‘I’LL PLAY THE COOK’: RECONFIGURING THE EARLY MODERN KITCHEN

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By studying food one can understand social and cultural phenomena of those who consume it. From the earliest times food has occupied a prominent place, first in the oral and later in the written literary tradition.¹

Answering questions on the quotidian practices of ‘the middling sort’ in the early modern period is never going to be a straightforward task, especially with regard to the regular rhythms of food preparation. There are few remaining sources that give first-hand accounts of these types of domestic duties and so it takes an imaginative interdisciplinary approach in order to provide a persuasive argument concerning early modern domestic life. With this in mind, this essay will use the art and theatre of the early modern period to explore the portrayal of tensions and complexities in the domestic space of the kitchen. It will also use printed household manuals to (re)theorise relationships, practices, and performed roles within the household. The aim is to assess the perceived spheres of knowledge of both men and women within the kitchen in order to provide a more nuanced reading of an area of research that is perhaps too rigidly defined in current scholarship.

The main model that is being refuted is one that claims that the spheres of influence and activity in the household were, for the most part, clearly separated between men and women; Wendy Wall in *Staging Domesticity* uses this model as a rhetorical platform from which to emphasise her arguments.² My own choice of sources runs close to those that Wall uses, partly because I share her aim not to ‘attempt to write a history of the empirical realities of domesticity’ but rather to use the sources to ‘characterise household life as part of an argument about the tenor and force of representations’.³ Another reason these sources have been chosen is because I feel that Wall has misrepresented some of them, and in order to remedy that misrepresentation this essay will probe the evidence further and offer a counter argument to, or revised history of, Wall’s assertions about the early modern kitchen. In doing so, my argument will promote a conceptualisation of the domestic space put forward by Jane Whittle and Sara Pennell; a space where there was synchronicity and mutual support within the family as my discussion of the evidence will demonstrate.⁴

The front cover of Wendy Wall’s *Staging Domesticity* depicts a detail from Nicolaes

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³ Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, p. 16.
Maes’ painting *The Account Keeper* of 1656; the book is largely about English national identities as told through the domestic sphere and so the use of a Dutch painting may seem counter-intuitive. In choosing this image it appears that Wall is drawing links between the domestic practices of the English, as seen in theatre, with the practices of the Low Countries, portrayed in Dutch genre art of the seventeenth century. This essay will take the links between these two media further in order to reassess the role of men in the early modern kitchen.

There is scant evidence of kitchen activity, pictorial or otherwise, surviving of English origin, so the use of Dutch art is a necessity as it provides as close a representation of English domestic life as possible, owing to the relative similarities between the two countries. In fact there were religious, martial, economic, social and political ties between England and the Low Countries during this period, as well as a strong aesthetic and cultural connection. Artists such as Sir Anthony Van Dyck attended court in England, and Dutch art would have often been imported by landowners wealthy enough to afford the expense. The twelve images discussed in this essay cover a hundred year period from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, allowing us to see how representations of the kitchen and of food preparation changed during this period. I will offer a brief reading of each painting, but it is the cumulative effect of this sort of artwork that I wish to use as basis for discussion.

We notice that the earlier paintings, such as Aertsen’s *Butcher’s Stall*, foreground the butcher’s produce and populate the scene with the visceral reality of food production. Aertsen’s painting also contains the biblical image of the Flight into Egypt following the Massacre of the Innocents (Matthew 2:1-23). The combination of these two images invites a comparison and suggests that we think of the children that Herod condemned to death when we see the limbs, innards and corpses of the animals in the butcher’s shop. Furthermore, this painting shows us a man collecting water, and beyond him a group of men and women around a table by a fire. This image, then, is full of religious symbolism and encourages its audience to see the parallels between the domestic and the divine.

