>342</sup> Sanders, 34.

<sup>343</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, *Women Pleas'd*, 243-244.

create a more harmonious and useful union. Dorothy Leigh, in her 1636 posthumously-published counsel, warns her sons to avoid mistaking ideas about brides and marriage as many men did, for if she was worthy of being his chosen wife, “shee is always too good to be thy servant, and worthy to be thy fellow.”<sup>344</sup> Any woman or man could be a servant, but a capable wife was a tool that was much more valuable, if she was given the proper authority and means.

While there is certainly much evidence for the “codified abuse of woman” by husbands and other male authority figures, through “buying, selling and owning her, sniggering at her ‘faults’ and caricaturing her sexuality,” and controlling her work, there was often more to the emotional and physical relationship between spouses.<sup>345</sup> While philosophy and fiction both argued for total male dominance, everyday experience showed that women as workers were capable and women as spouses were pleasant, meaning that such patriarchal theories “might not always be in practice the perfect model for human relationships, whether private or public.”<sup>346</sup> The preferential treatment of husbands and sons did not mean that wives and daughters were unvalued or unappreciated, but rather that “affectionate relations within the family might develop independently of the values of the outside world, and could even operate in contradiction to the hierarchy of gender preference.”<sup>347</sup> Within individual families, housewives and their daughters could be treated with respect and love.

Early-modern English theories on marriage, on the other hand, required women to love, respect, and obey their husbands, despite how the husband may feel

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<sup>344</sup> Leigh, 54, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:183715:36](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:183715:36) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 36.

<sup>345</sup> Steve Davies, 2.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>347</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 92.

about or treat her. Anthony Fitzherbert in 1534 emphasized the importance of following this double standard, for of a wife's duties "firste and principally the wyfe is bound of right to loue her husband aboue father and mother and al other men."<sup>348</sup> She was admonished to suppress any negative thoughts she may have about either his personality or his ability to manage their household, and instead restrain her opinions and speak to him with calm and pleasant speech.<sup>349</sup> If they refused to follow such restriction on speech and actions towards her spouse, popular culture labeled wayward housewives as nags, shrews, and gossips, oft-used characteristics of the theatrical housewife trope.

Both husband and wife communicated positively and negatively in order to accomplish the multiple tasks required by their household. The Italians, according to Giovanni Torriano's translated dictionary of proverbs in 1666, commonly said that "a husband must be deaf, and the wife blind, to have quietness."<sup>350</sup> Bold and subversive speech could aid the housewife, rather than impeding or offending her husband, and "a grunting wife," whether complaining of her tasks, her husband, or her ailments, could ably serve her husband well.<sup>351</sup> Difficulties in marriage often stemmed from difficulties in domestic work, for "haste makes waste, And waste makes want, And want makes strife between the good man and his wife," as observed in the English proverb noted in the

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<sup>348</sup> Fitzherbert, quoted in Clark, 47.

<sup>349</sup> Markham, 7.

<sup>350</sup> Giovanni Torriano, *Piazza universale di proverbi Italiani, or, A common place of Italian proverbs and proverbial phrases digested in alphabetical order by way of dictionary : interpreted, and occasionally illustrated with notes : together with a supplement of Italian dialogues* (London: F. and T. W., 1666), Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:49687:83](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:49687:83) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 83.

<sup>351</sup> John Davies, *The scourge of folly consisting of satyricall epigramms, and others in honor of many noble and worthy persons of our land. Together, with a pleasant (thought discordant) descant vpon most English prouerbes: and others* (London: Edward Allde for Richard Redmer, 1611), 177 no. 368, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:9884:97](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:9884:97) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 97.

1678 edition of John Ray's anthology.<sup>352</sup> The husband and housewife had an ongoing discourse of compromises, conflicts, and compassion that affected both parties in numerous ways. Wedlock was known to "tame both man and beast" in a way little else could.<sup>353</sup> The Good Housewife was a result of the guiding hand of the Good Husbandman, and her behavior was representative of her husband's care and managerial skills, as noted in an Italian proverb translated into English by John Florio in 1591.<sup>354</sup> These interactions were so vital to the makeup of Elizabethan society that often the central relationships in plays and stories revolved around marital discourse, such as in the triangles of husband, wife, and lover or parents, daughter, and suitor, because they were the definitive form of domestic relationships.<sup>355</sup>

Sources of popular culture also portrayed women perversely in the dominant role as a device both for comedic value and as a warning for husbands. Female characters who were "superior to the men in knowledge and capability," as in *Merry Wives*, reveal not only the obvious point that women were sometimes wiser than their partners, but also that they were given enough independence and opportunities to display such wisdom through the management of their households.<sup>356</sup> Shakespeare frequently chose to resolve the plots of his comedies "through the actions of a strong, wise and loving woman,"

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<sup>352</sup> John Ray, *A collection of English proverbs digested into a convenient method for the speedy finding any one upon occasion : with short annotations : whereunto are added local proverbs with their explications, old proverbial rhythmes, less known or exotick proverbial sentences, and Scottish proverbs* (Cambridge: John Hayes for W. Morden, 1678), 151, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:65242:80](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:65242:80) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 80.

<sup>353</sup> Draxe, 231, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:16202:121](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:16202:121), image 121.

<sup>354</sup> John Florio, *Florios second frutes to be gathered of twelue trees, of diuers but delightsome tastes to the tongues of Italians and Englishmen. To which is annexed his Gardine of recreation yeelding six thousand Italian prouerbs* (London: T. Orwin for Thomas Woodcock, 1591), 192, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:2501:102](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:2501:102) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 102.

<sup>355</sup> Roberts, 70.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

whose power came through her relationships in the home with husband and children.<sup>357</sup>

The theatrical family unit, representative of all of English society, required a strong and capable housewife to guide the family through her maternal wisdom, questioning the patriarchal order through her ability to resolve crises and disarm threats.<sup>358</sup> The wife held sway in the real kitchen as well, and it was only with her cooperation that a man could thrive, physically, emotionally, and economically.<sup>359</sup>

Each and every day, “gender roles were constructed, modified and reinforced—and sometimes challenged—in religious, scientific, medical, political, legal and literary discourses and practices,” as well as within individual private homes.<sup>360</sup> While women for the most part remained within the strictures established by her husband, and more broadly her culture, all women in some small part played a role in subverting and alleviating the oppression of patriarchy by learning and growing within those boundaries and by utilizing what autonomy and independence was available. There is no accurate way to determine how much “women would have elected their situation; it is likely, however that most acceded to it.”<sup>361</sup> The theory of female subservience did not always typify the relationship between husband and wife, but it was always a factor that was acknowledged by both parties.

Relationships between women, such as mother and daughter, sisters, and female relatives or friends, is more difficult to pin down. While husband and wife relations were the bread-and-butter of popular Elizabethan authors of all types, “the

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<sup>357</sup> Steve Davies, 117.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>359</sup> David Fergusson, *Scottish proverbs* (Edinburgh: Robert Bryson, 1641), A I no. 106, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:178795:8](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:178795:8) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 8.

