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The Communal Basis of Distinctive Voice in 17th-Century Receipt Manuscripts

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In the Baumfylde manuscript, Mary Baumfylde has inscribed ownership, “Mary Baumfylde. her booke. Iune Anno. 1626” (fol. 1r), with 1626 being the earliest date recorded in the text. Catherine Field remarks, however, that before Mary’s autograph, someone has written on the book’s front inside cover “many hands hands.”^[1] Mary Baumfylde’s signature seems simple enough, at least initially, but that first phrase perplexes. What to make of it? Is someone reflecting on the different hands that have gone into Mary’s recipe collection or that will go into it in the future? Are they considering the different hands that they themselves bring to the task of writing, or the hands that others bring (“many hands hands”)? By signing the book, is Mary herself stabilizing the many hands by inserting her claim of ownership? If so, she succeeded on one score at least because this collection sits in the Folger Shakespeare Library as the “Medicinal and Cookery Recipes of Mary Baumfylde.” But how can the recipes be called Mary’s when they are contributed by many hands over many years? Whatever prompted the phrase “many hands hands,” the multiple hands contrast starkly with the singular name.

In just the first few pages of the Baumfylde manuscript, the principle of “many hands” comes to vivid life in a way that explodes the assumption of singular authorship over this volume. Down the center of the front inside cover, and against the grain of the paper, is written in elegant handwriting, “Katherine Thatcher 1712”; further yet down the page appears the single letter “m” and beside it, once again, the word “many.” The facing page starts with a much less refined hand setting out “For: the Cloth bead November the 28” following it with a list of amounts presumably paid “to the dyer” (0:9.0), “for tape” (0:0:8), and “for Laice” (0:4:5). Further amounts are marked on this page in different inks, as well as the notation “TC a salver worth: 10:17,” followed by another series of numbers unconnected to any objects (fol. ir). On the recto of the subsequent page, Mary Baumfylde’s signature appears just above that of “mr. Abraham: Somers,” which in turn sits just above a scratched-out signature and date, “Katherine Foster May 1707,” themselves hovering over the flourishing signature “Katherine Foster July 1707” (fol. 1r). The next page includes the first recipe of the collection, “For sore eies & to cleere the eie sight,” before introducing yet another name, “My dear Aunt Cotterells,” presumably to commemorate the day of the aunt’s parting, “dyed March. 29. 1758. Aged 81 January” (fol. 2r). Immediately, then, the Baumfylde manuscript presents readers with a large cast of characters, an array of presumably discrete circumstances to which the pages respond, and a range of different uses to which all of it has been, and will be, put. In the context of this populous manuscript, even Mary Baumfylde’s signature becomes more mysterious than it might first appear. Sphinxlike, she stands out prominently even as she commingles on more equal terms with other signs of the manuscript’s history -- names, dates, numbers, receipts. The manuscript hints simultaneously at a world of the one and the many and it is precisely the relationship between the one, and the many in the Baumfylde and other early modern receipt manuscripts that this essay will seek to explore and to theorize.

The “many hands hands” of the inside cover gestures toward a communal world that the hands have wrought. Caroline Bicks and Jennifer Summit call early modern women’s writing “a notably social and communal practice” in which the concept of the singular author is not relevant.^[2] Yet Janet Theophano recognizes the presence of, if not authors, then at least distinctive voices in early modern receipt manuscripts: encountering a receipt with particularized instructions, she asks, “How could anyone dismiss that voice?”^[3] Moments where voices stand out suggest that even from within a well-defined communal culture, individuals make distinct impressions. Receipt manuscripts adhere to, and transmit, the broad social wisdom of a community, its collected knowledge, values, and dictates, but they also make room for the development and emergence of individual voices. The distinctiveness of particular voices is based, perhaps counterintuitively, in the manuscript community out of which they emerge; at every turn, distinctive voices bear the deep impression of community. Receipt writing is a kind of life writing, so it makes sense to take seriously the possibility that the manuscripts reveal individual as well as collective lives.^[4]

Scholars agree that we will not find in the writers of these manuscripts manifestations of the modern individual; nor will we find unique authorial figures who invent, own, and build copyrighted identities in the writing they leave behind. Seeking the self in early modern receipt manuscripts must then be a different kind of quest, one that gets at the intersection

between communal norms and individual articulations of the self. At some points the lives glimpsed in early manuscripts reflect conventional common experience, and at other points, they push into new territory, investing in innovation, discovery, and individual exuberance. But at all points, even when they seem most distinctive, the voices in the manuscripts are based in early modern community. Being so, they implicitly ask contemporary readers to consider how the concept of the individual, used as an anchoring principle to interpret a crowded manuscript, leads us to miss critical dimensions of the manuscript. If, following the manuscripts, we consider our own embeddedness in social formations larger than the concept of the individual, we might gain more supple insights into the functioning of these early modern texts.

