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## Written in the Kitchen: Eighteenth Century Women's Poetry on Cooking

Eighteenth-century women were often encouraged to set aside creativity for domestic pursuits such as cooking, a dilemma dramatized by Elizabeth Moody's 1798 poem "Sappho Burns Her Books and Cultivates the Culinary Arts (On Miss R.P.'s Telling Her She Would Find Love Only When She Did So)": "Now fancy soars to future times, / When all extinct are Sappho's rhymes; / When none but cooks applaud her name, / And naught but recipes her fame." A variety of female poets including Mary Leapor, Elizabeth Hands, and Mary Alcock protest against relegation to the kitchen in their verse, but the relationship between creative mind and domestic labour is more complex than this suggests. Often, the poetic and the domestic overlap, suggesting the creative urge might well be found in cooking and other domestic arts. The kitchen also is a site of female dominance, and cooking an occasion for female creativity, and poems by women of the eighteenth century demonstrate this.

By looking at the depiction of cooking and the kitchen in poems such as Leapor's "Crumble-Hall" and "The Epistle of Deborah Dough," Moody's "Sappho" and "The Housewife," Elizabeth Hands' "A Poem on the Supposition of an Advertisement appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant Maid," and Mary Alcock's "Receipt for a Novel," this presentation will suggest that women's experience of domestic labour was more nuanced than has generally been assumed by scholars. The variety of attitudes about domesticity evinced by kitchen poems are emblematic of the variety of reactions women likely had to the growing cult of domesticity that positioned women's 'proper sphere' in the home.

The paper also will contextualize women's poetry about cooking with information from databases such as the Digital Miscellanies Index and Orlando about the prevalence of poems about cooking and other domestic pursuits.

### Biography

Kathleen Lawton-Trask is a third-year D.Phil. student at the University of Oxford. Her dissertation is about eighteenth-century women poets' use of mock-heroic in poetry about domesticity. She holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Columbia University in New York City, where she studied fiction writing. More recently, she has been a research assistant on the Digital Miscellanies Index and for other online literary projects. Her research interests include women's poetry, mock forms, representations of the domestic, and digital humanities.