

“The Quintessence of Wit”: Domestic Labor, Science, and Margaret Cavendish’s Kitchen Fancies

By Samantha Snively

When William Cavendish described his wife Margaret’s first literary work as a “limbeck, where the Muses sit /Distilling there the Quintessence of Wit,” his choice of metaphor was particularly apt.¹ The alembic, a distillation tool with many uses, weaves together the realms of science, domestic work, and women’s writing.² In *Staging Domesticity*, Wendy Wall argues that the practices of household management, medicine, and experimental science were much less distinct in the early modern period than scholars had previously thought. Following Wall’s influence, subsequent work by scholars of women’s domestic labor and early modern science has continued to demonstrate just how closely household work intertwined with the emerging new science, medicine, and other typically masculine-gendered pursuits. Margaret Cavendish’s *Poems and Fancies* (1653, 1664) figures the relationship between scientific investigation, domestic labor, and women’s writing in a collection of poems about atomic theory, mathematics, anatomy, philosophy, and domesticity. The focus of this paper is a series of twenty-five poems tucked into the middle of *Poems and Fancies* that describe a personified and feminized “Nature” using household imagery. These poems group naturally together into a subgenre that I call “kitchen fancies,” and ten of them imitate the form of early modern recipes.³ Despite their coherence as a subgenre, these poems have not yet been examined as a distinct element within *Poems and Fancies*. In the kitchen fancies, Cavendish combines stylistic elements of early modern recipe collections, conduct manuals, and methods of experimental science in order to elevate women’s roles in experimental observation and the emerging new science.

¹ Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies, Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, The Second Impression, much Altered and Corrected* (London: Printed by William Wilson, 1664), A2v. *Early English Books Online*. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A53061.0001.001>.

² Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Elizabeth Scott-Bauman, referencing Wendy Wall’s work in *Staging Domesticity*, writes, “Laboratories built in the mid-1650s ‘show a variety of tools identical to those in a well-stocked *batterie de cuisine*’. Not only did laboratories resemble kitchens, but men and women actually practiced science (most obviously chemistry) in their kitchens,” in “Bak’d in the Oven of Applause: The Blazon and the Body in Margaret Cavendish’s *Fancies*,” *Women’s Writing* 15.1 (2008): 89. Distillation was only one of many techniques that crossed the boundaries between scientific methods and domestic labor: Wall writes that the alembic and still were used in the alchemical search for a quintessence as well as in the housewife’s kitchen to distill spirits or create rose-water; Wendy Wall, “Distillation: Transformations in and out of the Kitchen,” in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories*, ed. Joan Fitzpatrick (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 90-95. Michael Best, in his introduction to one of the more famous household manuals of the time, Gervase Markham’s *The English Housewife*, notes that distilled waters were often used as medicines or “kitchen physics,” and the same alembic would have been used to clarify or refine wine; Michael R. Best, *The English Housewife* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), xli-xliii.

³ The rest of the kitchen fancies feature conceits drawn from elsewhere in the house but still within the realm of the domestic. There is no clearly defined conclusion to the kitchen fancies, but I suggest that following the poem “Nature’s Exercise and Pastime,” the conceits in the “Fancies” section are too far removed from the world of domesticity to be considered “kitchen fancies.”

The culinary and domestic conceits throughout the kitchen fancies imagine the kitchen as parallel to the laboratory in ways similar to those Wendy Wall, Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, and Amy Tigner have identified, reiterating that knowledge of nature can be gained through the practices and labor of the kitchen.⁴ These poems also appeal to the communities of female readers already attuned to the mechanisms of the recipe book and household manual. By referencing similar literacies and subjects, the poems acknowledge and draw upon collections of knowledge exclusively found in the space of interwoven scientific and domestic practices.

