

# Community Literacy Journal

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Volume 15 | Issue 2

Article 6

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Spring 2021

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### Recommended Citation

Fleitz, Elizabeth J. (2021) "(Re) Mixing Up Literacy: Cookbooks as Rhetorical Remix," *Community Literacy Journal*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

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## (Re) Mixing Up Literacy: Cookbooks as Rhetorical Remix

Elizabeth J. Fleitz

### Abstract

Exploring literacy practices of home cooks, this article analyzes how cookbooks are remixed by users (with writings, clippings and other ephemera added to the text throughout its use). The practice of remixing the text with further editing by its user/audience illustrates the multilayered literacies at work in establishing authorship within the domestic space. The article builds its argument around one remixed cookbook as a case study, describing the remix-literate practices of the user, as the woman who used this cookbook remixed the text and genre to fit her needs and interests. This literacy practice is argued as a remix, which results in a transformation of the text itself and of the authority of the user. Both the original authorship (the act of compiling recipes from the church community) and the remixed authorship (the added ephemera and handwritten editing done by the user of this particular copy) are analyzed in tandem.

### Keywords

remix, literacy, community cookbook, recipe, rhetoric

To love and honor is O'kay  
And one might promise to obey;  
But what makes wives turn slowly gray,  
Is what to cook each blessed day  
—OUR FAVORITE RECIPES,

Ladies Aid Society of Hope Lutheran Church

Pencil-in notes. Dog-eared page corners. Pasted-in newspaper clippings. Annotations mark the well-worn cookbook on my shelf. Page stains indicate the most frequently used recipes. Crossed-out ingredients show substitutions, or personal preferences. Ephemera stuck between pages, like a scrapbook, tell of user interest: we are what we collect. One of my cookbooks, *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES* of 1950, demonstrates this scrapbooking practice, as the user has handwritten recipe edits in the margins, taped newspaper clippings on top of each other, and collected cooking tips on blank pages. I employ the term “cookbook user” intentionally here to indicate an active participant in the text’s development. One “uses” a cookbook—one does not passively “read” or “observe” the text. As a home cook, I also engage in this same annotation practice. The cookbooks on my shelf bear marks of use—the good ones, anyway. Like a textbook, my cookbooks are annotated to indicate which reci-

pes, techniques, and ingredients work, and which do not. This process of marking up cookbooks is ongoing: an endless search for improvement.

This practice of textual annotation, the marking up of recipes, the margin notes and pasted in clippings, is a common literacy practice for home cooks as they re-fashion and remix their cookbooks to better suit their lives. The act of marking up a recipe is a practice of food literacy, which enables a home cook to participate in a community of cooks by building a multimodal archive of their domestic needs and aspirations, leading them to create an original contribution to share. Jennifer Sumner defines food literacy as the ability to understand and apply knowledge about food and nutrition to one's own habits (83). Lauren Block et al. describe three components of food literacy: (1) conceptual or declarative knowledge, which includes the reading or acquiring of knowledge about food; (2) procedural knowledge, which applies knowledge about food to decision making, such as shopping for or preparing food; and (3) the ability, opportunity, and motivation to use this knowledge about food (7). Thus, food literacy involves not just the traditional concept of literacy—reading and interpreting information—but also the embodied practice of applying this knowledge to life. This act of marking up cookbooks is a multimodal process contributing to food literacy. Home cooks regularly engage in these literacy practices to improve their knowledge and skills involving food preparation.

While women have been participating in these literacy practices for generations, until recently there has been little scholarship to acknowledge their role in rhetorical history. Cheryl Glenn explains the historical silence of women in the history of rhetoric, noting that throughout Western culture, women have been disciplined by cultural codes restricting them to the private domain of the home, pushing them out of the public sector and thus out of history. Women were assumed to be caretakers of the home and of the family, and efforts outside of that realm were not considered appropriate to their role. However, since rhetorical history is written by those in public spaces, women were silenced from being part of that history due to their gender. Thus, rhetorical history has replicated the same kind of power dynamic as gender, pushing women aside due to their assigned role.