What do we look for when we have the Baumfylde manuscript in front of us, or any of the hundreds of other receipt manuscripts that have survived from the early seventeenth century onward? How do we decide what they tell us? As the title of her article suggests, Catherine Field explores the question of “writing the self in early modern women’s recipe manuscripts,” a question which others have found important as well, with Janet Theophano “reading women’s lives through the cookbooks they wrote,” Jayne Elisabeth Archer seeking the “quintessence of wit” in the manuscript intersection of poems and recipes, and Wendy Wall identifying recipes as a gateway to intellectual and creative freedom, allowing scope for self-definition.^[5] There has also been historically informed resistance to reading the receipt collections as a treasure trove of early modern selfhood; indeed some of the scholars inclined to seek signs of selfhood in the manuscripts also candidly recognize the limitations of this approach given the manuscripts’ clearly collaborative and communal nature. Michelle DeMeo attends to recipes as a function of networks rather than individual originality; Francisco Alonso-Almeida conceives of the recipe collection as a “discourse colony” reflecting “the evolution of social and cultural codes”; and David Goldstein notes the folly of thinking we can find original authors for manuscript receipts.^[6]

The question of what we should be looking for in these manuscripts is vexed because the manuscripts resist so many of the categories that we rely on today: recipes for food exist alongside medicinal recipes and home remedies – the manuscripts express a regime of care for the body in a time before food and medicine were separated into distinct areas of expertise. Recipes written in one hand exist beside recipes in another hand – these manuscripts record the contributions of many writers, often compiled across generations, thus unsettling categories of authorship that understand writing as driven by the singular intelligence of a guiding individual. Recipes for food and remedies exist alongside poems, lists of births and deaths, household accounts, experiments in handwriting, inscriptions of ownership, and compositions even more surprising to twenty-first century readers.^[7] These contributions vex the boundaries of generic categories that we would hold separate from each other.

Recognizing that receipt books “do *not* fit our current, conventional understanding of authority, authorship, and even the way a book works,” Christine Kowalchuk argues that “they require a wholly different frame.”^[8] She posits the frame of “aggregate” writing that preserves a “particular social culture,”^[9] and for her, this frame effectively invalidates the search for selfhood through the expressivity of individual authors:

The deeply traditional and social nature of receipt books suggests that the structural and rhetorical qualities that a number of scholars have interpreted as evidence of emerging modern subjectivity represent something else entirely. ... Receipt books highlight the distinction between our modern conception of life writing and that of the past; their folk-culture origins, oral conventions, and practical use all reflect their creation and functioning as social, not individual texts. Receipt books preserve a collective, not individual, identity and authority.[\[10\]](#)

Stressing the deeply collective nature of the manuscripts and the widely shared cultural assumptions they reflect, Kowalchuk warns against fixating on the individual, that central figure in our modern categories of understanding, to the extent that we miss clues about earlier ways of being.

The rich body of scholarship on early modern receipt manuscripts thus reveals contested questions about what the manuscripts tell us with regard to individuals and larger cultures. The contestation itself helps us build a rich range of approaches to this early modern archive; it reminds us to be careful, to acknowledge that we do not have a definitive model for reading manuscripts, but that, like the act of manuscript compilation itself, the labor of interpretation requires many hands. My central contention is that these many hands induct readers into distinct communities that shaped the writers' outlook and that also in turn licensed these writers to innovate, experiment, and judge in distinctive ways. The receipt manuscripts stand both as texts of communal knowledge and as expressions of individual voice.

It is useful to understand the communal and individual aspects of the manuscripts in relation to one another. While the expression of voice is one of the great pleasures that the manuscripts offer both their creators and their readers, even the most seemingly singular voices are shaped by the overarching community norms that the manuscripts encode. Equally, while receipt manuscripts induct their readers and practitioners into acts of community membership, they also guide reader-practitioners into acts of individual innovation, resistance, and discovery.[\[11\]](#) They implicitly invite them to consider what it means to be knowledgeable, authoritative, and creative, whether preparing a recipe in the kitchen or contributing through writing to the household manuscript. The manuscripts thus curate both communities and individuals.

