Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing

Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium

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11 Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England

Sara Pennell

In his curious heraldic anthology, *The Academy of Armory*, the maverick Randall Holme declared:

> let Cooks study new Dish-meats, and work out their Brains when they have done all they can, there is but four sorts of Meat which they can properly, and with safety work upon, viz. Flesh of Beasts ... of Fowle ... of Fish, and Field Fruits: and these again are according to their kinds, either Stewed, Boiled, Parboiled, Fryed, Broiled, Roasted, Baked, Hashed, Pickled, Souced, or made into Sweet-Meats. Nil Ultra.[1]

There may have been little more that early modern cooks could have concocted from available resources, but what they did produce was communicated not only in the dish itself, but also in the form of the recipe.[2] Central to this essay is an examination of the recipe as a gendered knowledge form, one which carried particular resonances for the women who gathered, and as we shall see, shaped, recipes in manuscript compilations, and for those who (with increasing visibility from circa 1650 onwards) were identified as authors of published culinary works. The particular character of women's culinary knowledge, and the conduits for that knowledge, emerge distinctly from seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century recipe collections.

This essay also examines the relationship between cookery as a form of practicable knowledge with recipes as its chief medium, and the status of such knowledge in the early modern European culture of experimentation and the 'new' natural and chemical philosophy, disseminated by the likes of Samuel Hartlib, Robert Boyle and by innovative institutions like the Royal Society. Writing about this culture and the communication of 'secrets' (the contemporary term often applied to scientific prescriptions

and medical remedies) William Eamon contends that 'we trust recipes because we know that behind them stands someone who does not use them' (7). To counter this somewhat anachronistic view, I want to demonstrate that the validity of the early modern recipe is only partly dependent upon the authority of the person who originated it, and who could have once been said to own it (a complex pedigree to trace, in any case). Rather, I want to focus on the ways in which such recipes had to be constantly used, in order to be validated, the mobility that such use required, and the part played by women in that process of validation.

It is important here to consider the nature of the 'text' in question; both in isolation (the recipe) and aggregate (the manuscript compilation). The recipe is central to comprehending culinary actions; indeed Karen Hess, an American food historian, contends that 'the story of cookery is in the recipes, if we but had them all' (47). Yet this is too sanguine a view for early modern recipes, indeed for any recipe. It also overlooks the fact that the story of cookery is not all that recipes in manuscript or published form can be seized upon to supply. The most pessimistic definition of the recipe is that given by another culinary historian Jean-François Revel, for whom recipes have a dark side, like the moon:

> a written recipe is far removed from the finished product. Between the two there lies the indefinable domain of tricks and knacks and basic tastes that are always implicit, never explained in so many words, because the books are addressed to people who speak the same language (112).

Recipes depend on a common practitioners' argot, which is partially revelatory, and yet also exclusionary. They also contain omissions, at which point the user must respond from the basis of common sense or knowledge. Eamon is slightly more positive, arguing that recipes are a clarified, even simplified inscription of memory, reliable simply through the fact of being registered: the inscription of the recipe is the 'completion [of] the trial itself' (Eamon, 7, 131, 360). A third reading likewise conceives the recipe as practical instruction, but one that assumes an almost proverbial status, especially once 'fixed' in a format that can be widely disseminated (Charsley, 32-34).

If the recipe is to be understood as a usually (but not exclusively) textual crystallisation of culinary knowledge, then the variety of these texts and their interaction requires study. The recipe as text arguably first achieved significance when the pre-eminence of oral transmission was under threat. The sociologist Jack Goody presents the written recipe as a constraint upon the accumulation and diversification of culinary knowledge

(*Domestication*, 143), while Eamon argues a more positivistic line: the printed recipe text 'standardizes and widens the repertoire of the practitioner' (132). However, the textual inscription of recipes arguably achieves neither of these things fully. The textual recipe is neither as inclusive nor as fixed as Eamon hopes, nor as restricting and ossifying as Goody fears. It carries with it only a conditional credibility, and might be more usefully described as 'unprotected' format, where transmission, rather than 'the trial itself', shapes received forms (Zetzel, 111). Recipes are the ultimately fluid text, through which practice can be constantly refined, but in which form the reproduction of actions can never be perfected. Indeed, the Latin root of recipe in *recipere*, to receive, embodies the mobility of the information carried by the text.[3]

Recipes and the manuscript and published cookery collections in which they appear are not the stuff of which literary and intellectual histories are normally made. Yet, notwithstanding Randall Holme's view of the limited world of culinary invention, cookery literature was an attractively viable non-fiction 'genre' for publishers and booksellers in the early modern period. Between 1650 and 1750, no fewer than 106 'new' culinary texts and 169 subsequent editions of texts already in print were published in the English language, in England, Scotland and Ireland.[4] This was an era in which culinary abilities were at once increasingly marketable (with the growing demand for domestic servants in urban centres), but less likely to be learned at one's mother's knee by those entering into service, especially in the variety demanded by ever-diversifying tastes. And while cookery skills of certain types — pastry- and confectionery-making, distilling — remained definitional for women of genteel and noble social standing, as they had been for the Lady Grace Mildmays of earlier generations, they also embraced attributes increasingly commended as desirably female: self-sufficiency and the maintenance of distinctively English habits, notably frugality, and domestic (in explicit contrast to commercial) expertise.[5] The diversification of domestic literature out from the socially circumscribed precious 'closet open'd' genre of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries meant that the rhetoric of this particular seam of femaleness was increasingly preached inclusively (albeit with subtle socio-economic shadings). The 'compleat housewife' emerged not only as a household ideal, but as a national exemplar by the early eighteenth century.[6]