The past few decades of scholarship have demonstrated that women did, in fact, have a voice, and they used it frequently in the public sphere throughout rhetorical history. Glenn reminds us that even though women were invisible and silent throughout the history of rhetoric, that is not the same thing as being absent from it. Women found their own avenues to express themselves, going outside of domestic space and into history. This work of “remapping” women into rhetorical history, as Glenn describes it, allows women's voices to be heard and illuminates their presence (3). As a “resisting reader” (Bizzell 51), scholars of women's rhetorics have challenged the patriarchal retelling of history and have instead worked to insert women back into the historical narrative.

While much scholarship focuses on women who have gained a public voice in history, there are indeed just as many, if not more, women who expressed their voice within the private sphere. These voices, while more difficult to locate than those of women speakers and writers in the public domain, are just as vital to constructing our

history with a gendered viewpoint. This article explores one specific literacy practice within the domestic space: the act of marking up a cookbook into a useable text to suit a home cook's needs and budget and finds that the literacy practices women use when interacting with the cookbook are valuable to study in order to remap the role of women into the history of rhetoric.

My claim, then, is to identify this marking-up practice as remix. Naming this act of annotating a recipe as "remix" allows for greater insight into the level of skill that amateur home cooks practice to gain literacy. This insight offers a better way to describe the transformative power this literacy practice offers the user as she claims authority within the text and within the larger community of home cooks. While most scholarship on remix involves digital technology, Jody Shipka reminds us that "multimodal" literacy exists in more forms than just digital (12). She notes that "If we acknowledge that literacy and learning have always been multimodal ... the challenge becomes one of finding ways to attend more fully ... to the material, multimodal aspects of all communicative practice" (21). If we only consider the topic of remix as applied to digital forms, we lose its potential for uncovering new insights, new ways to look at texts. As Shipka warns, "a narrow definition of technology fails to encourage richly nuanced, situated views of literacy" (31). To avoid this problem, Shipka suggests focusing on the composing process. In fact, remix effectively describes the composing process of home cooks interacting with their well-loved cookbooks, and thus is the reason I have chosen it as the lens through which to view this literacy practice. Additionally, there already exists a valuable body of scholarship on the process of remix in digital forms; therefore, using this scholarship will allow for a detailed observation of the user's composing process within the cookbook.

Much of the existing scholarship on cookbooks explores the ongoing revision process of recipes common to the genre. Cookbooks are unfinished works. Social historian Janet Theophano notes that "Cookbooks, as they are used in daily life, are works-in-progress" (187). It's a common practice to alter recipes, to revise amounts or oven temperatures, or to substitute ingredients for those more readily available. To better suit the user's current and future needs, annotations are made in the margins or between the lines of print. This is true for any cookbook, to be sure. In fact, Theophano reminds us that "Cookbooks invite editorializing" (188), explaining that for any cookbook or recipe, revisions are expected and even encouraged. For example, the author might recommend a different method or a substitution if preferred, encouraging the reader to decide what is best to suit her own needs. Other times, the editorializing might be unstated. In any case, cookbooks are frequently revised and edited to fit the user's own kitchen and preferences, as well as her own budget and resources.

This editorializing comes from the form of the genre itself. Rhetorical scholar Anne Bower explains that "[a] community cookbook is a subtle gap-ridden kind of artifact, that asks its reader (at least the reader who seeks more than recipes) to fill those gaps with social and culinary history, knowledge of other texts (such as commercial cookbooks), and even personal knowledge" (143). Bower argues that these gaps help invite the reader to become part of the text and engage with it, to insert her own knowledge and her own preferences, to interpret the recipes as she sees fit. In

scholarship, cookbooks are generally considered as a genre that necessitates perpetual revision. The sub-genre of community cookbooks, in particular, are themselves a remix: a collection of recipes shared by a local community of home cooks. My contribution to this conversation, then, is to describe how a user constructs a multimodal text within a community of home cooks: to do so, I name this process as remix as a way to home in on the technical practice a user engages in with the text. Through the use of remix, the home cook can offer new insight on the text, making an original contribution to share within the domestic space.