Looking carefully at manuscript recipes, we can see that they assume a world of knowledge, customs, and human relationships to which any new reader-practitioners must accommodate themselves.[\[12\]](#) Receipt manuscripts record systems of food preparation, household management, and the circulation of goods that preexist individuals and that in fact precisely instruct them in how to belong to households. The power of this collective knowledge appears in the Baumfylde manuscript in the several receipts that carry attributions and testimonials, suggesting accepted authorities and the wisdom gained from experience over time. A "receipt for the yoellow Iaundes" is said to be "approoued by mrs. Rogers" (fol. 8r); a receipt for "the Collicke and Stone" is called "an approoued medicine" (fol. 8); after Mrs. Reason's "Receitt for the biting of a mad dogge" is written "probatom" (fol. 41r), signifying that the recipe has been successfully tried. Mr. Abraham Somers, whose name appeared on the volume's first

folio, has also signed several recipes, for example for a “purgative Whey” (fol. 34r) and a “Secrett Quintessence” (fol. 36r). Attributions extend beyond figures like Somers, whose signature early in the volume implies a familiar relationship to the household. There is also a receipt for Paracelus Plaster according to “the London Receipt” (fol. 24r); and a cordial water attributed to “Doctor Chambers,” “*which he long tyme vsed and did many Cures, and kept it secret till a little before he dyed*” (fol. 14r); indeed “With this water Doctor Chambers preserued his life till extream age Would suffer him nether to goe nor stand any while, and he Continud for fiue yeares, when all the Phisitians iudged he would not have lived. ... And if it stand in the sunne all the summer it will be the better. finis” (fol. 16r). These attributions and testimonials put the household in relationship to wider communities of trusted authorities; they start to identify networks of outside interests and connections that were incorporated into the knowledge universe of any one household.[\[13\]](#)

The receipt books also implicitly and explicitly lay down the temporal structures that govern kitchen and community life. Folio 11 recto in the Baumfylde manuscript includes only a simple list of temporal units: “once a Day / once a Week / once a Month / once a Year.” These seemingly incomplete phrases could be the initial elements of a domestic to-do list, although because no such list follows, they simply hover as suggestive reminders of time’s power to subject everyone in the household, implying that it is important always to be thinking about what particular times dictate what particular tasks. The relentlessly successive categories of day, week, month, year, hint that there is no respite from the demands of household work. Perhaps users’ larger task in encountering the manuscript is to understand the receipts in terms of which temporal units make most sense for each of them. The writer’s ambiguous list of day, week, month, year thus illuminates one of the essential functions of receipt manuscripts: to induct individuals, sometimes haltingly, into the mental and behavioral temporalities that the household’s operations require. However, the lack of clearly articulated follow-through reminds us of how difficult a process it can be to reach an accommodation with time.

The regulatory presence of time appears insistently in the receipts: those aspiring to master the receipts must first subject themselves to the mastery of time. The receipt for white metheglin, for example, lays out an ornate temporal sequencing. When it comes time to scum froth off the liquid, the receipt specifies that “you must haue in readines the whites of thirtie eggs beaten to a froath, to put in soe soone as it is scumed” (fol. 21r). “In readines,” “soe soone”: manipulating delicate ingredients in just the right sequence of time is critical for successfully executing the receipt. Medicinal receipts also impose regimens of time on the reader-practitioner: “A Bath for an Olde Soare” calls for applications “three mornings one after another” (fol. 17v). A receipt “To heale a Tetter” calls for a doused cloth to be applied to the sore “Mornings and Euenings” (fol. 24v). Once again, the proper use of the receipt requires specific attention to time. Occasionally, the receipts also imply time as an indefinite category. An “oyntment for any soare brest” concludes with the advice to “keepe it for *your* use” (fol. 17v), suggesting that this ointment is something one should have on hand at *any* time, a necessary staple of the household. In this way, time is used not just in well-defined measures to structure the preparation of a receipt but also more generally to conceive of the household itself as existing in time and subject to its strictures.