The early modern housewife possessed a body of highly specialized, experimental knowledge, and often shared it with her female friends and relatives. Communities formed around the production and circulation of recipe collections and household manuals, leading to a treasury of practices and experiential knowledge that Wendy Wall has termed "kitchen literacy."⁵ I argue that Cavendish employs a kind of kitchen literacy by appropriating the form of the domestic manual to craft her poems, allowing them to circulate among female readers already connected through household networks. Calling on other women to test and circulate her writing while validating their labor as a form of scientific inquiry, Cavendish envisions a community of female readers and consumers forming around her work and, through it, engaging in dialogue with the leading writers and thinkers of contemporary scientific inquiry.

Experimental science and observation, often the work of household practitioners, were the provenance of what became the Royal Society.⁶ By the time the Society was founded in 1660, amateur scientists were so common that one of the Society's aims was to "establish a demarcation between professional scientists and mere amateurs," which meant that "women were systematically barred from membership . . . and thus from the process of producing legitimate knowledge about nature."⁷ Cavendish's kitchen fancies, however, propose the domestic sphere as a space for continuing experimentation by asking the reader to envision practicing the culinary arts as analogous to replicating an experiment, with a greater understanding of nature as an end result in both cases.⁸ In these poems, the language of science merges with the vocabulary of the kitchen, and the poems' construction as recipes suggests the writer's understanding of the matter that composes Nature, as well as a related inverse: that readers will be able to understand Nature's components by "recreating" the recipes.

⁴ See Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, and "Distillation: Transformations in and out of the Kitchen"; Scott-Bauman, "Bak'd in the Oven of Applause"; and Deborah Harkness, introduction to *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁵ Wendy Wall, "Literacy and the Domestic Arts," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 386.

⁶ In Elizabethan London, "naturalists, medical practitioners, mathematicians, teachers, inventors, and alchemists . . . provided later scientists with [experimental science's] foundations: the skilled labor, tools, techniques, and empirical insights that were necessary to shift the study of nature out of the library and into the laboratory," writes Deborah Harkness, *The Jewel House*, 2. See also Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁷ Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson, introduction to *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press Ltd, 2000), 25.

⁸ David Goldstein writes of the household guides of Hannah Woolley that "To *practice* a recipe is to treat it as an experiment, to use it as a template for empirical exploration and observation," and Cavendish's kitchen fancies are informed by a similar approach to method; David Goldstein, "Woolley's Mouse: Early Modern Recipe Books and the Uses of Nature," in *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity*, ed. Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 117.

For example, in the poem “Head and Brain Dress’d,” Cavendish envisions the composition of the brain, using the process of preparing a stew to theorize the brain’s component parts. The first four lines concern the abstract, metaphorical, and affective ingredients of the brain, including reason, judgment, wit, and fancies, but the next two lines consider the physical components of the mind: “A Bunch of Sent, Sounds, Colours tied up fast / With threads of Motion, and strong Nerves to last.”⁹ The language of motion looks back to the atom poems earlier in the collection, in which Cavendish speculates not only on the literal motions of physical processes but also on the “motions” of imagination, thoughts, and the animating force inside all life—precisely the concerns of the Atomists whose theories she subscribed to at the time. In “Of the Blood,” she details the circulatory system and references the recent discovery, through William Harvey’s dissections in 1616, of the system of pulmonary circulation, noting that “Some by their Industry and Learning found / That all the Blood like to the Sea runs round.”¹⁰ William Harvey published *De Motu Cordis (On the Motion of the Heart and Blood)* in 1628, and Cavendish’s topical reference to the discovery demonstrates her interest in and familiarity with the subject. By importing the theory of motion into her kitchen fancies, Cavendish “renders the increasingly male sphere of science accessible to women,” as Elizabeth Scott-Baumann notes.¹¹ And by conveying the ideas of motion through the conceit of a recipe, Cavendish also puts these scientific concepts literally into women’s hands for them to manipulate and fashion in their own terms. Furthermore, the kitchen fancies’ inclusion in Cavendish’s scientifically-minded text indicate an equivalency of topics—both the kitchen and the laboratory can be sites of exploration and provocation of imagination and fancy. As English society’s perception of practitioners of science was shifting to the cult of the individual male scientist, Cavendish’s inclusion of the women’s sphere in her own scientific investigations elevates and validates its practices and concerns to the status of the scientific. *Poems and Fancies* shows its female readers that they need not feel excluded from scientific inquiry, and the poems appeal to the creative experimentation they already engage in at home as a method perfectly suited to scientific investigation.