<sup>360</sup> North, 9.

<sup>361</sup> Hull, *Women*, 192.



existence of vigorous, able matrons was accepted as a matter of course,” with little attention given to the development of such dynamics.<sup>362</sup> Female relationships were mediated and cultivated along the established lines of female communication, through the passing down of traditional knowledge and ideas like recipes. As discussed in chapter one, the rising literacy of the middling sort allowed for daughters to remain close to their mother and her advice long after their departure as a wife to a new home through exchange of letters and visits. A 1615 book of sample letters provides an example of how these lines of female communication remained open despite the passing of the girl from daughter to wife, as a new wife, “going into the world and must leave to be a child, and learn to be a mother and to look to a family rather than to the entertainment of a friend...avoid tattling gossips yet be kind to thy neighbors and no stranger to thy kindred, be gentle to thy servants but not overfamiliar.”<sup>363</sup> There was a proper way to relate to women of all different types and stations, and a woman expectedly continued to maintain such relationships while becoming the “matron” of her own family. Proper relationships were crucial to a successfully operating kitchen, as cookery and domestic work relied upon the flexible-yet-hierarchical roles of housewife, servant, neighbor, merchant, and numerous other persons whose labor contributed to the table. Domestic industries, the primary occupation of women, provided many opportunities for women to forge, maintain, and break these female-to-female relationships while remaining within the parameters of housewifery. For example, laborious and time-intensive tasks like washing,

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<sup>362</sup> Clark, 44.

<sup>363</sup> “Letter of Counsell from a Discreet Mother to her Daughter, Newly Married” (1615), quoted in Hull, *Women*, 153.

whether performed at home or the local waterway, were often shared with neighbors and servants to lighten the load and lend a sociable atmosphere.<sup>364</sup>

A primary concern in women's relationships was the state of matrimony. Whether arranging matches, gossiping about friends, or commiserating over spousal abuse, women shared their experiences of marriage with one another. Since housewifery was an important component of marriage, the two were linked topics in female-to-female discourse, inside and outside of the kitchen. Arranging marriages for children and relatives was highly important for the future success and social advancement of both the couple and the arrangers. Despite this importance, study of personal correspondence on the subject reveals a trend of marriage negotiation as a female task that traveled along the established networks of female communication.<sup>365</sup> An example for the preference of female marriage negotiators occurs in *Merry Wives*, where Evans chose to mediate his potential match with Anne Page through Mistress Quickly instead of her employer Dr. Caius.<sup>366</sup> Women continued to stay involved in each other's marriages by giving advice, gossiping, and offering aid. In Mercy Harvey's series of letters exchanged with a married nobleman in 1574, the gentleman's attempted rendezvous was thwarted when he faced a hoard of Mercy's mother, sister, and servants instead of Mercy at the arranged meeting place, a malt house.<sup>367</sup>

Sometimes women's speech and actions worked against one another, and conflicts arose between parties over important matters of resources, domestic production, and reputation. Theatrical and literary comedies took advantage of the stereotypical

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<sup>364</sup> Flather, 80.

<sup>365</sup> Ezell, 20.

<sup>366</sup> Shakespeare, 1.2.7-10.

<sup>367</sup> Sanders, 165.

tumultuous relationships between women. Areas of feminine identity were fertile areas for disagreements since women had so much physically and emotionally invested in those areas. The driving storyline behind *Gammer Gvrton's Needle* is this type of female dispute, where interloper Diccon spreads the rumors that Dame Chat had stolen Gammer's rooster, telling Dame Chat that "Tib hath tykled in Gammers eare, that you shoulde steale the cocke."<sup>368</sup> Since poultry raising was almost exclusively a female duty, Dame Chat reacted to Gammer's accusation with the strong emotions that stem from personal investment, quickly threatening violence to both Gammer and her maid by vowing to "haue the yong hore by the head, & the old trot by y<sup>e</sup> throte."<sup>369</sup> Everything in the kitchen, from missing chickens to candy recipes, offered an opportunity for women to forge, strengthen, or break bonds. The long and hard labor of women in the kitchen represented not only the economic investment of the household but also the emotional investment of the housewife in her home and family. Just as these shared experiences and deep emotions could bring women closer together, they could also cause rifts between them.

Women mediated their relationships through their work and their space, housewifery and the kitchen. Within that role, women found a level of power and authority that affected how and why they related to others. This was particularly apparent in the relationship between husband and wife, as there was a conflict of ownership and authority between the two over the products and processes in the kitchen and related areas. The English man was the head of the household, no matter his position in the

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<sup>368</sup> Stevenson, 24.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 25.

outside world; as the saying went, “euery clowne is King at home.”<sup>370</sup> On the other hand, within the house the wife had been educated in the knowledge and skills of the domestic industries, and as such was better equipped to make decisions and manage practical matters. Subsequently, popular turn-of-phrase declared that “most master wears no breech,” meaning that it was the lady of the house who held the reigns of authority.<sup>371</sup> Male authors of guidebooks and advice were realistic enough to acknowledge the superiority of the housewife in knowledge and skills *as it pertained to those duties assigned to her*. Anthony Fitzherbert was willing to give an overview of housewife duties, but swore that “I tel the[e] not how they should do and excersyse their labour and occupacions.”<sup>372</sup>

The husband was in many ways excluded from the world of the kitchen by both his wife and societal expectation, except for his consumption of its products or profits. In a well-balanced household, “a heauen of gouernment,” the spouses remained in their gender-determined zones of labor, “the husband intent on his business, the wife imploied in her house.”<sup>373</sup> The Bishop of Carlisle equated this supposedly natural division with the development of the term “House-wife,” because “the well ordering of the House seems to be more particularly the Woman’s office.”<sup>374</sup> The labors of the housewife and the husbandman were “essentially parallel,” though not necessarily equal

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<sup>370</sup> G. Delamothe, *The French alphabeth, teaching in a very short time, by a most easie way, to pronounce French naturally, to reade it perfectly, to write it truely, and to speake it accordingly. Together with the treasure of the French tung, containing the rarest sentences, prouerbes, parables, similies, apothegmes, and golden sayinges, of the most excellent French authours, as well poets as orators. The one diligently compiled, and the other painfully gathered and set in order, after the alphabeticall maner, for the benefite of those that are desirous of the French-tung* (London: E. Allde for H. Iackson, 1595), 7, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:11355:97](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:11355:97) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 97.

<sup>371</sup> Tilley, 447.

<sup>372</sup> Fitzherbert, quoted in Clark, 47.

<sup>373</sup> William Heale, *An Apologie for Women*, (Oxford: 1609), quoted in Ezell, 38.