Early modern manuscript recipe collections are arguably less inclusive than their published counterparts, given that they often depended on compilation by someone who was able to write as well as to read.[7] As Wendy Wall has argued, participation by women in the construction and circulation of manuscript texts was a 'bid for gentility', against

involvement in a developing print culture which sought to construct a 'common audience'.[8] Recipe collections are also much less studied as a form of manuscript; Arthur Marotti, for example, noted that medicinal recipes often constituted part of what is 'miscellaneous' about early modern verse miscellanies (19). The early modern manuscript recipe or household compilation is certainly an amorphous creature, born of the many varieties of manuscript writing — verse miscellanies, table books, adversaria — which were components of the self-directed humanist education of high-status men and women. Yet the negligible 'literary' component of such collections arguably consigns them to that period of compilation in which Peter Beal has noted the 'sense of specialness' of manuscript practices was 'dispersed' (Beal, 142-44).[9]

Indeed, the bulk of the inclusions in receipt or household books reflect broad culinary, medical and other domestic interests, just as the status (where it is known or can be deduced) of their named, but often otherwise anonymous authors reflects a permeation of the practice of compiling such volumes beyond close-knit literary coteries into the pedagogic habits of the middling sorts (Beal, 142, 146; Ezell, 28-29, 58). The travelling of such collections along female kin lines also offers an important historical context for discussing the gendered and socialising characteristics of the dissemination of practical competence which Goody has discussed in relation to modern non-traditional societies (*Cooking*, 151, 190; *Domestication*, 140-42). The genre was ridiculed by Samuel Johnson, who presented a mid-eighteenth-century parody of the quasi-alchemical but entirely illegible 'secrets' of one Lady Bustle's inherited manuscript 'oracle' (in volume 51 of *The Rambler*). Even so, the manuscript collection in question is presented as a particularly female construction, and moreover, a highly-valued focus of inter-generational routes for female-to-female communication: Lady Bustle's volume is described by Johnson's narrator as a 'treasure of hereditary knowledge ... used by her grandmother, her mother and herself' (277).

Just such a bequest was recorded by Rebecca Brandreth, a gentlewoman of Houghton Regis (Bedfordshire), who specified in her will of 10 April 1740 the descent to her daughter, Alice, of her two manuscript collections:

> one of which said Books being for Surgery and physick and the other for Cookery and Preserves ... on the inside of the Lidds of each of them is mentioned that they were written in the year 1681 by Rebecca Price (that being my Maiden name) and written by myself. (Masson and Vaughan, 345).[10]

This description is also invaluable for what else it reveals about the practices of collecting recipes. Since other manuscript collections repeat Brandreth's division between medicinal and culinary prescriptions, the compilation of such manuscripts would seem to adhere to certain understood 'rules' or procedures; but no contemporary text has been found which explicitly details such conventions.[11]

Lorna J. Sass has suggested that recipes included in manuscripts were 'written down because they had been tasted or tried and known to be good', but this is a narrow view of motivations to compilation and communication (26). Brandreth's commencement of her collections while she was still unmarried (she married Nehemiah Brandreth in 1683) suggests that the inscription of a recipe collection was akin to amassing a non-monetary dowry. Other volumes indicate that these were also pages in which to hone one's handwriting. The neatly written volume begun by Mary Granville in the late seventeenth century ends with recipes copied out in a much more childish hand, on lines expressly ruled for that purpose, replete with mistakes, crossings-through and interlineations (Folger MS V.a.430, esp. pp.204, 207, 209-10, 214-15).[12]

The assertion by Brandreth that her volumes were 'written by myself' reveals another potentially complicating element of these texts as a medium of female knowledge and networking: some were literally inscribed by male scribes and donors. The collection signed by Mary Baumfylde in June 1626, and then by Katherine Foster (later Thatcher) in July 1707, was mostly written by two men: 'Mr Abraham Somers' who also signed the book (fol.2^{r}), and whose hand appears to have inscribed most of the first 40 folios; and Thomas Thatcher (possibly the husband-to-be of Katherine), who probably wrote out recipes in the latter half of the volume, and whose signature, 'Thos. Thatcher sculp[sit]' is attached to the foot of a recipe 'How to stew carps' (Folger MS V.a.456, fols 2^{r}, 53^{r}). Nicholas Blundell's 'great diurnal' also usefully records the actual practice of compilation, and the role played by a local scribe:

> [11 May 1719] Mr Shepperd brought my Wife some good Receipts for Cookery.
>
> [17 May 1719] Edward Howerd was here ... I gave him some Receipts to writ out for my Wife.
>
> [27 February 1720] I was very busy most of the day making an Index for some of the Receipts as Edward Howerd has writ in my Wives book of Cookery
>
> [2 March 1720] I payed Edward Howerd for writing Receipts of Cookery, &c: in my Wives book (Bagley and Tyrer, II, 257-58, III, 6).

Just as the act of inscription might not be straightforward, so the sources for compilation could be many and varied. Elizabeth Birkett's book of recipes, begun in about 1699, is a typical mixture of culinary, medicinal and miscellaneous veterinary and household advices. The various hands of its compilers — including those of Birkett and of her husband from 1703, Benjamin Browne, and possibly of her stepson, George — are far from neat, suggesting that this particular book had a long practical life, well beyond Birkett's pre-marital years. Some of the medicinal cures are attributed to printed sources, such as those by the late seventeenth-century popular medical writer William Salmon, but none of the culinary recipes is recognisably 'lifted' verbatim from the printed page (Cumbria Record Office MS WD/TE/box 16/1, esp. pp.3-4).