This article looks at the user's interaction with the community cookbook, exploring how the manipulation of the physical space of the printed page is in itself a literacy practice. This practice is impacted by the contexts of gender and community. These contexts inform the user's practice of collecting and arranging texts within the pages of the community cookbook—a cookbook which itself is also an arrangement of texts, an archive. In this resulting literacy practice, users collect and arrange the text in the most effective way to serve their purposes, according to their interests, ability and budget as well as that of their family. Users remix their cookbook to serve their own kitchen the best way they can. Women, due to the expectations of their gender role, gravitated towards literacies that have been highly adaptable and flexible. They had to be practical in all ways, literacy practices included.

In the following sections of this article, I begin by introducing the cookbook under discussion, using it as a case study to illustrate remix. I then define the concept of remix, explain how remix is motivated by Michel de Certeau's concept of "making do," and use examples from the cookbook to describe how a user remixes the text as they seek to empower themselves through making an original contribution as part of a community of home cooks.

### *The Cookbook*

Clad in robin's egg blue, the laminated paper cover worn at the edges, the title declares in all-caps: "OUR FAVORITE RECIPES" (see Fig. 1). Compiled in 1950 by the Ladies Aid Society of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bowling Green, Ohio, this community cookbook shows much shelf wear. The printed black and white photograph of Hope Lutheran on the back cover has mostly faded, leaving an almost indecipherable image. On the side, a rainbow of paper tab dividers label the sections, from "CAKE" and "PIE" to "VEGETABLES SOUPS" and "DRINKS." Overall, this community cookbook is a simple, text-based document designed for daily use in the kitchen. The comb-binding, which helps it lie flat on the counter, as well as the laminated cover and cardstock tabbed section dividers help to make it sturdy and easy to use.