Joachim Beukelaer adopts a similar style to Aertsen in his series of paintings *The Four Elements*, perhaps unsurprisingly given that Aertsen was Beukelaer’s uncle and trained him in his workshop. The holy family can be seen crossing a bridge in the background of *Earth*. Jesus is walking on the Sea of Galilee and making fish appear in empty nets in *Water* as twelve types of fish are displayed on the market stall representing the disciples. *Fire* has Jesus seated with Martha and Mary in the background, whilst in the foreground women

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5 Pieter Aertsen, *Butcher’s Stall with the Flight into Egypt*, 1551, Oil on wood panel, Uppsala University, Sweden, [http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/aertsen/butchers-stall/butchers-stall.jpg](http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/aertsen/butchers-stall/butchers-stall.jpg)
prepare meat for cooking as two men and one woman attend to the fire. Finally, *Air* depicts a number of living and dead fowl as well as rabbits and cheeses for sale, whilst in the background the prodigal son can be seen leaning on a woman. This series of paintings reinforce to the viewer the importance of religious contemplation in the presence of food and elevate food to a cultural object capable of carrying and conveying meaning, rather than merely a physical lump of flesh to be consumed for sustenance.

Adriaen van Nieulandt the younger’s *Kitchen Scene* shows the transition from the overtly symbolic images of the late sixteenth century to a style more concerned with accurate representations of domestic interiors. Again the sheer scale of animal bodies strewn across the composition is striking, and furthermore we see that both men and women are working together in the preparation of food. Peter Wtewael’s painting emphasises the violence of these domestic tasks as he depicts a woman spitting meat ready for roasting. Wtewael’s painting also touches on the issue of flirtation amongst household staff, with the two workers in this scene sharing carnal looks amongst the carnage of the kitchen. Household manuals of the period warned male servants ‘not ouer boldly to dallie with their masters wife, daughters, or maidens’ as this sort of behaviour could lead to ‘filthie communication’. The presence of warnings such as these in conduct books attests to the fact that this was a common enough issue that needed addressing.

The next four paintings are all by David Teniers the younger and the similarities in content and composition, as well as style, are clearly visible. In *Two Men playing Cards in the Kitchen of an Inn* and *Backgammon Players* we can see men inhabiting the kitchen spaces of inns, with some gambling and some showing an interest in the food preparation by the fire. These paintings, then, show the kitchen to be a space in which both social interaction and forms of entertainment can take place. *Kitchen Scene* and *The Kitchen* present us with

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10 Adriaen van Nieulandt the younger, *Kitchen Scene*, 1616, oil on canvas, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Germany, [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e0/Adriaen_van_Nieulandt_%28II%29_-_Kitchen_Scene_-_WGA16570.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e0/Adriaen_van_Nieulandt_%28II%29_-_Kitchen_Scene_-_WGA16570.jpg)
a view into the workings of the kitchen of a large estate. The first appears to be under the purview of the woman seated to the left hand side of the painting, with two men at work preparing the food in the background and a maid entering the kitchen. The wealth of this kitchen can be deduced by the presence of the magnificent looking swan pie on the table, as well as the scale of cooking that is taking place with three spits of meat being turned at the same time. *The Kitchen* is an altogether busier scene with twelve people and five dogs, as well as a variety of dead animals. Here it seems that the man standing to the extreme left of the picture is the owner of the house, and the activity around him is performed almost exclusively by men. Again the scale of production is evidenced by the amount of meat being roasted by the fire.

The final image is Thomas Wijck’s *Kitchen Interior* and it shows a male cook leaning on a table with food in various stages of preparation surrounding him. In the background another man can be seen at work further into the kitchen. This painting seems a lot calmer than a lot of the other ones as it doesn’t have the pressing of bodies or the mountains of food or the ferocious heat of the fire, and it is eye catching because of its relative stillness.

I have selected these paintings as they introduce a number of issues surrounding status, professionalization, inns and public houses, and the position of servants within the household. These issues have been tackled in previous scholarship by social and economic historians such as Mark Overton, Sara Pennell, and Jane Whittle; however the study of contemporary art to figure out these complexities is a new approach to these issues in the household. I have also selected them because, despite their differences, they combine to portray the domestic space of the kitchen in a multiplicity of ways and serve to destabilise the diametrically opposed conception of male and female spheres of influence in the household. Furthermore, the rearrangement of housing that occurred due to the introduction of chimney stacks in England and the move from open halls to a division of the property into smaller rooms including a kitchen is echoed in these paintings. Jane Whittle suggests, as do the paintings, that it isn’t clear

that the provision of a kitchen separated men and women. It may be that the migration of cooking from the hall to the kitchen encouraged men and servants to migrate there, too, thus moving the social center of the house, rather than segregating women.\(^\text{18}\)

The choice of paintings becomes clearer in the next section as we look at drama of the period and begin to draw comparisons between the representations surrounding food on stage

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and in the artwork.