One such poem, “Nature’s Cook,” highlights the transmission of household knowledge by referencing the intersection of domestic labor and another branch of scientific inquiry, that of medicine. Early modern housewives often acted as physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries for their household and the local community.¹² “Nature’s Cook” draws its conceit from the extensive knowledge of disease and the shrewd observational skills that early modern housewives needed to spot and diagnose illness. In the poem, the cook, named Death, serves Nature dishes “cooked” through various forms of illnesses, diseases, and fatal ailments.¹³ The list of ailments and their characteristics featured in the poem suggests the writer’s knowledge of *materia medica*, and the poem presumes this same familiarity in its reader:

⁹ Cavendish, 161.

¹⁰ Cavendish, 53.

¹¹ Scott-Bauman, 88.

¹² See Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 3-4, and Margaret Pelling, “Nurses and Nursekeepers: Problems of Identification” in *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations, and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (New York: Longman, 1998): 179-202.

¹³ Cavendish, 156.

Some Death doth Roast with *Feavers* burning hot,
And some he Boyls with *Dropsies* in a Pot;
Some are *Consum'd* for Jelly by degrees,
And some with *Ulcers*, Gravy out to Squeeze;
Some, as with Herbs, he stuffs with *Gouts* and Pains (emphasis mine).¹⁴

The methods of food preparation Cavendish connects with their matching ailments read like a catalog of recipes, elaborately winding together both the domestic conceit and the diagnostic reference handbook. These clever connections reinforce the intermeshed realms of medicine and cooking by noting their reliance on observation, both of disease symptoms and of the physical processes of cooking. Furthermore, both the kitchen and the surgery share an investment in preserving human life as well as herbs and flowers.¹⁵ Preservation methods abound in Cavendish's poem above—including references to jelly-making, drying and preserving meat, pickling, and the making of salt bacon and blood puddings. The poem's attention to preservation suggests a parallel between the preservation of food and the preservation of human life, achieved through observation and understanding of disease. Katherine Capshaw Smith reads Nature's cannibalism in this poem as Cavendish "forcing the reader . . . to recognize the ultimate meaninglessness of life and death," an apt reading given the thread of autocannibalism that winds throughout the kitchen fancies.¹⁶ However, seen in light of early modern women's household medical responsibilities, "Nature's Cook" can also be read with a conclusion as positive as Capshaw Smith's is dark, advocating for the preservation of human life and distributing the knowledge necessary to do so. While it can be said that a cannibalistic feast may be the finale of Nature's cooking, I argue that this poem crafts a positive image of the housewife, positioning women as possessors of medico-scientific and culinary knowledge that can counteract the effects of natural disease. Reading human life as the nourishment or "ingredients" of Nature suggests that women have a unique understanding of the workings of Nature, gained by means of the knowledge they acquire in the kitchen. This specialized knowledge allows them to understand the concerns of medicine and apply their domestic skills to benefit human life.

Many of Cavendish's kitchen fancies take on the form of actual recipes, combining the language of the kitchen with the themes and concerns of conduct books, resulting in poems that create a miniature domestic manual within Cavendish's text. These recipe-poems envision a reader familiar with the generic conventions of the recipe-book and domestic manual, while their conceits

¹⁴ Cavendish, 157.

¹⁵ Amy Tigner notes a similar move in the work of one of Cavendish's contemporaries, Hannah Woolley, who authored a number of recipe books in the 1660s and '70s, in which the techniques of the kitchen and the surgery were closely allied if not inseparable. The process of preservation, one of Woolley's particular concerns, "is also clearly part of the larger culinary and medicinal production that constituted kitchen science"; Amy Tigner, "Preserving Nature in Hannah Woolley's *The Queen-Like Closet, or Rich Cabinet*," in Munro and Laroche, 130. Woolley "identifies the art of cooking with chemistry and empirical natural philosophy," and Cavendish makes a similar comparison in "Nature's Cook," Tigner, 130.