The power of the manuscript to impose community norms is accentuated through the receipts' characteristic use of the second-person. The semi-ubiquitous "you" hails readers into relationship with the manuscript, inviting them to follow the rules in both the kitchen and the community. The "you" can easily function to subordinate the reader to the role of a pupil needing tutelage: a receipt for "Clarie water" begins "Take the Flowers and leaues and still them," later prescribing that "you *must* let [the water] drop into The receiuer upon muske and ambergreees," and again insisting that "when your sugar is desolved in the Water you *must* filter it through a Tunnell of cap paper *which must* haue no hole in it but *must* be sowed up uery close" (fol. 17r, emphasis mine). Directed at the reader over and over again, "must" leaves little room to improvise; the clipped imperative lays out rules to be followed. The receipt "To pickell mutton Cowcumbers" eases up on rigid authority, providing explanations to help the reader understand the instructions rather than simply follow them. The final step in this receipt is to cover the cucumbers with a layer of olive oil; the receipt explains that "the oyle keepes it without any creame one the topp, that when you use any they shall not take winde" (fol. 23r). The reader here may be reasoned with but is still implicitly positioned as a pupil, the "you" who must learn from the expertise of the unwritten "I."[\[14\]](#)

While the imperative form of "you must" does indeed position readers as subordinate, the ubiquitous second-person address in the manuscripts can also be much more liberating. Second-person address inevitably provides openings for independence and innovation. In second-person address, readers first experience themselves as novices but also gradually as experts, or perhaps a combination thereof. For example, moments of conversational second-person address often accept a certain degree of readerly expertise: instructions to "bake as you see good" in a receipt for biscuits (fol. 3r), or to put in "as much [insinglass] as you thinck will make it stiffe" in a receipt for white leach (fol. 7r), or to season a sauce for meat with "winter savory salt & pepper & a little nuttmeg *according as you like it*" (fol. 46r, emphasis mine) engage the hopeful cook as a kind of peer with at least a degree of culinary savvy. Further, written explanations like the one accompanying instructions for pickled cucumbers make it likelier that novices will in time become thoughtful practitioners capable of exercising their own informed judgement in the kitchen or distillery. And when it comes to multiple receipts for the same dish, such as two receipts for cheesecake on folio 43 recto, the manuscript trusts the aspiring cook to choose between presumably equally viable options, much as a writer skilled in the use of different hands might choose which one to employ on a particular occasion.

Reinforcing the inclination of the culinary receipts to prepare readers for expertise and agency, the medicinal receipts induct readers into positions of significant household authority. These receipts grant readers intimate access to the bodies of others at times of illness or injury. Those who can heal pain will have a special status in the household, not only through valuable knowledge of cures but through the direct handling of others' vulnerable bodies. A receipt "for a Canker in the mouth" instructs the nurse to "wash the patients mouth bloud warme twice or thrise a day," the language sensuously if metaphorically conjuring a nurse swabbing the mouth with blood (fol. 5r). Some receipts suggest that through their ministrations, the healers will gain their own visceral knowledge of pain: a "A playster for a soare breast" (fol. 31r) calls for the reader to "apply itt soe hott as you can

indure itt," implying that the nurse may have to hurt the patient's body in order to cure it, and also intimating, through the curious phrase "soe hott as *you* can indure itt" (emphasis mine), the possibility of *mutual* pain experienced by both patient and nurse. The receipt also indicates that if the sore breast should be "red and inflamed," the preparation should be altered in several ways and the poultice then applied "round about with linseede oyle; butt nott where the hoales are." This addendum implies intimate exposure to the patient's open body; it requires, too, a certain measure of judgement in the preparation and execution of the remedy. Requiring the reader-practitioner to determine when to adapt a receipt and how to apply it without harming the patient, the manuscript positions the reader as a competent authority figure within the household.