Plays of the early modern period, seemingly regardless of genre, often concern themselves with food, feasting and cookery; indeed Chris Meads draws links between the playwright and the cook by suggesting that ‘playwriting, like cookery, is essentially an adaptation process, a process of changing raw materials, and an often collaborative one at that’.\(^\text{19}\) This essay is also building on the concepts that Julie Sanders promotes, specifically that

> drama was one of the key means by which early modern English society strove to make sense of space and that attending not only to the spaces and places represented in plays written both for household and commercial performances but also to the agency those representations held in contemporary society in terms of what Henri Lefebvre termed the “production of space” can be a highly fruitful exercise.\(^\text{20}\)

Using this framework of cultural geography and applying it to dramatic representations of the kitchen, both as a physical place and a hypothetical space for change, will provide us with a greater understanding of performed roles in the domestic space.

Joan Fitzpatrick’s *Food in Shakespeare* is a great touchstone for looking at the importance of food on the early modern stage, however there are a number of aspects of Fitzpatrick’s argument that this essay will address. Before that however, I will consider the anonymous play *Arden of Faversham* to see how it portrays the ideological issues of male and female domestic knowledge.\(^\text{21}\) Interestingly, we are introduced in the first scene of the play to a painter named Clarke who can ‘temper poison with his oil’ (I.229) and effectively corrupt and destroy those who view his paintings. Clarke’s power is poignant with regard to this study as it adds weight to our understanding of early modern conceptions of the power and influence of artwork on its audience. Alice Arden, the wife and would-be killer of Thomas Arden, is mistrustful of the poisoned painting and so she chooses an alternative poison ‘such as might be put into his broth, / And yet in taste not to be found at all’ (I.280-1).

This chosen poison turns out to be the first of many failed attempts in the play by Alice and her lover Mosby to kill Thomas; the interest in this first attempt lies in Thomas’ knowledge of food and medicine to save himself. Alice makes Thomas’ breakfast, but on noticing that he has stopped eating the following exchange happens:


Alice  Husband, why pause ye? Why eat you not?

Arden  I am not well. There’s something in this broth
That is not wholesome. Didst thou make it, Alice?

Alice  I did, and that’s the cause it likes not you.

Then she throws down the broth on the ground.

There’s nothing that I do can please your taste.
You were best to say I would have poisoned you.

[...]

Arden  Why, gentle Mistress Alice, cannot I be ill
But you’ll accuse yourself? –
Franklin, thou hast a box of mithridate;
I’ll take a little to prevent the worst. (I.364-383)

This plot point comes early in the play and can easily be overlooked as the first of many failed attempts to kill Arden, but on closer inspection we can glean some vital information from it. The broth is produced off-stage and so we are unsure who made it, all we have to go on is Alice’s word, which is not the most reliable indicator of the truth. Arden’s suspicion is raised either due to a change in taste from his familiar breakfast, or a more ingrained mistrust of his wife and Mosby; Alice’s guilt is evidenced by her overreaction and an attempt to destroy the evidence of the plot by throwing the tainted broth to the floor. Arden recognises the fact that he may be succumbing to poison and his knowledge of homemade remedies serves him well as he calls Franklin forward to give him some mithridate, a cure-all antidote for poison found in some recipe books of the early modern period. Not only do we see, then, that Arden possesses knowledge that some would confine to the “woman’s sphere” of understanding, but also Franklin’s possession of the medicine shows the wealth of the characters, as mithridate was an expensive drug to make and it would take months to mature into readiness. If we follow on from Wall’s assertion that

Domestic tragedy, as we have seen, is defined not only by its subject matter but also by its realistic style of representation. What this usually entails is attention to the minute details of life, with the authenticity of this “slice of life” style bolstered by an overtly English setting.

We can then suggest that Arden’s knowledge is a realistic representation of the gentry,

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22 Pamphlets such as R. Band’s London Tryacle (1612) offered cheaper alternatives to mithridate and Venice Treacle and claimed to be ‘forceable against rotten and venemous diseases, and also of an easie and moderate price for the poor subject’ (A4v).
23 Wendy Wall, Staging Domesticity, p. 218.
and that analysing this moment in the play in great detail can offer us significant insight into the tensions and issues surrounding these daily routines. This moment in the play also has a much wider significance for the conceptions of England as a whole; Sanders says that ‘no household […] was a discrete entity’ and that actions within this type of domestic drama have implications at both ‘local and national’ levels.\textsuperscript{24} This sensational story – of repeated murder attempts and the breakdown of the family unit – highlights the tensions surrounding the preparation and consumption of food and, perhaps, hints at the fact that a little knowledge of “women’s work” is quite literally vital for men.