¹⁶ Katharine Capshaw Smith, "Bisket of Love, which crumbles all away": The Failure of Domestic Metaphor in Margaret Cavendish's Poetic Fancies," in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*, ed. Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2002), 61.

presuppose a form of domestic literacy that privileges women's household work and the experiential knowledge necessary to complete it. In poems like "A Posset for Nature's Breakfast," "A Bisk for Nature's Table," "A Tart," and "A Heart Drest," Cavendish crafts recipes for the "pleasing meats" of ideal womanhood, passionate love, youthful beauty, and other abstract concepts. "A Posset for Nature's Breakfast" describes the housewife Life as she "Scums the Cream of Beauty with Times Spoon," then "Boyls it in a Skillet clean of Youth, /And thicks it well with crumbled Bread of Truth," puts it on the fire, then "Cuts in a Lemmon of the Sharpest Wit," and adds "A Handfull of Chast Thoughts, double Refin'd, /Six Spoonfulls of a Noble and Gentle Mind, A Grain of Mirth to give't a little Taste" and then feeds the result to Nature.¹⁷ An early modern reader could easily have cooked an actual posset from this poem (if the ingredients were not abstract nouns) given its adherence to the conventions of the recipe format, and the rest of the poems similarly include instructions to make olios, "bisks," hodge-podges, tarts, and dressed meats. Much more abstract than cookbooks of today, early modern recipes gestured to possibility rather than strictly formalizing a given recipe. Even complex dishes usually consisted of a simple outline of the ingredients and methods of a dish, leaving space for adaptation, improvisation, and individual taste.¹⁸

The non-specificity of Cavendish's recipes—for example, just how much of Beauty's cream and how many "Eggs of Fair and Bashfull Eyes" go into the posset—also calls attention to the importance of practical, experiential knowledge and experimentation necessary to crafting the dishes and thus to reading the poems. In "A Heart Drest," the epistemological gap between stated instructions and edible finished product is filled by the housewifely reader's knowledge of technique, measurements, and method—a body of knowledge external yet supplemental to Cavendish's text. Cavendish describes the ingredients that go into the dish of dressed Heart, but leaves out almost all instructions regarding amounts, methods, cooking times, and the entire recipe for the "Sawce of Jealousie."¹⁹ The wit of the conceit—and indeed the kind of literacy produced by actual early modern recipes—envisions that the reader will be able to supply these missing steps and supplement the text with her own body of knowledge. The kitchen fancies provide a way to reverse-engineer the components of Nature: female readers use their specific set of skills to investigate and manipulate

¹⁷ Cavendish, 158. A posset, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is a sweet drink made from hot milk curdled with alcohol and flavored with herbs and spices, often used medicinally. Even in this recipe, medicine and cookery overlap, as a posset could become the base for a syllabub (a dessert) served at dinner or a drink given to the ill. An olio is a spiced meat and vegetable stew of Spanish or Portuguese origin, "Hence: any dish containing a great variety of ingredients." The word also came to mean "any mixture of heterogeneous elements," or a hodgepodge of any kind, including literary. Thus, when Cavendish published *The Worlds Olio* in 1655, she used a domestic term to describe a collection of poems and essays on scientific, medical, philosophical, and related topics.