In other collections this intertextual borrowing is more pronounced: the manuscript attributed to Elizabeth Fowler and dated on the front flyleaf to '1684' appears to have been copied directly from another, probably published text, as it follows the general groupings of dishes and numbering of recipes employed in contemporary culinary publications (Folger MS V.a.468).[13] Texts other than the purely culinary/medicinal were also consulted, especially once a magazine culture had taken root in the metropolis and provinces, from the early eighteenth century. A fine example of this is the mid-eighteenth century Snydercombe family recipe book, with copied-out and pasted-in excerpts from The Gentleman's Magazine and the Salisbury Journal (Dorset Record Office MS D/BOW: 169, unfoliated).[14]

Such evidence — not least that of the Blundells, where Nicholas appears to have been far more interested in recipe collection than his disinclined wife — does not however render manuscript recipe collections invalid as a means through which to study female knowledge formation. It simply reiterates that, as with other manuscript genres, recipe collections were no more single-source, single-authored, single-generation volumes, than they were destined for a single purpose.[15] Textual mobility is the key to the creation and survival of these manuscripts. They were made possible by, and thrived upon, the circulation of recipes between mothers, sisters and daughters, friends and neighbours of all ranks, and on occasion for the medicinal entries, between practitioners and patients. Exchange of domestic information was a crucial medium of female association, conversation and friendship. Thus the receipt of recipes from her cousin Ann Turnley in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, enabled the parson Thomas Brockbank's wife Elizabeth not only to keep in touch, but also to gain access to ideas not necessarily available in her more rural locality. In a letter of March 1706, Thomas passed on Elizabeth's thanks to Ann for 'your Receits, & [she] desires you in your next to tell ... the best way of making Coffee.' (Trappes-Lomax, 303, 306).[16]

The names of donors with which recipes are often annotated supply a suggestive shorthand map not only of the geographical, but also of the social connections (and arguably, aspirations) of the compiler(s). Elizabeth Birkett's book hints at the flows of information which occurred between status groups, containing as it does a number of recipes from the hands of 'Madam' Fleming, probably a relation of the local baronet, Sir Daniel Fleming. Lady Howe (probably the wife of Scrope Howe, 1st Viscount Howe), Lady Sheldon (wife of Sir Joseph Sheldon, alderman, and Lord Mayor of London in 1675), Lady Powis (wife of William Herbert, 1st Marquis and Earl of Powis) and the Countess Desmond (probably wife of William Fielding, Earl of Desmond) are all donors of recipes in Rebecca Brandreth's collection (Cumbria Record Office MS WD/TE/box 16/1; Masson and Vaughan, 340-43 and passim). The presence of recipes 'authorized' by women of superior social standing might indicate a blurring of deferential formalities in matters domestic, while still asserting the generosity proverbial amongst, and morally expected of, women of high social status to those with more restricted access to culinary and medical knowledge and materials.[17]

Such donations are however outnumbered by those received via familial links. Rebecca Brandreth collected recipes not only from her mother, Anne Price, but from her first and second cousins the Clerkes, and from various aunts (Masson and Vaughan).[18] Of course, donation of recipes, and indeed of whole manuscripts, as in Brandreth's bequest to her daughter Alice, was no guarantee of practice. The inside front cover of the Granville/Dewes manuscript is pointedly inscribed 'Mrs Ann Granville's book, which I hope she will make a better use of than her mother', and signed by the disinclined mother in question, Mary Granville (Folger MS v.a.430, front cover, verso; see Figure 11.1).

Apart from the socially elevated and kin, servants were a valuable source of recipes. Rebecca Brandreth recorded dishes which were supplied to her by Leech, the housekeeper in her parental home, and by Newton, who oversaw her husband's kitchen at Houghton Regis (Masson and Vaughan, 16). Elizabeth Okeover carefully wrote out the recipe for 'how to stew a dish of rabbits my nurs Foster's way' (Wellcome MS 3712, p.2, inverted). Indeed, these contributions go some way towards correcting the contemporary and historical image of the domestic servant as culinarily inexperienced and ignorant.[19] They also assert that, at a formative period in

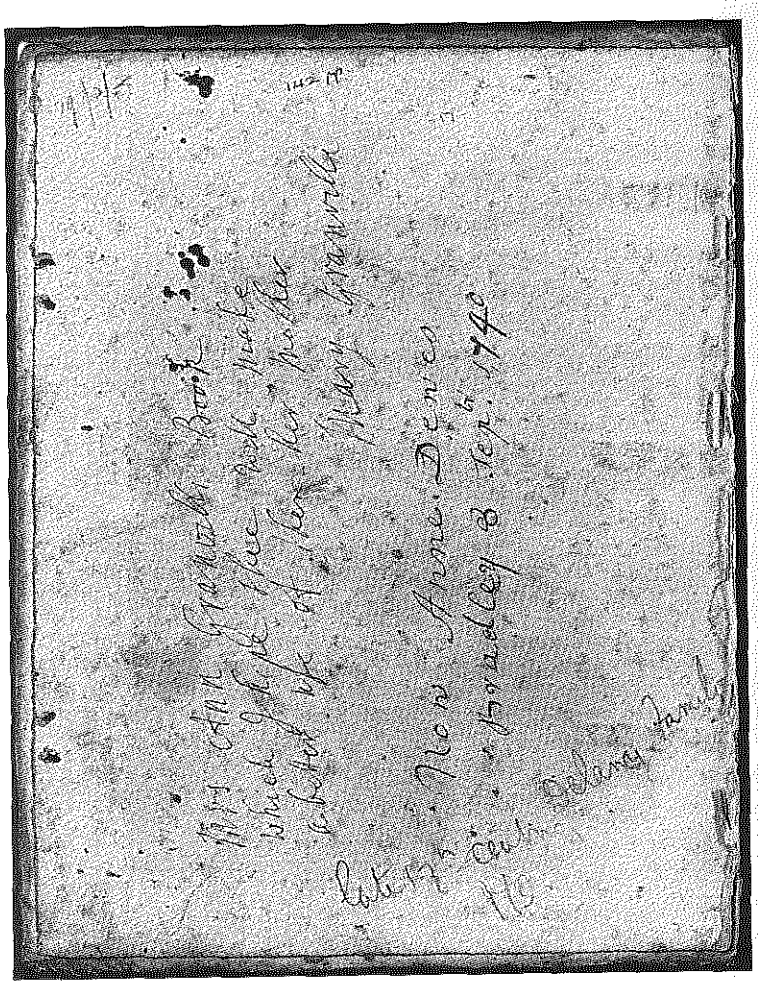


Figure 11.1 Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.a.430, inside front cover. Granville/Dewes recipe book inscribed by Mary Granville and Anne Dewes. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

some young women's domestic educations, female servants could be as crucial as instructors as any family member.