<sup>374</sup> Bishop of Carlisle A *Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Right Honourable Anne Countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery* (1677), quoted in Ezell, 39.

in value, and “each sex was regarded as sovereign in its own domain.”<sup>375</sup> It is clear that contemporary theorists made a distinction between the realm of male labor and social interaction and the realm of female domestic production and communal participation, herein represented by the terms “public” and “private.” They often referred to this division of employment in physical terms, as in Patrick Hannay’s 1619 *The Happy Husband*, where the rhyming preface denotes them in the typical fashion as “within doors she must tend; her charge, is that at home; his that at large.”<sup>376</sup> Neither public/private nor indoor/outdoor are perfect terms describing this separation, but it is important to choose and utilize this imprecise language to attempt to distinguish the nature and relationship of the boundary between gendered divisions of labor. This choice must first be analyzed in light of other scholarship that has addressed these terms of division before continuing on to analyzing the effects this division had on the life and labor of housewives.

These are not the much-debated Victorian public and private separate spheres, but rather a simplified but porous designation better in keeping with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ideas of household function. Erica Longfellow’s “Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England” thoroughly evaluates the meaning of the words “private” and “public” and their application in early-modern England versus the evolution and controversy of their usage in later centuries. She identifies more simplistic notions of public and private than that of the nineteenth-century model of separate spheres, wherein “public is that which has national or community relevance” and “*private* and *privacy* are more simply the negative of *public*.”<sup>377</sup> This

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<sup>375</sup> Mendelson, 1.

<sup>376</sup> Patrick Hannay, *A Happy Husband or, Directions for a Maide to Choose her Mate* (London: John Beale for Richard Redmer, 1619), quoted in Ezell, 37.

<sup>377</sup> Longfellow, 314-315.

private realm was household-based communal, social, and economic activities and products that operated both in complement with and outside of the public realm. Early feminist scholars equated the supposed restriction of women to the private realm with disempowerment and subordination, but recent scholarship has shown that domestic labor's economic and communal effects and relations "challenge and...move beyond binaries of public and private, domestic and political spheres."<sup>378</sup> Instead, the housewife's position within the community and her effects upon its economic and social balance "was deeply embedded" in the concept of the private domain.<sup>379</sup> The housewife's work in the kitchen could and did affect the public, masculine realm, but it radiated from the household and her place in the private realm. Image 9, "The assize of bread," is an excellent example of the weight and importance of women's participation in the economy. Here, the housewife is pictured bringing the grain from her land to the miller to be ground and the baker to be made into bread, along with the legislated values and measures for the types of bread. The government, here, officially acknowledged the housewife's vital participation in the grain cycle both as the customer and as the alternative producer (when baking at home). Yet, the housewife always represented her household and its products during her participation in this cycle, rather than any individual business ambition or interest, unlike the miller and baker. The use of the simple terms "private" and "public," while acknowledging a porous boundary of economic and communal discourse, is the most direct way to indicate the separation between the gendered realms of labor indicated by contemporary texts but does not enter into the theoretical debate regarding separate spheres.

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<sup>378</sup> Knoppers, "Introduction," 11.

<sup>379</sup> Longfellow, 328.

Women were not merely relegated to the house and kitchen, but they “exercised *de facto* control of domestic space and its objects” in a way that had the power to alter the lifestyle of men on major work days like laundry day.<sup>380</sup> The kitchen, the market, and the manor yard may have been “under men’s nominal authority,” but the “spatial and cultural dominance” in domestic industry was clearly feminine.<sup>381</sup> William Harrison, in his description of the structure of the manor yard, illustrates this masculine overarching control over this otherwise feminine space, where “the goodman lying in his bed may lightly hear what is done in each of” the many buildings and industries of domestic food production in the rural household while the housewife and her servants carried on the actual tasks of domestic production.<sup>382</sup> The householder would be able to help “if any danger should attach him” or his household, but otherwise was not responsible for any direct supervision, much less any production. In practice, the commonly-accepted dominance of the male householder was less sure because of the housewife’s competent labor and working ownership of the kitchen and its many parts. It “was a space of considerable authority, anxiety, and fantasy,” a figurative grey area.<sup>383</sup> It was unseemly or disgraceful for the wife *or* the husband to usurp the other’s place and space, and writers like Patrick Hannay portrayed authority and ability in each as highly gender-specific.<sup>384</sup>

Women in the kitchen gained a large measure of authority both with the approval of and in spite of their husbands, despite popular patriarchal philosophies to the

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<sup>380</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 206.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>382</sup> William Harrison, 199.

<sup>383</sup> Knoppers, “Introduction,” 11.

<sup>384</sup> Hannay, quoted in Hull, *Women*, 44.

contrary, because “power was negotiated on an individual basis.”<sup>385</sup> Women used literacy to aid their domestic authority, from educating their children and servants to keeping touch with absent husbands.<sup>386</sup> Letters between husbands and wives record how seriously and confidently women took the autonomy of their responsibilities in estate management. According to Mendelson and Crawford, “wives’ letters to their husbands usually reported what they had done; they did not solicit advice about what they might do.”<sup>387</sup> Even the antifeminist Edward Gosynhill in his poem “Venus” writes

Estates comenly where I go  
Trust theyr wyues to overloke  
Baker, brewer, butler and coke  
With other all, man medleth no whytte  
Because the woman hathe quycker wytte...  
My lady must ordre thus all thyng,  
Or small shal be the mannes wynnynge.<sup>388</sup>

The husband was essentially too busy and too important to bother with the private world of the household since he was engaged with the public realm of business and politics. Subsequently, the household became a feminized center of female authority in the deliberate absence of her husband, save his cursory decision making or nominal oversight. The husband, in his choice to leave household business to the wife, “g[a]ve her leave to know more than himself” about both food production and domestic resources.<sup>389</sup> Men who led busy lives in business or court “thankfully placed the whole burthen of family affairs in the capable hands of their wives,” and such arrangements were made at the individual level as necessity and personal preferences dictated.<sup>390</sup> The independence

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<sup>385</sup> Daybell, 187.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 310.

<sup>388</sup> Edward Gosynhill, “Venus” in *Mulierium Pean*, quoted in Benson, 216.

<sup>389</sup> Hull, *Women*, 43.

<sup>390</sup> Clark, 16.



and autonomy found in household management also prepared women for the struggles of widowhood, and the business dealings of the husband often smoothly passed to the wife upon his death.<sup>391</sup> The kitchen in particular was a necessity for the wife's survival in widowhood, whether she was truly on her own or under the supervision of her adult children, since she could provide for both her own food needs and monetary profits from the excess. The will of a yeoman in 1571 exemplifies a husband providing for his wife after death, wherein he bequeathed to his wife Agnys half the kitchen, use of the common hearth, adjacent chambers for her to live in, and all of the necessary equipment for her "to dresse meate and drinke, bake and brewe, and to doe all other necessaryes mete and convenient in the same kitchen at all times," even though his son inherited the rest of the estate.<sup>392</sup>

Not all wives had the same level of autonomy, however, and some men extended their patriarchal authority in severe, and sometimes abusive, ways. While the wife, children, and servants were subject to discipline and correction, "the wrongs of a Husband or Master are not reproached," acknowledged the proverb in George Herbert's collection in 1640.<sup>393</sup> Even when tasked with the same duties and expectations of household management while her husband was away, the letters of Lady Harley from 1642 reveal that her husband "never gave his wife full control of the estate, and was always more ready to censure than to praise her arrangements."<sup>394</sup> For husbands who believed in the overwhelming superiority of men and the childlike nature of women, it

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>392</sup> Molly Harrison, 45.