Presenting a combination of imperatives, explanations, and options, the receipt manuscripts call on readers to imagine and take up their place in the structure of the household, and also to experience some measure of freedom in determining how they will occupy that place. The etymology of the word "receipt" itself suggests how manuscripts can liberate as well as bind. Linked to the Latin "recipere," or exchange, and to the verb "receive," receipts signal a culture of active transaction where knowledge is passed from household to household, person to person, generation to generation. Wendy Wall states that "Recipes were transit points that actively created and defined knowledge communities and networks of association."[\[15\]](#) There is nothing static in the exchange of a receipt; rather, receipts are about motion.[\[16\]](#) Circulating, receipts are charged with the energy of contact between different people and places. They signal the deep relationships and networks of connectivity that delineate one's place, and also the agency of those who negotiate the relationships and the ever-evolving nature of the networks. Receipts convey new knowledge about how to do things, and in the process they create conditions of agency for readers who must be ready to absorb the knowledge and put it into practice.[\[17\]](#)

In the context of a receipt culture that requires judgement and licenses invention, it is not surprising that the manuscripts, in addition to entries that read as anonymous impersonal conduits of customary household culture, also feature contributors who vividly jump off the page, their voices full of intention and specificity. In another manuscript, Lettice Pudsey famously crosses through a lengthy receipt for pickling cucumber and underneath it writes dismissively, "This receipt is good for nothing."[\[18\]](#) The receipt invites Pudsey to accept its authority, but Pudsey pushes back, her frustration and scorn palpable across time. Was the receipt truly good for nothing? Was Pudsey frustrated with her own inability to follow its provisions and pickle cucumbers successfully? Was the receipt provided by a rival of Pudsey within the household, and was the chance to denigrate it too attractive to pass up? Whatever the circumstance driving Pudsey to editorialize, the manuscript clearly conveys the strength of intention belonging to this particular contributor. In this and other instances, the receipt books give us a chance to see individual writers asserting what we would call voice and intention from within the household systems to which they belong.

That we are talking about voice and intention within a larger household system seems clear enough in the Granville manuscript when we encounter Mary Granville's inscription, presumably written on the day she gave the book to her daughter Anne as a wedding gift:

“Mrs Ann. Granvills Book,” writes Mary, “Which I hope she will make a better use of than her mother Mary Granville.” [19] Whether Mary was truly as indifferent a housekeeper as these lines imply or whether she was an accomplished cook modestly downplaying her strengths, as Wendy Wall thinks might be the case, she is explicitly drawing attention to herself at the beginning of this collection, remaining a presence to be reckoned with even as she licenses Anne to surpass her achievements in the kitchen. [20] The further curious point that Mary addresses her daughter as Anne *Granville* on the day that Anne became Anne *D’Ewes*, and that Anne later corrects or amplifies her mother’s address line by writing her married name into the volume, suggests that we are dealing with writers very conscious of their own identities and concerned to represent their identities on the page in very specific ways. Yet even as Mary and Anne draw attention to particular identities, they do so by stressing their places in a larger familial relationship: for Mary, they are a mother and a daughter and the receipt book serves as a matrilineal inheritance that unites them across time; for Anne, the receipt book also marks her transition into a new role, that of wife, and her entry into a new family. [21]

We know we are talking about identity, too, when we open the Maddison family receipt book to the page where a daughter, who Janet Theophano estimates would have been between five and 15 years old, writes “Mary Madcap I am” in an unpracticed hand that nevertheless aspires to elegance. [22] “Mary Madcap” – it sounds like a character name in a play, perhaps signifying unconventional, unpredictable, mischievous, merry-hearted behavior. Was the young girl experimenting with who she was or might become? Was she teasing other members of the household as to her mischievous presence, indicating her refusal to play by the rules of the manuscript if indeed the manuscript assumed a set of rules? “Mary Madcap” is written above the line “I am,” which in turn precedes the date 1679, written twice. “I am” is blurry and a bit faded. The fanciful, punning name, the repeated date, the elusive “I am” all suggest experiments with an identity in process, and a young person who aspires to be someone worth paying attention to. [23]

Elsewhere in the Maddison manuscript, Mary Maddison the mother begins writing a receipt “for a dropsy”: “Take a pecke of sliced,” she begins, and then breaks off abruptly to inform us “I cannot write it right,” an astonishing admission, an expression of frustration that tells us something about this writer’s high expectations for herself and her refusal to fall short, her refusal to write it wrong. [24] The receipt “for a dropsy” comes part way down a page including other home recipes, for sores, for the gout, that she has written in the formal secretary hand. And she starts the recipe for a dropsy in secretary hand, too. But when she breaks off, she switches to the less formal italic hand to conclude “I cannot write it right,” showing us, even in admitting defeat, that she is significantly literate: she has a toolbox of hands from which to choose; when one frustrates her, she can switch to another. A hand on the page is not merely a neutral vehicle for transmitting information but also evidences a discerning mind at work, one that has decided what her most appropriate hand will be and what her next best option will be when a particular hand is not working as she hoped.