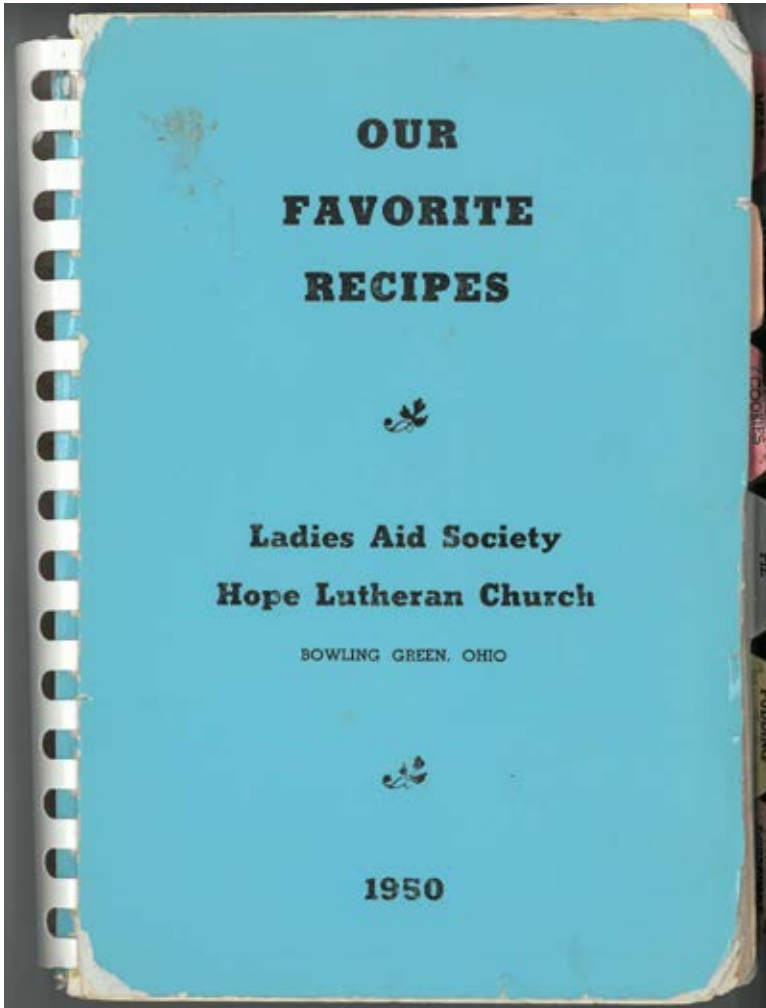


Figure 1. Front cover of *Our Favorite Recipes*

While the original user of this cookbook is unknown, the content of the added text and ephemera gives some hints. While it is impossible to know for sure, based on context clues, the owner was most likely female. The fact she owned a cookbook published by the Ladies Aid Society of Hope Lutheran Church would indicate she was either a member of that church or had friends who were; being from the same town as this group, she likely had similar Midwestern values. She was a homemaker and added not just recipes, but also cleaning tips, gardening notes, and even medical reminders. She creates a text similar to Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management*, an 1861 reference guide known for its inclusion of domestic tips along with recipes. I was given this cookbook by a friend from my hometown, Bowling Green, Ohio, who

knew of my interest in collecting cookbooks, so I know little more of its origins than the town and the church it came from. Nor can I be sure these annotations were done by only one person (though the handwriting is consistent throughout). Considering that lack of information, all I can do is observe how this user, whomever she may have been, interacted with this text.