As with the artwork, this passage in the play highlights the influence of status and wealth on our understanding of domestic knowledge and reinforces Pina Palma’s assertion that ‘Renaissance literary discourse on food is circumscribed by social and economic boundaries’.\textsuperscript{25} Arden may have only delayed his inevitable demise in this sequence, but he has done so because his social position and wealth have allowed him to acquire knowledge held within these “receipt books”, and act on that knowledge with his friend Franklin by correctly diagnosing and self-medicating for poison.

Palma’s argument can also be applied to some of Titus’ actions in \textit{Titus Andronicus}.\textsuperscript{26} The actions of the play take place in the upper echelons of Roman society, with a hint towards the courtly world of Elizabethan England. In \textit{Food in Shakespeare} Fitzpatrick groups together the action from a number of plays based on their “foreignness” and says that

\begin{quote}
[i]n these plays Shakespeare takes his audience to new times and places (Hamlet’s Denmark, Titus’s Rome, Pericles’s Greece) and that which should be familiar is made strange: the body does not eat but is eaten (suggesting Catholic doctrine) and food becomes distinctly exotic: a vehicle for murder or punishment rather than a source of nourishment.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

My argument here is that the opposite effect takes place, especially in \textit{Titus Andronicus}. In the following passage we see a level of gore that is shocking to a modern audience, but may have had a less hysterical reaction from an Elizabethan audience that was largely desensitised to death, blood, violence and flesh (as in the genre art):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Titus} Hark, wretches, how I mean to martyr you.
This one hand yet is left to cut your throats,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Julie Sanders, \textit{The cultural geography of early modern drama}, 1620-1650, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{25} Pina Palma, ‘Of Courtesans, Knights, Cooks and Writers: Food in the Renaissance’, p. 51.
While that Lavinia ’tween her stumps doth hold  
The basin that receives your guilty blood.  
[…]
Hark, villains, I will grind your bones to dust,  
And with your blood and it I’ll make a paste,  
And of the paste a coffin I will rear,  
And make two pasties of your shameful heads,  
[…]  
*He cuts their throats*  
So, now bring them in, for I’ll play the cook  
And see them ready against their mother comes. (5.2.179-204)

The visceral scene of Titus and Lavinia, in their varying states of mutilation, killing and cooking Tamora’s two sons Chiron and Demetrius in order to feed them to their mother is packed full of potential meaning to be teased out. Here we are looking specifically at the language Titus uses to describe his actions, and what we see is akin to the instructions in a number of early modern recipe books.\(^\text{28}\) At this moment in the play, Titus is eliding the boundaries of time and space created between the early modern audience and the ancient Roman setting of the play. Using Elizabethan terminology, and with his speech resembling an extract from a book of recipes, Titus transgresses boundaries of gender, class, time and space, and manages to make the strange become shockingly familiar. Food is, in this instant, not only a ‘vehicle for murder’ but also a ‘source of nourishment’, sating Titus’ hunger for revenge. Titus is also using “women’s knowledge” of food preparation in order to exact his revenge on Tamora, symbolising the power of domestic knowledge whilst also undermining the perceived gender bias. Titus, as a member of the upper echelons of society and a soldier, ought not to have this understanding of the intricacies and methods for cooking and so the transgression of the social boundaries may have been as shocking as the violence enacted on stage.