The many instances of writers practicing handwriting on the manuscript pages tell us that writers worked hard to gain the literacy that would give them entry into communities of the

kitchen and more broadly the household. We can see instances of orthographical practice in the Baumfylde manuscript in faded phrases like “many hands hands” or the single word “seeds” written in a different ink directly under the word “seedes” at the end of a receipt “To preserue Raspes” (fol. 22r). Sometimes these examples show us clear instances of collaboration across generations. In the Maddison collection, a confident hand writes five poetic lines: “Like swallows when the summers done / they fly and seeke some warmer sun / then wisely chuse one to your friend / whose love may: when your beauties end / Remaine still firme by you”; underneath the verses, a less experienced hand has written “Like Swallows”: this looks like a daughter engaging immediately with what her mother has written above. Has the mother chosen a poem to school her daughter in life wisdom? Is the daughter reflecting on her mother’s poem and giving it a name? Is the young writer about to copy out the whole poem herself? If so, the task remains undone because the next line of the manuscript shifts to a new hand setting out “an encomprable pomatum maid by Madam Thornton.” [25] Here a poem on the fleeting nature of friendship across time immediately precedes a receipt, attributed to someone who might herself be a friend, bringing the reader back to the demands of the household. [26] Together, the different hands, the different kinds of writing, the different points of view, and the different levels of authority all embody different points of orientation to the capacious household community. These distinct points of orientation serve as jumping off points for individual members of the household to practice and articulate their distinctive voices.

Like the Maddison manuscript, the Baumfylde includes a poignant poem, this one signed by Catherine Thatcher in her exquisite hand, likely the same Katherine Thatcher from the inside cover of the manuscript. Catherine’s poem is about the temptation to escape the systematic regularities of daily life through travel abroad; as such, it might be understood as an expression of the writer’s desire to distinguish herself over and against the rest of her community, who appear in her verses as “you”:

But why (you’l say should I abroad

For happiness Repair

Will distant Climes or new Aboard

Discharge the mind from Care

Yet let me try if Fortunes Smiles

Or frownes I’ll be Resign’d

Enjoy the good or bear it’s Ills

With a Submissive mind. (Fol. 10r)

The poem may project outward an internal debate over the question of whether life at home is enough. Catherine Thatcher almost simultaneously registers her desire to seek happiness abroad and quashes this desire by committing to cultivate a submissive mind. Choosing to privilege the happiness she might find at home, she nevertheless acknowledges that her decision will entail submission, suggesting a degree of ambivalence about subordinating her individual desires to the norms of her wider community.

The poem's precise location in the manuscript perhaps accounts for why the writer entertains the question of going abroad. The poem immediately follows two pages of receipts for treating baleful illnesses: "To deliver a woaman of a dead child," "For the Collicke and Stone" (fol. 7r), "To stop bleeding inwardly" and "to stop bleeding in a woond" (fol. 8r). After the tragic domestic image of miscarriage and the omnipresent domestic dangers of inward and outward bleedings and pains, Catherine might very well expect her imaginary interlocutor to understand why she would "abroad / For happiness Repair." Immediately following the poem is the page, previously discussed, featuring the seemingly incomplete list, 'once a Day / once a Week / once a Month / once a Year (fol. 10r). Read in the context of Catherine's poem, the list, written in her hand, illustrates the seriousness of her commitment to bring a submissive mind to bear: through the list, she seeks to regulate her thinking by subjecting it to the imperatives of household time. The fact that the list is never completed and that it is itself followed by four blank pages indicates the difficulty of completely subordinating her imaginative faculties to the pressures of the here and now.^[27] Catherine follows her signature by dating the poem ("Verses 1707") and specifying the location where she wrote it ("Saint Mary @ Hill. Billingsgate"). Thus, even her poem on the temptations of abroad returns her to the specific time and place of her lived experience and to her commitments there. Her community retains its potency.