If not family or employees, these donors were likely to be near neighbours, and such propinquity has consequences for the format of material in circulation. On 2 March 1709, Nicholas Blundell 'peruesed some of Jane Harrisons Receipts to see which of them my Wife had not, and some of them I writ in her Book': Jane was probably the wife of William Harrison, clerk of the local parish of Sefton, and were her manuscript collection to survive, it would make interesting reading alongside Frances Blundell's, not least to see from whom else locally both garnered recipes (Bagley and Tyrer, I, 204).

Undoubtedly, the relatively circumscribed familial and geographical nature of the networks by which recipes travelled, led to a degree of similarity between — if not actual duplication of — recipes. On two consecutive pages of her cookery manuscript, Rebecca Brandreth recorded five recipes detailing how to stew a rump of beef, four of which came from named donors. The recipes, while not identical, are comparable in regard to certain ingredients and seasonings, and the recipe attributed to 'my second Cousen Clerke' is noted as being the same as 'Mrs Lord's' (Masson and Vaughan, 86-87). Elizabeth Okeover's manuscript contains two adjacent recipes for a medicinal 'red powder', one from Mrs Addison and one from Mrs Armsted; in the index of recipes, it is Mrs Addison's cure which is annotated 'This one I make'.[20] Neither Brandreth's nor Okeover's collection can thus be considered truly 'unique'. Certainly they are 'unique' in the way that all manuscripts are unique productions; their contents, however, are rooted in resources and connections which would make familiar reading of the now-lost manuscripts of second cousin Clerke and Mrs Addison. If this shared currency of recipes and (beyond recipes) of tastes, appears to devalue these documents as registers of individual or familial practice, we need to examine more closely why Rebecca Brandreth might choose to write out more than one recipe for stewing a rump of beef in the first place.

In investigating the gendered character of types of knowledge, we have to confront the fact that we only have a very basic conception of the means by which women, of whatever socio-economic group, acquired knowledge in the early modern period. Those, like Anne Conway, who received schooling and intellectual intercourse alongside their male peers were truly exceptional, participating in an indisputably 'male' field of knowledge creation and exchange (Hutton, 219).[21] Increasing levels of reading literacy amongst the female population across the seventeenth century require us to deal not only with the issue of 'how knowledge contained ... within ... texts

... was mediated by forms of reading' (Fissell, 81), but how it was shaped by forms of experience. But the alignment of women's intellectual strategies with the prevailing educational parameters for the male population overshadows the extra-pedagogic ways in which women encountered, mediated and registered varieties of knowledge.

Indeed, part of the difficulty in viewing information about domestic activities such as cookery as a form of knowledge, is the prescriptive opposition set up by early modern commentators between knowledge (or 'art'), and manual aptitude or skill.[22] While many studies of early modern housewifery reiterate its contemporary classification as a competence, the most 'art-less' of even manual skills, they nevertheless neglect to examine the bases upon which this opposition was constructed.[23] And yet Eamon is happy to identify the format of seventeenth-century natural philosophical formulae as 'recipelike' (339), even though, as Londa Schiebinger suggests, the virtuosi of the Royal Society were endeavouring to render scientific practice more masculine, and to abate the links with a scientia iconologically (and grammatically) identified as female (677-83). The practical (female) know-how of recipes is left an awkward companion of the (male) intellectual experimentalism of the habitués of the Royal Society.[24]

Yet the kinship which Eamon suggests between culinary recipes and the new experimental philosophy is tenable. Perhaps the most notable dynamic of the desire to extend, rather than restrict, natural philosophical and chemical communication was the attempt to replace the scholastic universal prescriptive with a mode of experience-rooted explanation, stripped of arcane terms and rhetorical flourishes. The experimental process was envisaged by the likes of Sir Francis Bacon and Robert Boyle within a larger project of language and technical reformation, as practical building blocks, 'matters of fact', assembled towards establishing probability through repetition: not, as in the past, as a once-attempted proof of hypothetical statements (Boyle, sig.A3^{r}).[25] And even if, as Jan Golinski suggests, Boyle's interpretation of experimental observation without 'luxurious language' was no less rhetorically persuasive than the emptily didactic texts he wished to supplant, the emphasis on experiment reiterated the force of accumulated testimony over that of logical procedure (59, 68-69).

Nevertheless, the essential paradox of both the recipe and the experimental observation is that they are texts that surely render complete demystification impossible. As a record of practice they are vulnerable precisely because, as texts of action, they always evade standardization. Contemporary critics of Boylean experimentalism also pointed up this problem; in the case of culinary texts the idiosyncracies of personal taste add a further obstacle to true replication (Golinski, 76-77).