When Titus announces that he will ‘play the cook’, what does he actually mean? The verb ‘play’ clearly has meta-theatrical allusions at this moment of high drama, but can we come close to identifying an early modern stereotype of a cook? If we return again to the paintings appended to this essay we are left frustrated as there doesn’t seem to be an archetypal image of a cook that runs through any of the works; equally, searching through probate inventories gives an indication of wealth and possessions, but only an estimate of the

\(^{28}\) John Partridge’s recipe for baking woodcocks reads as follows: ‘Perboile them, and being trussed, put them into the Coffin with sweete larde about them, season them with pepper and salt, and a good quantity of butter, let them bake one hower and a halfe, and so serve them’ (*The Closet or Treasury of hidden Secrets*, 1584).
value of clothing and not any physical description. What we can assume is that Titus is referring to a cook as being a male profession, as the OED’s definitions for the noun suggest a gendered division in the understanding of the word pre-1616 (cook, n. 1a, 1b). I would suggest that in the next scene, when we are given the stage direction ‘Enter TITUS like a cook’ (5.3.25 s.d.), he must have been wearing something recognisable to the audience as being the outfit of a cook. As a piece of evidence the ‘Peacham Drawing’ is highly problematic and scholars have been in debate for almost a century about its authenticity and merit.29 What we can say is that the sketch records the costume of a group of players acting out a story that is, or is from a similar source to, Titus Andronicus, thought to be recorded around the end of the sixteenth century. The fact that the majority of the costume is of early modern styling, with a few characters’ costumes hinting toward the Roman era, suggests that this was a common practice amongst theatre companies. If so, then it is highly likely that Titus’ original cook’s disguise would have been recognisably Elizabethan. Therefore a lost stereotype must have existed for the disguise scene to work, and if this is the case then again there is elision between the imagined Roman world and the reality of Elizabethan England.

In a recent RSC production the choice was made to use mainly modern dress and Titus’ appearance altered from a red military uniform to a black dress with a white collar and white apron on.30 This gender transformation through costume is very much a modern interpretation of what “playing the cook” means, and has transformed Titus’ transgression from one of a change in class and status, to one of gender. This farcical moment of cross-dressing in Michael Fentiman’s production could also have been an attempt to find humour in amongst all the savagery and bloodshed of the climactic scenes of the play. With this gendered turn in the final act, Fentiman’s staging as a whole takes on a different register entirely and attempts to really push home the issues of male and female power and influences that is so current and relatable to our modern audiences. In the early modern period, having a nobleman who has previously been offered the imperial crown of Rome “relegate” himself to the knowledge of the kitchen and ‘play the cook’ would have been equally as powerful.

Another character in Titus who shows an early modern understanding of the methods described in domestic literature is Aaron. After the Nurse brings news to Aaron of the birth of his son he takes steps to calm her, sits her down in a vulnerable position, and then kills her. Fitzpatrick talks about the violence of the description of killing a pig in Thomas Moffett’s cookbook of 1655, yet fails to see the mimesis present in Aaron’s actions.31 Moffett suggests that efforts should be made to calm the animal, and that the fatal blow should come from behind. This cookbook was printed just outside the time frame of this essay, but the method

passed down through oral tradition would have been similar to the written source. In fact, Wendy Wall states that the writers of the cook books would often ‘defer to a seemingly inaccessible but foundational world of proverbial lore and everydayness’ and therefore merely regurgitate the knowledge back to its practitioners.32 After having completed these first two steps Aaron then says:

Aaron ‘Wheak, Wheak’ – so cries a pig preparèd to the spit. 

(4.2.145)

The mockery of the Nurse’s screams is also an impression of a pig’s squealing and the fact that Aaron knows these early modern methods is a further reminder that the façade of the Roman world is at points very thin in Titus Andronicus.

What the analysis of both of these plays does is show us the violence of the domestic space, and also highlights instances when knowledge of the domestic space is not confined to the women’s sphere. Food links life and death together closely, and the control over the production of food was, in a large part, the control over life and death. This unsettling fact has been dealt with in drama to illustrate the importance of these daily rituals. By having men kill and trick women in Titus Andronicus, Shakespeare is showing how these transgressions can have extreme consequences.

With so much at stake on a daily basis, the growing number of cook books, books of secrets, and other such domestic literature in the late sixteenth century all aimed to ensure that each family unit was performing its part within the larger common weal. Wall claims that ‘Women’s work emerges as the most basic source of a native knowledge lodged deep in the recesses of memory, and domesticity becomes instrumental in fantasies about national identity’ and she claims that there is a tension within this type of literature about what the male writers should and shouldn’t know.33

I feel that Wall presents a rather one sided view of the printed sources and so, to address that imbalance, this essay will now look at John Partridge’s Treasurie of commodious Conceits. Wall uses Partridge’s book to make the point that often, within these manuals, ‘the text veers unsteadily when citing a source, crossing back on itself so as to suggest the problem of knowing, or not knowing, women’s work’.34 Wall notes a fear or apprehension in the voice of the writer at crossing over into the woman’s domain and yet fails to mention that, according to the title page of the 1573 edition of Partridge’s book that she quotes from, the book is not only ‘Mete and necessarie for the profitable vse of all estates both men and women’ but furthermore it was ‘Gathered out of sundrye Experiments lately practised by men.