The same is also the case with three aphorisms that appear toward the end of the manuscript. These aphorisms express both the individual writer's sense of wit and also the time-honored ideas of common sense that bind a community. The first says "In Wit, as Nature, what affects our hearts / Is not ye executness [exactness?] of external parts; / Tis not a Lip, or Eye, we beauty call / But the Joint force & full result of all" (fol. 61v). This could almost be advice on how to read the Baumfylde manuscript itself, respecting its holistic totality. "'Tis with our Judgments as our Watches," goes the next maxim, "none Go iust alike yet each believes his own" (fol. 61v). Encountering this *bon mot*, readers might smile at the recognition of values that their community holds dear while also absorbing those values, consciously or not, into their individual world views. Perhaps, more slyly, the aphorism implies the need to go beyond the limits of our own narrow horizons and question our judgements in light of other perspectives. Or, again, it might obliquely indicate the nature of the manuscript itself, a series of different entries by different hands at different times, each of which must have been judged by their contributors to be meaningful additions. If it is beneficial to consider different perspectives, the aphorism says, this manuscript has already collected them.

The many hands that begin the Baumfylde collection are thus essential throughout. The writer of one receipt might be the reader-practitioner of another; a girl watching her mother write a receipt one day might, on another day, her wedding day perhaps, or the day of her

mother's funeral, receive the whole manuscript as her own. The early modern manuscripts that survive hurtle forward in time, added to by succeeding generations, at some point becoming finished artifacts, closed archives, that any further additions would violate. But even as closed archives, the manuscripts continue to enable relationships across time. Coming to the manuscripts in later centuries, readers step into the "you," and imagine relationships between themselves and the long-dead hands behind the writing. Hilary Spurling published *Lady Elinor Fettiplace's Receipt Book* partly because the manuscript had been passed down for generations in her husband's family and the edition helped define her own place "as the latest wife in this chain" of wives who had cared for the heirloom.^[28] In March 2018, when Hillary Nunn and Amy Tigner ran a Shakespeare Association of America seminar on the Baumfylde manuscript, a number of the participants tried out some of the recipes in the manuscript. As this edition of the *Early Modern Studies Journal* attests, their papers were filled with accounts of their attempts to translate early modern instructions into contemporary terms, their spectacular failures, their valiant second efforts, their creative adaptations, and, usually, their eventual creation of something reasonably edible. Their relationship with the Baumfylde manuscript inspired these twenty-first century scholars to expand their own culinary horizons. In this way the manuscript is both historical and living, inspiring acts of identification as well as creative differentiation. Kowalchuk puts it well when she recounts publishing early modern receipts alongside her own notes about trying out those receipts in the kitchen: "I thus became an active participant in a kitchen conversation begun at least four hundred years earlier ... The fact that my mom helped me with some of the cooking ... made it that much more authentic."^[29]

The Baumfylde manuscript continues, then, to be rooted in communities while also serving as a catalyst for new relationships and innovative individual accomplishments. We do not need to project current assumptions about the kitchen, gender, or authorship back onto this or any of the early modern manuscripts in order to find value in a complex historical genre. By trying, as so many dedicated scholars are doing, to identify in the manuscripts domestic regimens different from our own, we might be able to reorient our contemporary thinking through encountering different ways of being. Of course, there are also continuities: we still inherit and experiment with dishes; we still collaborate; we still build community around the table. The Baumfylde manuscript and its many cognates, speaking to us from the past, have the potential to make us consider afresh our own investments, obligations, and power as creators of contemporary cultures of the kitchen.^[30]

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Notes

[1] Catherine Field, "‘Many hands hands’: Writing the Self in Early Modern Women’s Recipe Books," in *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle. (Ashgate, 2007), 49-63, p. 54.

[2] Caroline Bicks and Jennifer Summit, "Introduction," in *The History of British Women’s Writing, 1500-1610* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-14, p. 2.

[3] Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women’s Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 90.

[4] Catherine Richardson suggests that "Because middling-status women’s lives were so closely tied up with the performance of domestic work, ... writing about household issues might constitute a form of life-writing, even outside genres such as the diary." See "Household Writing" in Bicks and Summit, 89-107, p. 98.

[5] See Theophano; Jayne Elisabeth Archer, "The ‘Quintessence of Wit’: poems and recipes in early modern women’s writing," in *Reading and Writing Recipe Books*, ed. Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell (Manchester, 2013), 114-34; and Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen*, (U of Pennsylvania P, 2015), especially 85 and 141.

[6] See Michelle DiMeo, "Authorship and medical networks: reading attributions in early modern manuscript recipe books," in DiMeo and Pennell, 25-46; Francisco Alonso-Almeida, "Genre conventions in English recipes, 1600-1800," in DiMeo and Pennell, 68-90, pp. 68-9; and David Goldstein *Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge, 2013), esp. 158.