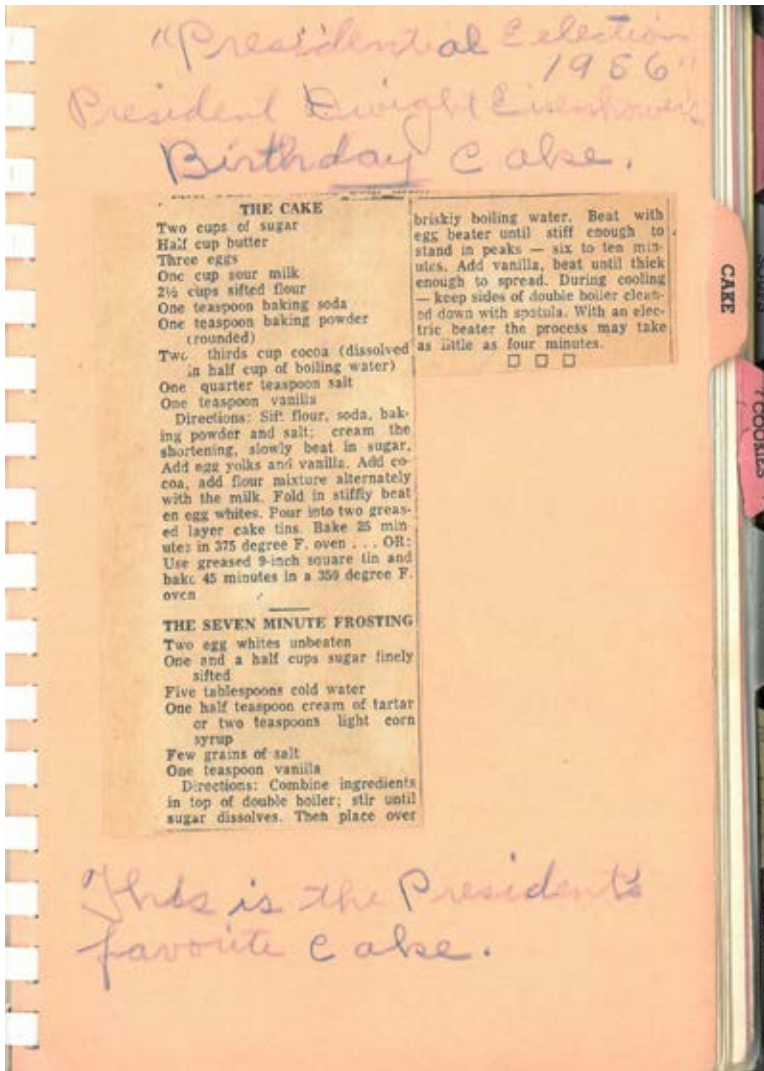


Figure 2. The front of the CAKE divider with Eisenhower's birthday cake recipe & handwritten notes

This particular copy of *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES* illustrates how a cookbook may be used to suit its owner, and how it can be adapted for remix. The shelf wear

and stains on the cookbook are not the only evidence of its frequent usage: this copy contains many newspaper and magazine clippings, handwritten notes, and index cards to enhance the original publication. As the user remixed this text to suit her own needs, she used it as a scrapbook to collect more recipes, gardening tips, medical information, and other household notes. In the margins, in blank spaces, and even over top of existing printed recipes, she wrote, or glued, taped, and pinned the ephemera, fashioning a more useable cookbook to fit her own purposes.

Most of the ephemera are included on the tabbed section dividers located between each chapter, though the taped recipes also spill over into the printed pages as well. She uses each blank page to the limit, fitting in clippings in addition to handwritten text. In one example, on the front side of the “CAKE” section divider, a newspaper clipping of a recipe titled “The Cake” and “The Seven Minute Frosting” is pasted in (see Fig. 2). Above the clipping is a handwritten caption in pencil: “Presidential Election (sp) 1956” / “President Dwight Eisenhower’s Birthday Cake.” Below the recipe is a comment: “This is the President’s favorite cake.” Other pages throughout this cookbook follow suit, serving as a container for the ideas she couldn’t forget. On the back of the “COOKIES” divider (see Fig. 3), words written in pencil (“Yellow [...] Freestone”) are obscured by a pasted-over recipe for Lemon Drops from the September 1958 issue of *Better Homes & Gardens*. Also pasted on the page are a magazine clipping for “Strawberry-Pink Punch,” as well as “Holiday Fruit Cookies,” the latter of which she edits in pen with her own preferences for ingredients and oven temperature. In her process, she compiles relevant materials together first, which is her process of putting together the collection. Then, she organizes and arranges them within the text, which is her process of creating the remix. Within this cookbook, this user remixes the text to design--quite literally, in terms of visual design as well as choice of content--her own text and to best serve her own kitchen.

### *Remix Culture and the Cookbook*

Let us pause for a moment to gain a better understanding of the concept of remix. Lev Manovich, writing in “Who is the Author?,” observes “Remix culture has arrived” (8). Focusing on its origins in audio mixing, Manovich defines remix as the “systematic re-working of a source” (6-7). Lawrence Lessig goes further with his definition of remix, as he ties the rise of remix culture to the rise of Web 2.0, with the use of ranking, tagging, and sharing links on blogs in the early 2000s (85). Lessig notes, “Whether text or beyond text, remix is collage; it comes from combining elements of RO [read-only] culture; it succeeds by leveraging the meaning created by the reference to build something new” (76). Lessig’s definition involves the act of combining, gathering, and juxtaposing of elements, in particular as part of social interaction. Lankshear and Knobel, focusing on digital culture, define remix as “the practice of taking cultural artefacts and combining and manipulating them into a new kind of creative blend” (1). Similar to Lessig, this definition identifies combining as having the effect of creating something new; again, a type of collaboration or collage.