32 Wendy Wall, Staging Domesticity, p. 31. 
33 Wendy Wall, Staging Domesticity, p. 35. 
34 Wendy Wall, Staging Domesticity, p. 32.
of great knowledge’, surely undermining Wall’s classification of this book as ‘the first cookbook in England written specifically for women’. In addition, we can see that within the text of the 1584 edition Partridge gives over a number of his chapters to men. Chapter 13 tells the reader how to ‘make paste of Sugar, whereof a man may make all manner of fruities, and other fine things’ and later on in the book, in the section devoted to physic, Chapter 81 describes ‘The maner to make another kinde of dyet drinke, of stronger operation for the same diseases, which by the practise onelye of one man, hath done very great good, as well in the City of London, as in diuerse other parts of the Realme’.

The sense we get from books such as Partridge’s and ‘The good husvifes Ievvell. Wherein is to be found most excellent and rare Deuises for Conseites in Cookerie, found out by the practise of THOMAS DAWSON’ is that men played an active role in the gathering and dissemination of domestic knowledge, and that men were also included in the intended audience of the instruction. Wall categorises the potential audiences for these types of books as

- newly urbanised wives who wanted to mask country practices;
- citizens interested in European novelties;
- daughters of cashpoor aristocratic families in need of positions;
- yeomen and country gentry interested in efficient agrarian work;
- men who delighted in viewing tasks designated as female.

This essay takes umbrage with the suggestion of the final section of interested readers. By attempting to remove all traces of male involvement in the domestic sphere, works such as Wall’s are diminishing our understanding of the overall make-up of early modern life. Whilst raising some excellent points about the ways in which ‘plays overlay social debates [...] onto the paradoxical representation of domesticity emerging in early print forms’, Walls is neglectful of a balanced treatment of the sources at her disposal.

This essay has attempted to offer a more nuanced view of early modern domestic life than previous writers. By ‘resisting simple binaries’ of male and female spheres of knowledge, this essay hopes to have shown that the idealism held within domestic literature was more of a rhetorical strategy than a commentary on the actual proceedings within the kitchen. The problematic nature of the types of sources available in the attempted reconstruction of quotidian domestic practice tends to leave us asking more questions than we can find answers for, and this is by no means a conclusive answer. Much more work needs to be done to solve the issues raised here, because ‘[i]f we do not investigate the ordinary, the

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35 Wendy Wall, Staging Domesticity, p. 42.
36 Italics added for emphasis.
37 Wendy Wall, Staging Domesticity, p. 18.
38 Wendy Wall, Staging Domesticity, p. 58.
meaning of the extraordinary is infinitely impoverished’ and so our understanding of the early modern period should be firmly rooted in the domestic and the everyday. During the period, countless factors had influence on the day to day workings of the house: architectural and structural advancements led to an alteration in the layout of housing; the ‘middling sort’ gained an economic foothold and began to influence the tastes and fashions of the nation, including the types of food eaten; mass migration into urban areas and economic diversification led to less domestic production and an increase in the wealth of public victuallers and food production specialists, such as butchers, bakers and brewers; and increasing levels of literacy and the reduction of the price of books meant that the lower classes needed to be catered for in domestic literature and cookbooks. This essay has tried to capture some of these influences in its analysis and has worked with Fitzpatrick’s suggestion that ‘then, as now, theories of food and drink and choices about eating and drinking encode economic circumstances, social aspirations, national identity, physical health, and self-worth’.41

Both ideologically and physically then, it seems that ‘[h]ousehold spaces tie individuals together in ways which are both stabilising and troubling, implicating them in endless permutations of interconnection’ and that in doing so the very nature of the house, as well as all its literary and cultural paraphernalia, ‘reveal[s] the sheer impracticality’ of the binary division of men’s and women’s work’.42 The popular culture of the theatre, of painting, and of advice literature leads us to the realisation that ‘housework was not exclusively female’.43

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