[7] See Wendy Wall on the kinds of writing found in receipt manuscripts, especially p. 11. If we find the manuscripts odd today, it is because our categories of understanding are so different from those of the early modern period. We are disoriented by the manuscripts not because they are intrinsically disorienting but because we are so far removed from the assumptions that they take for granted.

[8] Kowalchuk, 4; Goldstein notes that "The multiplicity of authorial practices in the manuscript recipe genre exceeds our present vocabulary of authorship and originality" (159).

[9] Kowalchuk, 40, 39.

[10] Kowalchuk, 42, 44.

[11] On the question of resistance, Wendy Wall argues that "recipes unearth a domestic set of experiences and competencies that were potentially at odds with the prescriptive idealization of the ‘good housewife’" (161).

[12] In *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity* (Palgrave, 2011), Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe powerfully argue that receipts also assume relationships between the human and the nonhuman. In the case of medicinal receipts and their reliance on a deep knowledge of ingredients from the natural world, “to create a remedy is to enact intimate connections between human and nonhuman material” (85).

[13] Michelle DiMeo defines the social network broadly, as “a series of connections that evolve over one’s lifetime, or possibly even ‘imagined’ communities” (42). For further rich discussions of receipt manuscripts in relation to social networks, see Sara Pennell, “Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes, and Knowledge in Early Modern England,” in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity / Trent Colloquium* (Ashgate, 2004), 237-58. Pennell notes the particularly female familial and professional networks through which manuscript recipes circulated, arguing that the manuscripts “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” (242). See also Goldstein, who writes about recipe attributions that “what is most impressive about these citations is the breadth of the networks they expose, extending far beyond one’s particular class or region” (148).

[14] Kowalchuk suggests that “the imperative form receipt books use ... might not represent the assertion of an individual woman’s instructions, but rather a disembodied authority of tradition, implying the way something simply is *done*” (42). This insight supports the idea that the imperative imposes communal authority on the reader; it might even encourage the writer-speaker to merge any sense of the speaking self with the “disembodied authority of tradition.”

[15] Wall, 3.

[16] Sara Pennell, also considering “the Latin root of recipe in *recipere*, to receive,” argues that it “embodies the mobility of information carried by the text” (239).

[17] In this vein, Catherine Field maintains that the selves that emerge through the writing of receipt books are “constructed as positive, authoritative, and capable of healing (and being healed) through the writing, practice, proving, and exchange of medicinal and culinary recipes” (59).

[18] Quoted in Kowalchuk, 305.

[19] Quoted in Kowalchuk, 67.

[20] For speculation about Mary Granville’s domestic aptitude, see Wall, 194.

[21] Caroline Bicks and Jennifer Summit note that domestic manuscripts constitute “a maternal inheritance that, more surely than land, can be passed from mother to child” (8).

[22] Theophano, 158.

[23] See Theophano, 158-60, for more on Mary Madcap. Theophano notes other pages in the book where “she practiced her initials MMMM repeatedly, trying different-shape letters as if trying on different personalities” (158).

[24] Theophano, 162-63.

[25] Theophano, 180-81.

[26] In fact, the tail of the “L” in “Like Swallowes” dips down to crowd the first line of the receipt for the “encomprable pomatum,” visually suggesting that the business of the kitchen pushes aside thoughts of swallows and fleeting friends, and also that the “swallowes” poem still somehow haunts the pomatum receipt, the melancholy fact of impermanence shadowing Madam Thornton’s “encomprable” directions for preserving a special hairstyle.

[27] It is not clear that the pages reflect sequential writing; the poem could conceivably predate the receipts that precede it or postdate the list that follows; however, a sequential reading like the one I propose produces an interpretation of the poem as a powerful momentary articulation of dissatisfaction with daily domestic life.

[28] Hilary Spurling, *Elinor Fettiplace’s Receipt Book: Elizabethan Country House Cooking*, (Viking, 1986), xi.

[29] Kowalchuk, 52.

[30] Goldstein eloquently expresses the ethical dimension of the receipt book. Speaking specifically of Anne Fanshaw’s receipt book, he argues that it “shows how to render visible the networks of obligations and duties that bind one person – textually, socially, religiously – to another in order to form a society” (139).