Steven Shapin's thesis about the practical and rhetorical contours of truth-making and -recording in early modern England becomes relevant at this point, in examining how practical engagement enabled validation of culinary knowledge transmitted in manuscript recipe texts. Shapin, by his own admission, focuses upon the 'gentlemanly culture' encompassing early modern natural philosophical practice, but suggests that amongst 'servants, women and the non-gentle' other 'economies of truth' might have existed (406). The relationships between women that turned upon reliability (friendship, familial ties, servant-mistress duties), and the concrete forms through which we are able to study those relationships — for example, manuscript recipe collections — do not diverge greatly from the model set up by Shapin for his scientific gentlemen, their 'invisible technicians', and the wider, distanced, consuming 'public'; indeed, I contend that the similarities between these relationships have been obscured by the contemporary and historically gendered readings of virtues like honesty and reliability for the female portion of the early modern population. I also challenge Shapin's argument that women's routes towards knowledge acquisition were framed wholly by 'cultural dependence', together with all the implications of passivity and unreliability (because of absence of independence) that this observation carries (87-91). Women may have had greater agency in shaping their knowledge sources through activating and arbitrating cultural references, rather than simply being dependent on them, than Shapin gives them credit.[26]

On initial scrutiny surviving manuscript collections would seem to be foreign to the hearthside, and therefore to the imprints of practice, lacking extensive staining or signs of handling. The very fact of their survival partially explains this, in their recasting as heirlooms and a subsequent modern reassessment of their antiquarian and monetary value.[27] But a close reading of these texts, in particular of the alterations arrived at in transmission, particularly the annotations and emendations which are distinctively not conventions,[28] can nevertheless supply indications of practice recorded, either in the interventions of the compiler herself, or the mediations of donors and borrowers.

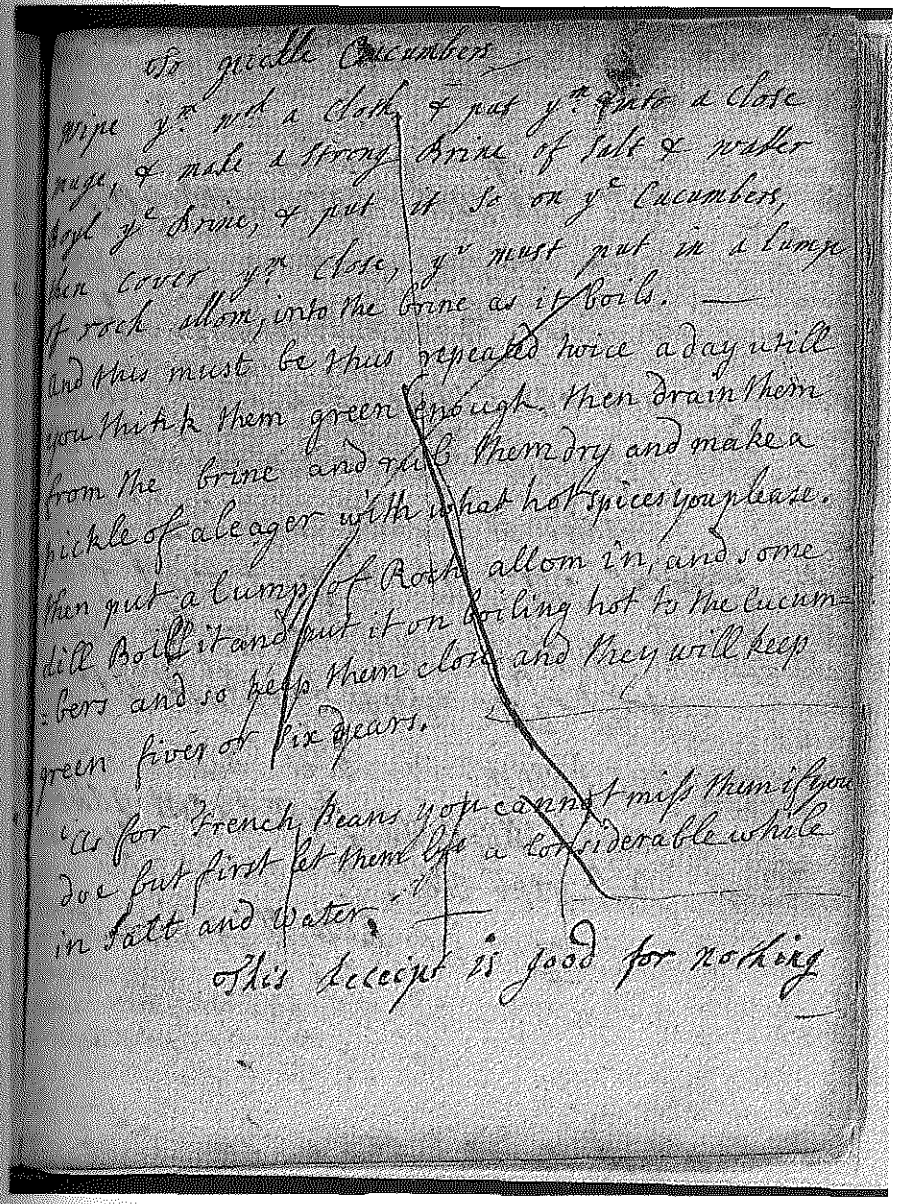
One notable emendation illustrates this neatly. In the volume attributed to Mary Bent, I. Bent and A. Clayton (and spanning 1664-1729), the same hand in which a recipe for pickled cucumbers is written has annotated it with 'you may put a little pepper in if you please, but we do not', and has crossed out Jamaica pepper where it is included in two further recipes (Wellcome MS 1127, pp.2, 34, 35).[29] No less a mark of personal

intervention is the forthright annotation in one recipe included in Lettice Pudsey's volume: 'to pickle cucumbers' is crossed through thoroughly, and recorded at the foot, 'This receipt is good for nothing' (Folger MS V.a.450, fol.57^{r}; see Figure 11.2).