<sup>393</sup> George Herbert, *Outlandish proverbs* (London: T. Paine for Humphrey Blunden, 1640), no. 139, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:4180:7](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:4180:7) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 7.

<sup>394</sup> Clark, 16.

must have been difficult to surrender the responsibility for his household's survival through food production to his supposedly-incapable wife. Men could justify such beliefs both in general early-modern gender philosophies, and at the individual level, as in the controlling husband Lopez in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Women Pleas'd*, who claimed that he was ensuring Isabella's virtuous life and keeping her healthy by making all of the decisions regarding her duties and her diet, since he knew better as "I am Cook my self, and mine own Cater."<sup>395</sup> Women could also take advantage of their domestic authority, whether in reality or in the imagination of playwrights and philosophers. "The cunning wife makes the husband her apron," was a common phrase to describe how women could use men as a tool of the kitchen and alter men's lifestyle through housewifery.<sup>396</sup>

In some ways men and women were at constant odds over the running of the household. Men's nominal patriarchal authority over all aspects of the wife's life offered a narrow window for them to enter the working kitchen, prompting some to attempt to interfere with women's work, to varying success. The goodman might dictate or request something in the household and was theoretically followed, "but as the goodwife says so it must be."<sup>397</sup> Shakespeare's Master Ford questioned the servants who carried the buck basket filled with laundry and Sir John Falstaff, yet his wife was quick to shut him out of housewifely business with "Why, what have you to do whither they bear it? You were best meddle with buck-washing!"<sup>398</sup> Male-authored publications like Markham's *English Housewife* insisted upon the wife clearing her decisions with the male householder, but "popular culture affirmed women's right to control household space, applying the

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<sup>395</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, *Women Pleas'd*, 244.

<sup>396</sup> Howell, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:63](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:63) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 63.

<sup>397</sup> Tilley, 269.

<sup>398</sup> Shakespeare, 3.3.142-143.

derogatory term ‘cotquean’ to men who meddled with domestic concerns.”<sup>399</sup> The woman’s education in both the practical and theoretical aspects of housewifery, household management, and food production determined that she was rightfully the authority in the kitchen, and this was supported by entertaining depictions of strong and crafty housewives or effeminate men who meddled in kitchen affairs.<sup>400</sup> This level of authority and responsibility was a trade off with the doctrine of coverture, wherein the woman’s status in the public sector was under that of her husband.<sup>401</sup>

Even Markham acknowledged the grey area outside masculine authority. In “A broth for any fresh fish,” the choice on flavor additions was left up to “the fancy of the cook, *or* the will of the householder.”<sup>402</sup> The choice of ingredients was a matter of taste and cost, and both men and women had opinions on those matters. When the choice is about cooking technique, Markham gives the discretion wholly to the housewife, “that is as please the cook.”<sup>403</sup> Housewives and cooks also had the authority to dole out the products of their labor, for even “what the good wife spares the cat eats.”<sup>404</sup> Disruption in the kitchen, from missing tools to misbehaving servants, threatened the housewife’s authority by limiting her ability to perform her gender-determined duties. Gammer Gurton’s missing needle is a prime, though somewhat exaggerated, example of such disruption. Her servants lamented over the loss of the needle, a phallic symbol of authority, that they and Gammer would rather have her bones or her comfortable chair be

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<sup>399</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 205.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>402</sup> Emphasis added. Markham, 79.

<sup>403</sup> “To boil any wild fowl,” Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Clarke, 242, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:8454:131](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:8454:131) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 131.

broken, because the missing needle rendered Gammer domestically impotent.<sup>405</sup> The play ends, unsurprisingly, with the discovery of the lost needle and the return of Gammer's authority, accompanied by the rejection of Diccon's attempted meddling in housewifely affairs. Whether Diccon and the Cambridge student audience he represented "surrender[ed] their carnivalesque power back to the fantasized household" or that the end of the play shows the return of the household to a level of feminine unimportance is a matter of perspective.<sup>406</sup> From all perspectives, however, patriarchal philosophers, busy husbands, and theatrical audiences alike, it was unquestionable that "all is well when the Mistresse smiles."<sup>407</sup>

Housewife authority was most apparent in her relationship with her servants, both male and female. The size of a household and its means would determine the tasks of the individual servant. Mendelson and Crawford demonstrate that "at one extreme, large noble households included a host of live-in female personnel allotted to precise vocational niches...Lower down the social scale...a female work routine which took on an increasingly multioccupational character."<sup>408</sup> Women, with their education in the multiple skills of housewifery, were in many ways more useful for the small, mixed farming predominant during the period.<sup>409</sup> Jane Whittle's survey of probate documents confirms this preference for multi-occupational female servants, "differentiating wage rates in terms of age or general descriptions such as 'best woman servant' and 'common servant.'"<sup>410</sup> In any case, the housewife needed to supervise and manage all household

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<sup>405</sup> Stevenson, 8.

<sup>406</sup> Wall, "Household," 10.

<sup>407</sup> Howell, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:14](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:14) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 14.

<sup>408</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 102.

<sup>409</sup> Whittle, 56.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 62.

servants in their tasks, and therefore needed to have a working knowledge of all of the domestic industries to insure their proper execution.

Some female servants served in an apprenticeship-style manner, learning housewifery for a future of work in specialized fields like dairying and textile manufacturing or as the mistress of her own household.<sup>411</sup> The good maidservant, through both learning and executing domestic production, satisfied not only her mistress but herself as well, “for by her Industry she may come one day to be Mistress over others.”<sup>412</sup> The housewife, despite the assistance of servants, worked continuously as well, as exemplified by Lady Hoby, who “was evidently a pious and efficient lady who kept her women servants busy by her own example.”<sup>413</sup> No matter the means and resources of her household, none was so high that the housewife herself was not directly involved in day-to-day foodstuff production. The utilization of servants did, however, relieve her of some of the domestic drudgery so that she could assist her husband in his business or community service, reinforcing her social status.<sup>414</sup> There was a hierarchy within the staff which is apparent in the tasks accorded to them by the female head-of-house, particularly in regards to what the housewife saw as worthy of her own time versus what could be left to the lowest of servants. Amanda Flather identifies this hierarchy in serving meals, where the housewife directly served her husband his meal but then merely supervised as the female servants served her and the rest of the diners.<sup>415</sup> On the other hand, the menial, time-consuming, and less-complex chore of laundry was beneath the more important

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<sup>411</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 94.

<sup>412</sup> Woolley, 122.

<sup>413</sup> Molly Harrison, 52.

<sup>414</sup> Clark, 294.