¹⁸ As an example of typical early modern recipe formats, I include a recipe from Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife* (1653). Compare Cavendish's poem "A Tart" with Markham's recipe for a yellow tart [a custard tart]: "Take the yolks of Eggs and breake away the filmes, and beat them well with a little cream; then take of the sweetest and thickest cream that can be got, and set it on the fire in a clean skillet, and put into it sugar, cinnamon, Rosewater, and then boyl it well: when it is boyl'd, and still boyl'ing, stir it well, and as you stir put in eggs, and so boyl it till it curdle, then take it from the fire and put it into a strainer, and first let the thin whay [whey] run into a by dish, then strain the rest very well, and beat with a spoon, and so put it into the tart coffin, and adorn it as you do your prune tart, and so serve it, and this carrieth the colour yellow"; Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife*, in *A Way to get wealth, containing six principall vocations, or callings, in which every good husband or huswife may lawfully employ themselves* (London: Printed by W. Wilson for E. Brewster and George Sawbridge, 1657), Special Collections, University of California, Davis, G7r-v.

¹⁹ Cavendish, 161.

them. Nature's cooks are figured as in control precisely *through* their recipes rather than as insignificant because of them. From the early modern kitchen, notes Wall, radiated control of the household: "The ailing human, waiting to ingest home remedies, might well have quivered in the face of the housewife, who so evidently had her finger on the pulse of life and death."²⁰ The cook of nature is presented as a positive role in which a specific set of skills contributes to the understanding—and pleasure—of Nature.²¹

By including recipe-shaped poems in her collection, Cavendish references the unseen labor and particular literacy found in circles of women's textual consumption and production, and invites these communities of readers to partake of her own work. A number of scholars, including Wendy Wall and Sara Pennell, have begun to analyze manuscripts of recipe books collected, transcribed, and annotated by women.²² The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw an enormous rise in the publication of handbooks, manuals, and miscellanies, and Pennell notes that "cookery literature was an attractively viable non-fiction genre. . . . Between 1650 and 1750 no fewer than 106 'new' culinary texts and 169 subsequent editions of texts in print were published." The topics of the domestic manuals ranged from the solidly practical recipe collections to the emerging genre of "the compleat housewife." These manuals brought together "definitional" skills for genteel women with "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."²³ In addition to the published texts in circulation, early modern women often compiled their own recipe collections, borrowing from friends and family and modifying their own copies of published texts. With each transmission, the recipes needed to be tested and in many cases emended, leaving behind

²⁰ Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 4.

²¹ The kitchen fancies also evoke the genre of the conduct manual, and thus widen further the circle of prospective readers of Cavendish's text by gesturing to another type of knowledge-circulation and regulation common among women's communities. Household guides and domestic manuals of the seventeenth century often included descriptions of the ideal housewife and prescribed behavior for a woman. One famous example, Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife*, opens with a discourse on proper womanly conduct. Markham writes, "Our English House-wife must be of chaste thought, stout courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good neighbor-hood, wise in Discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick of speech but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affaires, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skillful in the worthy knowledges which do belong to her Vocation"; Markham, 3-4. Cavendish includes a number of these tropes in her kitchen fancies, replicating the format of household guides in her own work and employing her recipes to enable the creation of properly behaved subjects. "A Posset for Nature's Breakfast" echoes many of Markham's precepts above: among the "ingredients" that go into the posset are truth, "Fair and Bashfull Eyes," "a Countenance that's Wise," sharp wit and discretion, "Chast Thoughts," "Noble 'nd Gentle mind," and good health (Cavendish, 158). "An Olio Drest for Nature's Dinner" details the preparation of a passionate lover's heart, but advises temperance of the emotions, for "Nature's apt to Surfeit of this Meat" (Cavendish, 159). "A Bisk for Nature's Table" resembles less a conduct manual than a blazon, and Elizabeth Scott-Bauman has masterfully described the ways in which Cavendish's kitchen fancies ironize blazonic tendencies, subverting another form of regulating women's conduct; Scott-Bauman, "Bak'd in the Oven." Furthermore, many of these conduct manuals for women were written by men, and by writing a little conduct-guide of her own, Cavendish both draws on and subverts the genre, expanding women's authority and the influence of their knowledge.

²² See Wall, "Literacy and Domestic Arts"; 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*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); and David Goldstein, "How to Eat a Book: Ann Fanshawe and Manuscript Recipe Culture," in *Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 139-70.

