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Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England

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Situating Conciliarism in Early Modern Spanish Thought
Situer conciliarisme dans la pensée espagnole de la première modernité

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which invites debate, reflection, and further contributions on a widening variety of textual *corpora*. This fine book has much to recommend it, especially to English-language students of Renaissance literature and history who seek to weigh the importance of one of Renaissance Europe's principal literary idioms as its distinctive forms appear in a representative variety of national contexts.

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Leong, Elaine.
Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. Pp. 288 + 19 ill. ISBN 978-0-2265-8366-2 (paperback) US$32.50.

Elaine Leong's book examines the different ways that households collected, tested, and assessed recipes for personal health and domestic management in seventeenth-century England. Her work details how men and women collected and exchanged information and techniques, which contributed to the development of what Leong terms "'household science'—that is quotidian home-based investigations of the natural world" (4). The home was a space in which families eagerly amassed and analyzed information on natural processes, taken from relatives, friends, and printed texts. Working from 260 manuscript recipe books and 200 printed titles issued between 1600 and 1700, Leong's text demonstrates that domestic spaces were important sites of early modern knowledge making. Like contemporary learned knowledge communities, households possessed an interest in the natural world and engaged in similar practices of structured knowledge making, rooted in experience and observation.

In chapter 1, Leong explores the roles of family, sociability, and gift exchange in recipe collection. Connecting these three branches of investigation, she argues that early modern households were embedded in social networks established and sustained through the gathering and sharing of medical and culinary knowledge. A system of reciprocity existed; in granting others access to family preserves and remedies, households expected to receive information

and recipes in return. As recipe collection often occurred informally through conversations and social gatherings, Leong suggests it be viewed as an intimate practice. People exchanged their personal experiences with domestic problems and solutions, and, as a result, established or consolidated close connections. Preserved in family manuscripts as recorded recipes with named sources, these connections became codified maps of a family's health and social alliances.

Chapter 2 explores health from a broad perspective, illustrating how household management included physical, socioeconomic, and political health. Examining the St. John family, Leong reveals how quotidian domestic work was a cooperative effort between a family and their staff. Leong's inclusion of the letters of Johanna St. John—daughter of parliamentarian Oliver St. John—demonstrates how female heads of households spent a great amount of time ensuring that their staff were employing the best natural processes to rear and harvest high quality livestock and vegetables. Meats and comestibles were consumed by household members; however, they were also shared with friends and patrons. Thus, it was in a family's best interest to ensure that they and their staff were informed on the most effective methods in estate management.

In chapter 3, Leong investigates the multi-step process through which many households collected and assessed recipes. Surveying domestic trials and experiments, she finds that families were not passively receiving knowledge but rather were actively creating it through a sequence of trial, assessment, and codification. Through this process, they engaged with information to determine whether it could be accepted into their household or rejected. If the latter occurred, the reputation of the donor was at stake: to reject information was to reject the original author's expertise. As Leong argues in chapter 4, the notions of sociability embedded within recipe collection practices meant that domestic recipes were tested under particular circumstances. In order to preserve a friendship or social connection, many households were willing to salvage recipes by repeatedly testing them and employing broad ranges of evaluative criteria.

The different ways that early modern households used recipe collections in the construction and writing of family history is the focus of chapter 5. Leong's notion of a family's use of recipe collection to demonstrate lineages of knowledge and sociability contributes to existing scholarship on domestic archival strategies. Households, particularly those of the gentry, archived their family histories by recording economic fortunes and marriage alliances. The act

of cultivating and maintaining social networks through recipe and information exchange is part of this archival system for Leong, who writes that recipes "not only sketched out a social and economic history of the family but also constructed the family's very identity" (126).

In the final chapter, Leong moves beyond family manuscripts to consider the role that printed books played in transmitting and codifying recipe knowledge. Manuscripts and printed recipe books differed in their production and circulation. While manuscripts were compiled among familial generations, often highlighting the different contributors, and were circulated through personal contact, printed recipe books presented the collection's compiler as a single authority and were widely distributed. However, both manuscript and printed recipe knowledge were part of a larger system of knowledge-making practice. Details of practices and techniques from both sources could be found in household recipe collections, indicating that families sought and shared broad ranges of materials in their explorations of natural and material processes.

Leong's chapters are case study centred, yet her work is a wide-scale review of early modern knowledge making. Delving into a variety of household-framed experiments, her work contributes to current literature on making and knowing in early modern worlds. Recently, historians have examined science and technology development from more inclusive perspectives. Scholars such as Deborah Harkness and Pamela Smith have shown that centres of scientific production existed beyond institutional settings. Adding to this conversation, Leong demonstrates that both families and their staff gathered, tested, and produced different forms of information and techniques. Female heads of households and domestic servants such as stewards, dairymaids, and gardeners were not peripheral to scientific progress in seventeenth-century England. Rather, they were important contributors who contemplated, wrote, and shared the epistemic practices that they employed in domestic spaces. An enjoyable and engaging read, Leong's book offers a fresh perspective on knowledge making. Moving beyond academic societies and laboratories, she demonstrates that kitchens, vegetable patches, and barns offered households the opportunity to expand the parameters of natural inquiry in early modern Europe.

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