<sup>415</sup> Flather, 66.

responsibilities of the busy housewife and was therefore delegated to female servants or professional laundresses.<sup>416</sup>

Servants of all types were essential for the maintenance of a proper rural manor or urban household and were employed by any one that could afford even one helping hand, and “thus a significant proportion of the adolescent female population were servants of one kind or another.”<sup>417</sup> The duties and expectations required of a servant depended upon the means and needs of the mistress and her family, as well as the maidservant’s own family and status, to endless variation.<sup>418</sup> Servants could encompass everyone from the lowly dairymaid to the fostered nobleman’s son, and so “there was nothing inferior in being a servant,” and a majority of society served at one point or another during the lifecycle.<sup>419</sup> There was constant two-way communication of ideals and expectations between housewives and their help, “an exchange of knowledge and skill...between the classes that made everyone familiar with new foods and tastes.”<sup>420</sup>

It was a woman’s right and responsibility, according to John Brinsley’s treatise on female behavior in 1645, to “rule over her *Children* and *Servants*...as much as God hath made them subject to her.”<sup>421</sup> “Duties towards dependents” occupied much of the time for women, as they were responsible for both the education and performance of their servants, everything from settling conflicts between servants to teaching them Christian piety.<sup>422</sup> The standards for servant behavior were established by the master and mistress of the house, and enforcement of those rules was subject to the mistress’s

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<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>417</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 94.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Molly Harrison, 50.

<sup>420</sup> Thirsk, *Food*, 208.

<sup>421</sup> Brinsley, 38-39, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:113261:22](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:113261:22) (accessed November 14, 2013). image 22.

<sup>422</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 309.

temperament, and in extreme cases servants were given physical discipline or even abused.<sup>423</sup> One method of punishing misbehaving or untrustworthy servants was to evict them if they were residents of the house; this was a gendered punishment, where records show that mistresses could throw out female servants directly, but evicting adult male servants required her husband's action.<sup>424</sup> Dame Chat went as far to threaten her rival Gurton's servant with physical correction, stating that if she had him alone, she "wold surely rap thy costard."<sup>425</sup> The displeasure of Gammer at her lost needle was felt by her maidservant Tyb and the kitchen boy Cocke "on our bones," and Tyb wished that she had "ben hence a myle" in order to avoid her wrath.<sup>426</sup> The housewife got better results from her servants when she applied positive methods, even when she might feel otherwise, as in the common phrase "the Ladie kisses her man for his Masters sake."<sup>427</sup> The mistress of the house lived and worked in close quarters with her servants and so it behooved all of them to cultivate strong, friendly relationships. The shared time and emotional bond between superiors and servants "made it difficult for either party to see the relationship in purely economic terms," and this relationship crossed social and economic boundaries through common experiences.<sup>428</sup>

The hardworking and humble servant was the ideal, and she who stayed busy throughout the day and respected her betters with a curtesy "was cald her mistres' floure."<sup>429</sup> The most talented of housekeepers or nurses, an old proverb warned, "spoil's a huswife" by taking care of all her needs and thereby excusing the housewife from hard

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<sup>423</sup> Molly Harrison, 49.

<sup>424</sup> Flather, 50.

<sup>425</sup> Stevenson, 58.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>427</sup> Cotgrave, "Dame," [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:134](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:134) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 134.

<sup>428</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 237.

<sup>429</sup> Thomas Churchyard, poem quoted in Molly Harrison, 51.

work.<sup>430</sup> It was the duty of the servant to remember that which the housewife had taught him or her and utilize that knowledge for the good of the household daily.<sup>431</sup> It was shameful, on the other hand, to insult or undercut your employer, as displayed by Hodge's reluctance to insult his mistress Gammer in his gossiping with interloper Diccon, "My gammer (cham ashamed to say) by god served me not weele."<sup>432</sup> Just as for the mistress, maintaining a positive relationship was beneficial for servants, and going against such was harmful to the balance within the household. Such close relationships could have economic benefits as well, as illustrated by the common practice of leaving bequests to underpaid female servants in wills.<sup>433</sup>

The housewife's authority and the products of her labor became tools of social advancement through hospitality. A wife's education in social graces and manners was useful in her performance as the hostess of guests of all sorts at her table. From laborers at harvest time to travelling nobility, the hostess needed to be aware of how to cater to the needs of all sorts, and proper treatment of guests could lead to social advancements for the housewife's family. Serving guests at one's own table allowed a master (and mistress) "a unique opportunity to define the social standing of everyone eating at his tables," by everything from their place at the table to the content of their meal.<sup>434</sup> The legendary precedent for the importance of good hospitality was in the tale of King Lud, whose table was always arrayed with basic foods from eight in the morning to seven in the evening for all in need, as laid out in Edward IV's *Black Book* of royal household regulations in

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<sup>430</sup> Howell, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:6](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:199516:6) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 6.

<sup>431</sup> Woolley, 121.

<sup>432</sup> Stevenson, 19.

<sup>433</sup> Whittle, 56.

<sup>434</sup> Peter Brears, *All the King's Cooks: Tudor Kitchens of King Henry VIII at Hampton Court Palace*, 2nd ed. (London: Souvenir Press Ltd., 2011), 23.



1472.<sup>435</sup> This ability to provide sustenance to guests of all types was prized by the self-sufficient middling sort as well. The majority of food preparation in the housewife's kitchen went to feed the many fulltime servants and day laborers who made up the majority of household eaters.<sup>436</sup> At the other end of the scale, serving important visitors of equal or greater status provided social and economic opportunities, as illustrated when Master Page in *Merry Wives* calls upon his wife's hospitality skills to greet the noble Sir John Falstaff and his travelling companions with "Wife, bid these gentlemen welcome.—Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner. Come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness."<sup>437</sup> Here both the wife as hostess and her domestic products of game pie and ale served as diplomatic tools for the ambitious Master Page. The well-stocked and self-sufficient manor was essential for hospitality, for "he that has breams in his pond is able to bid his friend welcome."<sup>438</sup> Successful hospitality in the middling household, though, required the skillful use of these raw materials through food preparation and female social interactions, for only "a cheerefull looke fills vp halfe-emptie dishes."<sup>439</sup>

Men certainly noticed these female social skills and remarked upon both their utility and their attractiveness. Men ate, and therefore men were interested in food consumption and food production, even when they were not directly involved in the processes of cooking. These skills directly affected men in a number of ways, from

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>436</sup> Whittle, 63.

<sup>437</sup> Shakespeare, 1.1.180-182.

<sup>438</sup> Isaak Walton, *The Universal angler, made so, by three books of fishing the first written by Mr. Izaak Walton, the second by Charles Cotton Esq., the third by Col. Robert Venables ; all which may be bound together, or sold each of them severally* (London: Richard Marriot 1676), 178, Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:53581:103](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:53581:103) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 103.