These distinctive records of practice — for how else would Lettice Pudsey know that the cucumbers were so bad if she had not herself tasted the finished product — are not the only marks of textual intervention. The individualized circumstances of personal tastes and practical needs are apparent in the alteration of ingredients, quantities and procedures. A recipe in the manuscript attributed to Elizabeth Okeover for Hungary water (a widely-used medicinal 'strong water' of the period) described as 'Coz: Okeover's', calls for rosemary, lavender, marjoram and brandy; at its close it is annotated, 'this is good but I think a double quantity of Rosemary or rosemary flowers may be better.' Later in the same manuscript cousin Colebrand's recipe 'to preserve orringes whole' is accompanied by the observation 'I think one may have good orringes to preserve in January & fresher or in February'.[30]

The gargantuan size of many dishes, possibly reflecting the origin of a recipe in a household (or published cookery book) where meals were designed to produce leftovers that found their way to the servants' table, is dealt with in several manuscripts. The recipe for a carrot pudding in the Turner/Turner Eyre compilation is clearly simply too big: an annotation states 'Halfe this quantity will make a pudding large enough' (Folger MS W.a.112, p.120). Throughout the late seventeenth-/early eighteenth-century collection signed on the flyleaf by Jane Dawson, recipes such as that for 'Lady Dorchester Cake' and for 'little plum cakes Mrs Robinson [her recipe]' are written in full, and then followed by a note of the ingredients necessary for cakes half the size (Folger MS V.b.14, pp.36, 48).

Procedures are also refined and clarified. The Bent/Clayton manuscript contains a recipe for a calves' head pie which directs that hard-boiled egg yolks be added to the pie before it goes into the oven, but an annotation states 'I never put in the eggs till the pye is bake.' (Wellcome MS 1127, p.74). The 'green oyntment for sores or salve' in the Okeover volume requires straining through a sieve: this line is annotated in the margin by another hand that directs it should be 'run … through a canvas strainer not wrung or squeeze at all' (Wellcome MS 3712, p.238). This observation is not only invaluable for what it says about practice — specifying what the straining should comprise — but for what it reveals about the material cultural technology of the kitchen. The annotator wanted to record the fact


To pickle Cucumbers

Wipe y^{e} wth a cloth & put y^{e} into a close
pan, & make a strong brine of salt & water
boyl y^{e} brine, & put it on y^{e} cucumbers,
then cover y^{e} close, & y^{u} must put in a lumpe
of rock allom into the brine as it boils. —
And this must be thus repeated twice a day until
you think them green enough. then drain them
from the brine and wipe them dry and make a
pickle of ale & eager with what hot spices you please.
then put a lumpe of Roch allom in, and some
dill. Boil it and put it on boiling hot to the cucum-
bers and so keep them close and they will keep
green five or six years.

As for French Beans you cannot miss them if you
doe but first lay them in a considerable while
in salt and water. —

This receipt is good for nothing

Figure 11.2 Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.a.450, fol.57^{r}. Recipe from Lettice Pudsey's recipe book crossed through and annotated. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

that straining through a metal sieve would not suffice: only careful running through a canvas bag (the forerunner of a modern jelly bag) would achieve the correct consistency for the salve.

Issues of credibility and reliability were surely involved in these recipe transmissions and receptions: issues which render the compilation of a manuscript cookery collection as much a sociological process, and the text an artifact of that process, as it makes it a culinary curiosity. The appending of a name to a recipe is not merely a mark of donation, but also a register of witness and circulation; the recipe lives up to its title in being worthy of transmission. Yet the testimony is only conditional; the recipient alone can supply a confirmation of it. Thus Elizabeth Okeover (or another compiler) tried the recipe for 'red powder' which both Mrs Armsted and Mrs Addison deemed good enough to pass on, but only liked, and recorded her approval of, one of them. Marked thus, the recipe perhaps was circulated further orally; or, if Okeover's book was lent to someone (as Jane Harrison's was to the Blundells) for another to peruse, the borrower might take especial note of those dishes annotated in such a way. The annotation of a recipe for 'Lady Moore's drops for a cough' in an eighteenth-century compilation as being 'given me by Watkin Williams esq., March 19 1735/6 who had it from Lord Nowel' was likely to catch a peruser's eye, not least because the annotation continued, 'Mr Williams assured me he had tried it with great success.' (Folger MS W.a.303, pp.120-21).

The recipe text is thus not merely an unprotected text; it is quintessentially unreliable until used and, in the moment of making, proved. Practice was the only means through which the recipe text could be tried and move beyond being a mere prescription. Indeed, it is the practical possibilities of the written recipe which locate this type of manuscript production outside literary parameters. The practitioner would become a recipe's author and owner for the moment, but this authorial relationship was only temporary. The perception of involvement, of intimacy with the methods and media of production in cookery attached only partially to the recipe donor, not least because the distances between recipient and donor made testimonies of worth statements which could only be taken on trust, or tested at a later time in the relatively private bounds of one's own household. There was no Gresham College laboratory (where the members of the Royal Society gathered to observe experiments) in which these accounts could be viewed and verified, even by a limited audience. The relationship between knowledge and skill, between the scientific gentleman as author and the technician as 'anti-author', whose labour was encompassed by the intellect and honour of the virtuoso (Shapin, 383), was in fact collapsed within all women's domestic activities in the confines of the household; the mistress and the female servant were at once authors and anti-authors in the constant negotiations between knowledge and skill that culinary, as well as other household, tasks demanded.

The donation of recipes between individuals established links which were reinforced if recipients undertook to 'authorize' or try the dish themselves, but which were not destroyed if a dish was 'good for nothing'. The exception to this may have been medicinal recipes, where appending a donor's name to a recipe served not only to authenticate the distance travelled by a recipe, but also authenticated the particular experience of the donor: hence the frequent identification of the 'professional' position of men or the elevated status of women who contributed cures, for example 'Mr Borrough, minister of New Kirks' who supplied a cure for 'a pain in the rein [kidney] or stone' in the Fleming of Rydal manuscript.[31]

Donated recipes are a variety of gift, not unlike those discussed by Paula Findlen for early modern Italian collectors of natural history (5-24). Their provisional 'economic' value is embedded in their utility, which can only be verified when the recipe is converted into the dish (although with medicinal recipes, identifying donor status may have lessened the conditional nature of such utility). Thus Rebecca Brandreth's five similar recipes for stewing a rump of beef were recorded as tokens of the relationships Brandreth had with their donors — tokens which awaited Brandreth's conversion into valid culinary currency. Approval in this manner would in turn (hopefully) consolidate those personal relationships — but Brandreth's recipes are left apparently untried and unvalidated.