²³ Pennell, 239.

“distinctive records of practice” that recall the experimentation and regulation of knowledge occurring in the kitchen.²⁴ The University of California, Davis’s 1657 edition of Gervase Markham’s *The English Hous-wife* provides one example: an early modern owner not only added her own recipe for a remedy for “scurvey/rickets” in the margins but also corrected Markham’s advice, changing a step in a recipe for jelly from “bruise [the fruits] in fair water” to “boyle,” which is the correct method.²⁵ Emendations like these figure the early modern recipe as an ongoing experiment, requiring the personal, experiential knowledge of a housewife to render them viable.

The recipe-in-circulation required not only the knowledge of a specialized set of skills but also created the need for what Wall terms “kitchen literacy”: a set of skills that “used navigational tools to shape conceptions of household labor even as they articulated specific practices for readers to emulate. . . . [The manuscripts] entangled conceptions of household labor with methods for reading.”²⁶ Building on Pennell’s and Wall’s work, I argue that Cavendish’s kitchen fancies articulate a kind of “kitchen literacy,” combining the actual literacy required to read the text with the practical literacy required to understand the kitchen conceits. The poems require such a kitchen literacy: they ask the reader to be familiar with not just different types of food but also preparation methods, proper recipe composition, and other knowledge that could only be gained through experience—for example, the regulation of oven temperature referenced in “Nature’s Oven”: “By thinking much the Brain too Hot will grow, /And Burn them up, if Cold, Fancies are Dough.”²⁷ And by making analogies between the way to read a recipe collection and the way to read her book, Cavendish also invites a reciprocity and dialogue from her (female) readers, asking them to “test” her poems as they would verify a recipe.

Throughout her writing and especially in *Poems and Fancies*, Cavendish’s relationship to domesticity is complex and multifaceted. She deploys modesty tropes yet unabashedly declares her desire for abundant fame; she uses domestic metaphors to justify women’s writing ability yet paragraphs later declares that women waste too much time on “little Employments, which makes our Thoughts run Wildly about”; and her stated distaste for household matters strikes a dissonant note with the familiarity she displays with kitchen matters.²⁸ Scott-Baumann argues that Cavendish’s use of domestic metaphors “is always self-conscious and often ironic,” as she crafts counter-blazons out of her kitchen fancies or deploys recipes alongside atomic theory to collapse distinctions between the two.²⁹ Additionally, Cavendish uses her facility with domestic pursuits alongside her corpus of scientific, natural, and philosophical knowledge in order to demonstrate her skill as a writer and thinker. In the prefatory materials, Cavendish states her desire for fame and renown, and as her text circulates, the subjects of her poems also gain recognition. By including domestic practices and recipes alongside the popular topics of science, Cavendish garners prominence for traditionally gendered—and thus often unnoticed—labor and knowledge. “The cult of the individual scientist,”

²⁴ Pennell, 248.

²⁵ Markham, 48, 88.

²⁶ Wall, “Literacy,” 386.

²⁷ Cavendish, 158.

²⁸ Cavendish, B2r.

²⁹ Scott-Bauman, 88.

writes Scott-Baumann, "has obscured the heavy involvement of women. Servants, wives, and daughters repeated experiments in the kitchen to fulfill the Royal Society's methodology of proof," and *Poems and Fancies* records one such instance. Cavendish's work gestures to women's involvement in scientific experiments while also drawing these communities of women into the cult of the professional scientist, suggesting that they too possess the skills and knowledge necessary to advance scientific inquiry.³⁰ As a genre placed alongside her other scientifically-minded poems, Cavendish's kitchen fancies suggest that not only are women's fancy-based thoughts suited to scientific knowledge production, but that the methods by which they work and the circles within which they circulate their knowledge also represent spaces of scientific exploration—important contributions to the speculation and experimentation of the Scientific Revolution.³¹

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³⁰ Scott-Bauman, 89.

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