<sup>439</sup> Cotgrave, "Més," [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:311](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:311) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 311.

consumption to social interaction. Men used the products of women's kitchen work to represent their household in community events such as bride-ales and purifications of women.<sup>440</sup> This utilization of woman's culinary hospitality by her husband brought the wife outside of her kitchen in the obligations of "good neighbourhood," from serving strangers at her home to bringing remedies to ill neighbors. Yet she remained within her private designation since she represented her husband's household and its products rather than herself, thereby avoiding any of the "complicating constructions" or mixed messages about a woman's place.<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, men linked the experience of food production and dining with the women themselves who provided that experience. The Duke of Siena in *Women Pleas'd* remarks at the absence of his hostess, "But Where's my virtuous Mistriss, such a Feast, And not her sparkling beauty here to bless it? Methinks it should not be, it shews not fully."<sup>442</sup> More crudely, the rambunctious male characters of Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene's 1594 *A Looking Glasse for London and England* expected their ale at the local tavern to be complete with female company, for "a cup of Ale without a wench, why alas tis like an egge without salt, or a red hering without mustard."<sup>443</sup> Within the home, too, men admired women's hospitality, particularly in the apportioning of meat. Housewives during this period took on the duty of carving the meat at the table and apportioning it to her table guests, a duty that formerly belonged to the head male servant and so was considered very masculine. The ability of a woman to skillfully handle flesh took on sexual overtones, exemplified by Falstaff's reasons why he

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<sup>440</sup> William Harrison, 131.

<sup>441</sup> Flather, 31.

<sup>442</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, *Women Pleas'd*, 271.

<sup>443</sup> Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene, *A Looking Glasse for London and England: A Critical Edition* (1594), ed. George Alan Clugston, Renaissance Drama: A Collection of Critical Editions (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1980), 139.

is attracted to Mistress Ford, “I spy entertainment in her: she discourses, *she carves*, she gives the leer of invitation.”<sup>444</sup> The housewife’s skills in food production, such as the carving of meat, could provide male consumers like Falstaff with entertainment and satisfaction, both culinary and sexual, simultaneously.

Women used hospitality differently with female friends, family, and neighbors. Women, through the traditional female network, “participated in and even managed a precapitalist gift-exchange system...circulated food, cloth and clothing, jewelry, animals, medicines, cash, prayers, relics, and favors.”<sup>445</sup> Housewives chose to share the products of their labor, such as marmalades made with precious sugar and homegrown fruit, in a less formal manner than the codified hospitality at the table. Hospitality could also become charity through the sharing of domestic goods with the less fortunate, as recommended by Markham in his chapter on dairy production, “the best use of buttermilk for the able housewife is charitably to bestow it on the poor neighbours, whose wants do daily cry out for sustenance: and no doubt but she shall find the profit thereof in a divine place, as well as in her earthly business.”<sup>446</sup> These private transactions typically avoided the written records on household management, and instead are located in the private letters, receipt books, and oral testimony in court records, the methods of female communication.<sup>447</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, in their extensive review of female court testimony, have found incidental remarks describing the transaction of goods for profit or charity outside of commercial markets and their official paperwork. For

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<sup>444</sup> Emphasis added. Shakespeare, 1.3.41-42.

<sup>445</sup> Jane Donawerth, “Women’s Poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of Gift Exchange,” in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*, eds. Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove, and Karen Nelson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>446</sup> Markham, 174.

<sup>447</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 219.

instance, the case of *Elizabeth Buller alias Busby v. William Buller* [1633] revolved around the ownership of a large brass kettle originally belonging to Elizabeth, which testimony of neighbors and family revealed, along with an exhaustive list of Elizabeth's personal possessions, that Elizabeth had sold the kettle to her brother John for 18s. in order to buy new clothing.<sup>448</sup> Women often used alternative methods of distribution and exchange of goods outside of the officially established lines of commerce, whether as a gifts to strengthen neighborly bonds, such as the sharing of prized cordials, or a means of manipulating their economic resources, like the pawning of plate or linens to a friend in order to acquire extra cash.

Women's authority in the kitchen gave them access to economic means and required them to develop an understanding, whether by education or on-the-job experience, of basic household management of money and resources. Women were aware of their value in economic terms from a young age and linked its price to the role of the housewife because of their dowry. Brides were appealing to men because of their monetary value, as exemplified in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by Evans' interest in Anne Page over the seven hundred pounds bequeathed to her by her grandfather, calling them "good gifts."<sup>449</sup> Women also understood the value of a dowry and their labor, and used them to have a say in their marriage and future.<sup>450</sup> Somewhat callously, some men enjoyed the fortune of keeping a dowry upon the death of their wives, spawning the saying "a dead wife's the best goods in a mans house."<sup>451</sup> In the opposite situation, a

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>449</sup> Shakespeare, 1.1.56-57.

<sup>450</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 122.

<sup>451</sup> Ray (1678), 58, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:65242:34](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:65242:34) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 34.

woman's education regarding money management was a vital attribute in her widowhood.<sup>452</sup>

Written records like court testimony “give the impression that young women had an image in mind of the minimal amount of resources in cash and goods needed to set up a household appropriate to their social level.”<sup>453</sup> *Heartless Harry: or Dolls Earnest Desire to be Married*, a late sixteenth-century ballad, illustrates this awareness of household value necessary for marriage. Doll soothes her love's concern about their financial state if they marry, “I have Wealth enuff in store, the Sum of forty Shilling. With Piggs, Ducks, Geese and haushold stuff, all left by my old Grannum.”<sup>454</sup> Once acquired, housewives managed money and valuable resources on a daily basis and were expected to understand the economic impact of their work. Physically, the mistress of the house held the keys to the coffers, controlling the valuables and money stored within her home.<sup>455</sup> Some of those who were literate chose to record this in household records, accounts, and commonplace books regarding their spending on supplies, payroll for servants, and their profits from selling excess domestic products.<sup>456</sup> Here are the new subjects of housewifery education of reading, writing, and basic arithmetic in action, like those taught by Nathaniel Bacon to Jane Tutoff's daughter, helping to assist and affirm the housewife's economic authority. These accountings might be perused and signed by

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<sup>452</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 177.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid, 122-123.

<sup>454</sup> Francis Douce, *Heartless Harry: or Dolls Earnest Desire to be Married*, Douce Ballads I 94a, Broadside Ballads Online from the Bodleian Libraries (1671-1704) <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/static/images/sheets/DouceBalladsI/asa0186-m.jpg>.

<sup>455</sup> Flather, 46-47.

<sup>456</sup> Molly Harrison, 66.

the master of the house, like the Earl of Bedford in Woburn Abbey's "Kitchen-Book," but the keeping of records on household expenditures was a female duty.<sup>457</sup>

The products of a middling housewife's labor were almost wholly profitable for her family, save the cost of a few imported ingredients and servants' wages.<sup>458</sup> A good housewife became proficient at "capitaliz[ing] on the connections between different areas of household production and consumption," efficiently using every ounce of valuable resources like poultry, from eggs to feathers.<sup>459</sup> The conservative rural middling sort condemned overspending and wasting since they could affect the family's overall status, for "a fat kitchin, and a leane purse grow quickly neighbours."<sup>460</sup> Status, for this demographic, was constantly in flux and the efficient utilization of resources essential in bolstering and defending that status.