Recipe exchanges also present a cycle of indebtedness that was cancelled and reiterated either in kind or with associated gifts. Thus in a letter of 1653, Bishop Brian Duppa of Northampton begged his correspondent, on behalf of his wife, for a 'way of making Lamport hare-py ... for in all the new bookes of cookery we cannot find it'. In a subsequent letter we find Duppa giving thanks not only for the recipe, but for the hare pie itself, dispatched by his correspondent:

> I have a double obligation laid upon me by this favor, for it is not onely a kindness from you, but from your Lady ... that she could easily part with such a present to satisfy the curiosity of a person so unknown to her, for which we return her our humble thankes ... which you ar now com to the honor to make use of (Isham, 74).

Recipes were arguably not as mutually involving as other types of gift — the onus was still upon the recipient to make the dish or cure — but they carried other values that Findlen has noted, not the least of which was the

ability to animate and maintain relationships across and between social, geographic and intellectual space.

Viewing the manuscript recipe text as both a conditional document and a gift, a double trial of the donor's credibility, is not inconsistent, in a culture where trust is vested in objects and texts that carry signs of practice. This also helps explain why, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (to which most of the manuscripts discussed here date), an age of print ascendancy, the connection to manuscript sources remained crucial to stress in printed culinary texts. *Mrs Mary Eales's Receipts*, published in London in 1718 and again in a modified version, *The Complete Confectioner: or, the Art of Candying and Preserving in its Utmost Perfection* in 1733, is a perfect case in point. The publishers of the 1733 volume detail in their preface how the few printed copies of an earlier volume, which was in turn derived from a manuscript of recipes which Eales (described in the 1718 volume as a confectioner to William III and Queen Anne) had put together for a few readers 'of prime quality', had changed hands for 'five guineas' apiece (*Confectioner*, sig.A1^{v}). There is of course an air of publishers' puffing to such claims, but Mrs Eales' recipes must have been disseminated in manuscript form several years before 1718. All the recipes in the manuscript collection of Elizabeth Sloane (daughter of Sir Hans Sloane), dated internally to 1711, are noted by Sloane herself as being 'a copy from Mrs Eales book', and the recipes in the manuscript are almost verbatim those published in the 1733 text (British Library Add. MS 29739, fol. 61^{r}).

The link to manuscript formats was certainly practical. Printed cookery books, particularly those with explicit addresses to servants actual and aspirant, presented a ready-made form of manuscript compilation for those who came from backgrounds where such information circulation and female networks were not accessible, and compilation across generations impossible. But it was also epistemological. Culinary publications, perhaps the most unprotectable of unprotected texts in a volatile print culture lacking effective copyright restrictions, gained authority through connection to a traditional format in which continued recipe circulation depended upon belief in shared social and intellectual credibility, but in which continual practice, rather than the circulation, was the primary means of knowledge authorization.[32] The assertion of a manuscript pedigree for a printed text was a fiction, but one on which the reader's critical evaluation of the text depended heavily.

Enlightenment in understanding women's historical experiences often comes through a sensitivity to terminology, and the case is no different here. Understanding the recipe as a transmission is certainly more

constructive and fluid than reading it as a prescription, and enables us to fit it in alongside other re-readings in the histories of women, notably of social networks, knowledge formation and communication, and domestic technology. The manuscript text is only a fraction and refraction of practice: there are still omissions, elisions and assumptions of intuition, and much more work needs to be done on and beyond collections like the ones encountered here, to consider how expertise was acted upon beyond the recipe text.

The conventional historiography of technology in the household construes women as passive in its construction because of the interpretative weight upon design, manufacture and 'the way things work'. But the etymology of technology in the Greek *tekhne* (art, craft) supplies a connection to art and skill which is not simply equivalent to object production, at least not in the early modern period, where 'art and mystery' connoted the practice (and indeed, the privilege of practice) of skill. Technology as technique, as how to do something, renders women as far from passive experts in the early modern domestic sphere. The manuscript recipe thus provides a perspective upon the possibilities of culinary expertise as a particularly female form of technical knowledge that was neither merely practical nor wholly abstract. Female ownership of such knowledge may have been circumscribed by the format such knowledge took — that is, the imperfectible recipe — but this does not lessen female agency in the creation, modification and circulation of such knowledge.

Eamon is surely wrong when he writes that 'the secret of a recipe is its intellectual poverty', because he fails to comprehend the elision of the practical and the conceptual within the recipe (359-60). Indeed, the recipe, if not the ur-text for culinary history, might instead be viewed as a pre-eminent text of early modern expertise, its 'authentic voice' (Eamon, 12). The ways in which women read, intervened in, and communicated recipes, are certainly as important to understand in the history of early modern cultures of knowledge as the ways in which their natural philosophical contemporaries deployed such texts at the heart of their experimental revisionism.

Notes

1 That is nothing more: Holme, Book III, ch.3, p.80, sig.K4^{v}. My transcriptions preserve original spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