Profits of housewifery were literal when women sold their goods at market for monetary gain. Whether selling the excess not consumed by family or as a professional, women's for-profit goods and services usually mimicked or were a part of housewife duties like spinning or serving in a tavern.<sup>461</sup> A remarkable example of this is a woman famed for her puddings who made all of those eaten by King Henry VIII in his private dining chamber while he was at Hampton Court, which she was paid 6s 8d for from the Privy Purse expenses in 1536.<sup>462</sup> She could also serve in her husband's business, if need required, carrying on in the same accounting, buying supplies, and interacting with

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Clark, 64.

<sup>459</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, 224.

<sup>460</sup> Cotgrave, "Povreté," [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:376](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:376) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 376.

<sup>461</sup> Hull, *Women*, 148-149.

<sup>462</sup> Brears, 113.

customers that she did within the home.<sup>463</sup> Subsequently it could be said that the wife had “all the rule of her husband’s purse,” both private and public.<sup>464</sup> That could serve well or ill, depending upon the spousal relationship. Sir John Falstaff tried to take advantage of the housewife Mistress Ford’s authority over her husband’s coffers by trying to strike up an affair with the woman to gain her confidence.<sup>465</sup> Cuckoldry, then, had more repercussions than just on the husband’s pride, but rather his purse as well.

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<sup>463</sup> Clark, 156.

<sup>464</sup> Shakespeare, 1.3.49-50.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 2.2.257-261.

## CONCLUSION

### REPUTATION

The hard work of the housewife ultimately reflected her reputation, which was informed by the various sources that defined housewifery and its domestic industries, from oral lessons from a mother to popular songs and sayings. In this it differed strikingly from the male legal philosophy of coverture which insisted that a woman was subsumed under her husband as one person at the time of marriage. Housewife culture developed a reputation for women complementary to—but outside of—her husband’s reputation. For every positive attribute there was a negative attribute: “if long, she is lazy, if little, she is lowde, If fayre, she is slutish, if foule, she is prowd.”<sup>466</sup> All were attributed because of the actions of the woman herself, rather than based on her husband’s standing alone. The reputation of a woman was a valuable commodity to both men and women. Both judged female reputation based on performance in or suitability for marriage, which was a combination of housewifery and sexuality. The church courts, which regulated matters of social conduct, became known as “women’s court” because of their heavy use by female litigants to settle matters of reputation.<sup>467</sup> The avenues of female culture emphasized or fortified reputation, positively through the sharing of

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<sup>466</sup> Florio, 188, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:2501:100](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:2501:100) (accessed November 14, 2013), image 100.

<sup>467</sup> Frances E. Dolan, “Women in the Law Courts” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 143.



advice and negatively through gossip. As with the rest of female culture, the idea of female reputation stayed within the private, domestic, hardworking conservative *status quo* demanded of women by their male relatives and spouses, while at the same time building pockets of subversive personal growth.

While men did not emphasize female reputation in the same way as women, they did acknowledge the importance of good character in daily life. A well-reputed girl or woman was an asset to her prospective husband, as it indicated proficiency at housewifery, whereas “a gazing and gadding maid seld proues good houswife.”<sup>468</sup> The lyrics of a 1680 song composed of old English proverbs declared that “sluts are good enough to make Slovens porridge,” indicating that the reputation of a cook and housewife transferred to the products of her labor and all that it entailed.<sup>469</sup> In the reverse, foods like stewed prunes had their own gendered attributes which reflected back on to women’s reputations, in this case as a male aphrodisiac served frequently at brothels and a synonym for prostitutes used in several of Shakespeare’s plays.<sup>470</sup> Being a good wife naturally meant being a good housewife, proficient in all the domestic arts and industries. By learning, doing, and succeeding at food production and domestic services, women fulfilled men’s traditional ideal of the wife. However, the authority, creativity, and community created by the housewife’s labors developed a simultaneous alternative identity within the realm of female culture. The balance between the powerful speech and actions required of women to manage her household and the consequences of pushing too

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<sup>468</sup> Cotgrave, “Fille,” [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:221](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7666:221), image 221.

<sup>469</sup> *The youngmans careless wooing; and the witty maids replication; all done out of old English proverbs. : to the tune of, Mars and Venus* (London: P. Brooksby, 1680), Early English Books Online, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:174257](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:174257) (accessed November 14, 2013).

<sup>470</sup> Francine Segan, *Shakespeare’s Kitchen: Renaissance Recipes for the Contemporary Cook* (New York: Random House, 2003), 19.

far into male authority (the shrew who wears the breeches) was a precarious tightrope that the housewife had to navigate each and every day to establish her place and meaning within her own kitchen and society at large.

For women, it seems, reputation went beyond its economic and marital consequences, into that female realm where words, emotions, and advice held so much sway. These were matters solely between women, settled through traditional means inside the long-established and constantly-renewed networks of female culture. It called upon the experiences of a lifetime and the memories of a family and community. Gammer reminds Dame Chat that she has never stolen from her in twenty years, and therefore this lineage was the basis to resolve their conflict over the possibly missing domestic goods of the sewing needle and the rooster (both household possessions typically under female authority).<sup>471</sup> Only when they call in the various prominent characters of their mutual community does the true state of their honesty come to light, drawing upon collective reasoning to determine fault and distribute resources.<sup>472</sup> The housewife gained credit in her community through her domestic labor, through acts such as administering an effective fever remedy to an elderly widow, hosting local business associates and their wives with a generous multicourse feast, and befriending nearby women during shared trips to the nearest market to sell excess eggs. In the currency of reputation women found avenues to foster female culture, form female networks, and reward female labor.

The housewife trope in popular culture relied upon these values of female culture, either to praise them in the figure of the Good Housewife or to satirize them in

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<sup>471</sup> Stevenson, 35.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

comedic form. The housewife identity was ultimately a construct of reputation, recorded in the words and works of the woman in her kitchen. She, as a central part of female culture, both borrowed from and rejected male ideas of feminine identity, and similarly borrowed from and rejected male ideas of cookery in her handwritten receipt books. The housewife received numerous messages about who she should be and how she should act, and from the record it is clear that, at least in her own kitchen, she made the choice of how she would interpret and use that information to better her own life. Herein was her true strength as a symbol for early-modern English society, the ability to grow and produce despite overwhelming obstacles and established constructs. The fruits of the housewife's labor were both the product of and the reason for the development of the housewife role, for food and food production is vital for the survival of the human race. Women had the unique opportunity to have a modicum of authority in this essential task, even while they were oppressed within the culture at large. The housewife may not have been able to leave the private realm, but she could extend out her hand and invite you into her realm, the kitchen, with "If euer ye loue me, let vs go in and drinke."<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 70.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

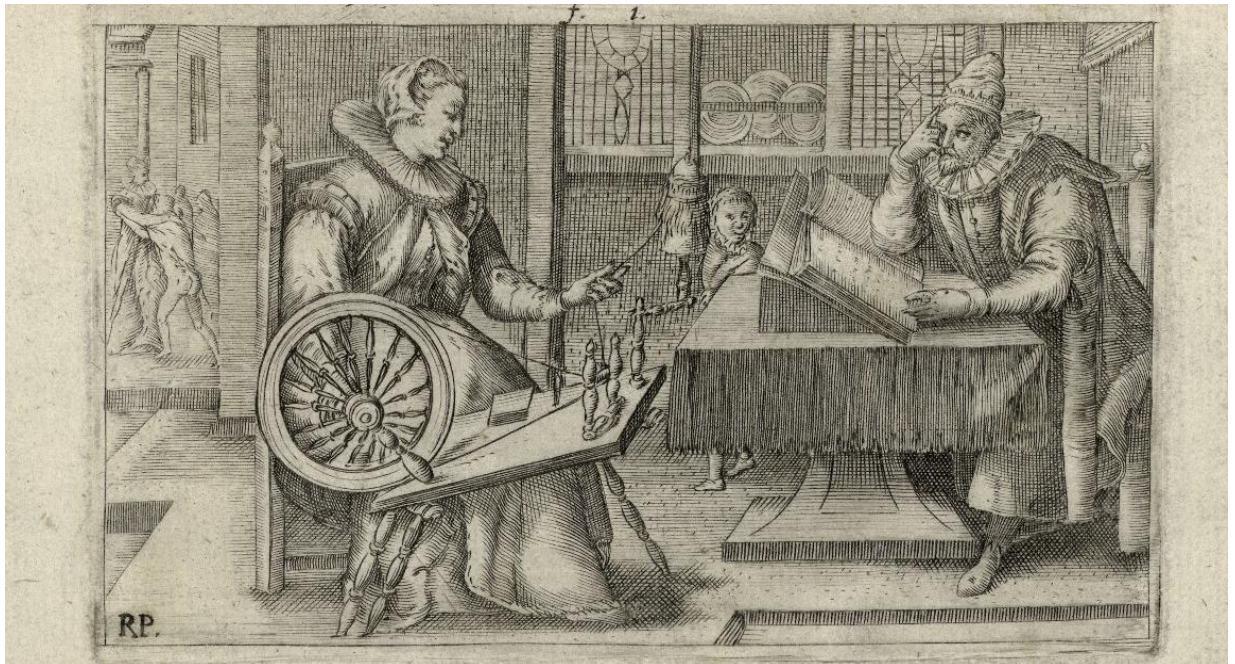
### VISUALIZING THE HOUSEWIFE: A PICTORIAL ESSAY ON GENDER ROLES IN THE EARLY-MODERN KITCHEN



“Ecclesiasticus the 25th Chapter.” *Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608*. 1608. MS V.b.232.

By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library. <http://luna.folger.edu/>.

1. The ideal middling wife and husband stand side by side in the image accompanying the 25th chapter of Ecclesiastics, which warns the reader about the dangers of a wicked wife. Ultimately, the virtue of a wife was a direct reflection of her husband and her household, and that virtue was determined by her actions and dedication in housewifery as much as piety and spirituality.



“Image 13 – woman spinning.” *English customs*. 1628. STC (2nd ed.), 10408.7.

By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library. <http://luna.folger.edu/>.

2. While the newly-literate housewife had begun to record her own advice about housewifery, typically the male was the source of knowledge and learning in the home and on the published page while the female put such knowledge in to action. Female education now included the masculine skills of the literary arts, but it was relegated to appropriate topics for the virtuous and hardworking housewife. On the other hand, male authors crossed over to female topics in guidebooks to help sculpt the housewife role despite not actually participating in those tasks.





"Boasting." *Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608*. 1608. MS V.b.232.

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3. Thomas Trevelyon represents the vice of boasting in the form of a woman and her goods. The housewife's work had both monetary and moral value for herself and her household. It is unsurprising, therefore, that male authors and family members of both genders had much to say about the education and performance of women in housewifery.





“December hath 31 dayes.” *Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608*. 1608. MS V.b.232.

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4. Our middling rural housewife is representative of her class and region, and her actions reflect the desires and goals of her demographic. The housewife's role as producer and hostess firmly represented the values of the middling sort, such as self sufficiency, while also serving as a means to improve the household's standing in the Great Chain of Being. Here she serves a man of greater means, whether a visiting nobleman, wealthier neighbor, or landlord, with the products of her own household, opening doors for both social interaction and economic opportunities.





“The Strumpet inticing / The young man yielding.” *Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608*. 1608.  
MS V.b.232.

By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.  
<http://luna.folger.edu/>.

5. A young woman's skills in cookery and domestic production were attractive attributes to the prospective bridegroom, both for his own potential lifestyle and the future economic viability of his home. Whether as a strumpet enticing a gullible young man or a hardworking young maid gaining the eye of an advantageous suitor, women's performance of housewife duties was an essential part of her sexual and matrimonial attractiveness and the kitchen served as a site of gender negotiation between spouses throughout the lifespan of an early modern marriage.





“Les femmes à table en l’absence de leurs maris.” *Print by Abraham Bosse. ca 1636.*  
ART 264930 (size M). By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.  
<http://luna.folger.edu/>.

6. The kitchen and the dining table also provided women with opportunities to facilitate female networks through the sharing of recipes, dining together, and sharing workloads. Here, as the caption illustrates, a group of women used the opportunity of a single-gender meal to speak freely and enjoy the products of their labors.





“Woman points to man carrying basket of horns.” *English customs*. 1628.  
STC (2nd ed.), 10408.7. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.  
<http://luna.folger.edu/>.

7. By necessity the housewife ran her kitchen with a high degree of authority, decision making, and independence. Husbands and male authors, however, could feel threatened by the reach of the English housewife, and in literature she is often portrayed as attempting to usurp the male dominant role. This image depicting a wife who has cuckolded her husband illustrates this spousal betrayal not with an expected image of sexual depravity but with the reversal of matrimonial authority over labor. The housewife walked a fine line between successfully fulfilling her enormous responsibilities and remaining within her subservient role in the household social hierarchy.





"Malice." *Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608*. 1608. MS V.b.232.

By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library. <http://luna.folger.edu/>.

8. The housewife's authority over servants of both genders tempted some women to verbally and physically confront their charges, from mild nagging to a striking blow to eviction. Trevelyon again chooses to use the female domestic role to illustrate moral failings and potential vices, exaggerating the housewife's berating to symbolize Malice and exemplifying the cultural trepidation over female domestic authority.







*Royal, military, and court costumes of the time of James I. ART Vol. c91 no.7d. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library. <http://luna.folger.edu/>.*

10. The rural, middling housewife of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries symbolized her sex, class, and household everyday in her knowledge and labor in the kitchen. Astride a horse indicative of her moderate wealth and the importance of her task, this housewife carries the fruits of her domestic labor to market to contribute to the economic and social value of her household within her community. Her authority and abilities as an individual woman in the kitchen were moderated by patriarchal insistence that her accomplishments be subsumed as representative of her household. Even riding into the outside world, she carried the goals and goods of her private realm as her purpose, the physical embodiment of the gendered role of housewifery.