2 The more modern form 'recipe' (current from the early eighteenth century) is used throughout this essay in preference to 'receipt', since the dominant modern commercial meaning of 'receipt' rather overshadows its early modern meaning.
3 Cf. Eamon, 131.
4 Although without comparable data from either the preceding or succeeding centuries, we cannot assess the relative scale of this production.
5 For Grace Mildmay, see Pollock.
6 These ideas are developed more fully in Pennell, especially ch.3. See also Hunter.
7 Although as we will see below, these two actions in the compilation of a manuscript recipe collection need not be undertaken by the same (female) person.
8 It is worth noting that she does not explicitly include non-fiction prose writing in this argument (12).
9 See also Marotti, 19-22, 25-27, 30, 40, and Ezell, 30-34, 38, 58.
10 Unfortunately, the current whereabouts of the manuscript used in Masson and Vaughan, and the ancillary documentation concerning Rebecca (Price) Brandreth, are unknown.
11 See for example Wellcome MSS 3294, 3295, the two volumes attributed to Anne (de) Lisle, circa 1748, the first of which contains culinary recipes, the second medical, veterinarian and miscellaneous cures. Even in single volumes a similar division could be achieved by writing medicinal recipes at the back of the volume; see Wellcome MS 1127.
12 See also the mainly medicinal recipe collection attributed to Elizabeth Okeover, with sections written in a very small neat hand, each recipe heading given in a larger italic script and underlined; Wellcome MS 3712, pp.123-216.
13 The text from which these recipes, which also lack any attributions and annotations, were transcribed has not yet been identified.
14 See also Porter, 292.
15 See especially Folger MS E.a.4, which was evidently initially intended for use as a commonplace or memoranda book, the first 45 folios having headings for appropriate notitia.
16 See also Brears, 194.
17 This aspect of the circulation of medicinal recipes is considered in more detail in Stine, esp. ch.5.
18 See also Brears, 190.
19 Cf. Eland, I, 141, 151; Harrison, 132; Hill, 139.
20 Admittedly we do not know whether Mrs Addison and/or Mrs Armsted were near neighbours of Okeover: Wellcome MS 3712, index at end of inverted recipes, unpaginated.
21 See also Hutton and Nicholson.
22 Steven Shapin observes this divide in his study of truth-making and validation within the early modern 'scientific' community, but his chapter upon the laborants and technicians who remain almost invisible because of it, is acknowledged as being merely a 'token'; ch.8, esp. 361-63.
23 For example, Hill does not engage with issues of knowledge or skill in her discussions of housework and domestic service, chs 7 and 8; see also Cowan, ch.2.
24 It is important to note that the wives, sisters and other female relatives of virtuosi like Robert Boyle, and John Evelyn shared their medicinal and culinary recipes with them, but that the ways in which these recipes were deployed in the sphere of the Royal Society have not been examined in detail, although see Stine, 146-48.
25 See also Golinski, 63-65, 70; Dear, 667, 683.

26 Cf. Stine, 11.
27 For example, a well-preserved late seventeenth-century manuscript volume by Katherina Elizabeth Harington was sold at Sotheby's on 12 October 1995 for £1495: see lot 105, *Food and Drink*, 24. Arguably many copies of practical texts (manuscript and published) have had an alternative existence to that suggested by their subject matter, as components of specialist collections; such an existence probably precludes relevant annotation, but I still think the question of application can be posed in the gap between these 'pristine' texts and those assumed lost through use.
28 As opposed to annotations like *probatum est* (that is tried and tested), which could conceivably have been copied from a published text or from a donor's copy.
29 Many of the inscribed recipes, including the three recipes noted here, are marked with a cross, possibly indicating that they have been used, and are worth re-using, either by the compiler(s), or by borrowers.
30 The manuscript contains at least two different hands, and it has not been possible to establish whether the annotations are Okeover's, or another compiler's: Wellcome MS 3712, pp.250, 12 (inverted).
31 Cumbria Record Office MS WDY/118, p.112: the recipe was possibly inscribed by Sir Daniel Fleming. See also Stine, 192.
32 A point which both supports, but also moves beyond, Wall's observations about the continued 'instability' of printed, engendered texts in this period: see Wall, 3, 20; cf. Elizabeth Tebeaux, who makes no reference at all to the continued importance of manuscript transmission, alongside oral dissemination, as a 'live' source of technical information in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 29-62.

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Dorset Record Office

MS D/BOW:169, Snydercome family recipe book, mid-eighteenth century

Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC

MS E.a.4, anonymous recipe collection, *c.*1650-1750
MS V.a.430, Granville/Dewes recipe book, *c.*1640-1750
MS V.a.450, Lettice Pudsey recipe book, *c.*1675
MS V.a.456, Mary Baumfylde/Katherine Foster recipe collection
MS V.a.468, Elizabeth Fowler recipe book, *c.*1684
MS V.b.14, Jane Dawson recipe book, late seventeenth/early eighteenth century
MS W.a.112, Turner/Turner Eyre recipe book
MS W.a.303, Malet family recipe collection

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12 'Often to my Self I make my mone': Early Modern Women's Poetry from the Feilding Family[1]

Alison Shell

This article introduces and describes a sequence of poems written by a late seventeenth-century female member of the Feilding family, surviving in a manuscript in the Osborn Library, Yale University: a commonplace book in an exceptionally attractive embroidered binding, which juxtaposes original verse with copies of other poems, prayers, recipes and lists (Osborn Collection MS b. 226).[2] Dating from just after the writer's widowhood and charting a process of recuperation made more difficult by tensions within her family, these verses represent an unusual and poignant survival; and their intensely private quality calls into question many currently held assumptions about the nature of audiences for women's manuscript verse.

The Feilding family, headed by the Earls of Denbigh, was one of the most prominent aristocratic dynasties in seventeenth-century England;[3] and several seventeenth-century female members of the Feilding family had literary and artistic interests.[4] We know that the writer of the Osborn MS was a Feilding because she apostrophizes herself by that name in one of the poems, and because of a line in one of the poems lamenting her widowhood, 'Think on thy ffeildings dying grones' (p.85). Further identification is highly problematic, though there was at least one female Feilding writing poetry in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. Frances Feilding was a member of a scribal community of women, and one of her verses survives, signed, in the Berkshire Record Office. Addressed to Lady Christobella Rogers, Feilding praises Rogers's poetry and makes grandiose claims for it: 'then talke not of ben Jonson skill / nor yet of homers: soareing quill'.[5] Two possible Frances Feildings appear in the family genealogies. The first of them is Dorothy Feilding, sometimes known as Frances, who was the fourth and last wife of the Civil War hero, Basil Feilding, 2nd Earl of Denbigh.[6] The second Frances was born into the