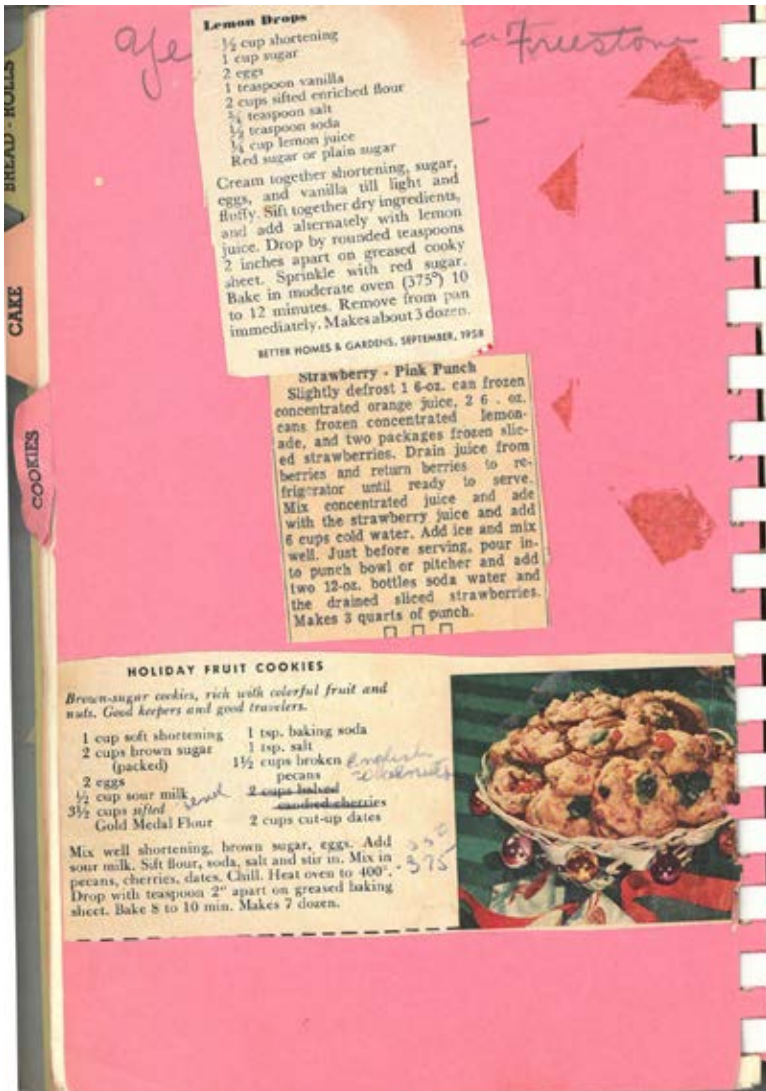


Figure 3. The back of the COOKIES divider with handwriting obscured by magazine recipes

Interpreting remix as collage is useful in an educational sense—as Lessig explains, we “learn by remixing” (81). Lessig cites scholar Henry Jenkins, who explains that the retelling and appropriation of elements from existing stories is an important step in the process by which children develop cultural literacy (81). Remix isn’t just a step leading to learning, though; it is also a marker of understanding: “It takes extraordinary knowledge about a culture to remix it well” (Lessig 93). These margin notes and taped-in cooking tips in this cookbook aren’t placed there at random. This act of remix is a demonstration of the user’s level of knowledge—knowing what de-

tails are relevant to be placed in the best location in the text for optimum usability. This cookbook remix is also evidence of the user's future goals, including the literacy skill they want to improve, or aspect of domestic life they want to perfect.

At first glance, a remixed cookbook can look like a mess of pencil marks, paper scraps, and dog-eared pages. This messiness isn't limited to a time period, either—the 1950s-era *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES* illustrates the same messy habits I use in my own cookbooks. Deborah Brandt, in her article “Accumulating Literacy,” writes about the present moment’s “piling up and extending out of literacy and its technologies” (651). Today’s readers “find themselves having to piece together reading and writing experiences from more and more spheres, creating new and hybrid forms of literacy” (651). New forms of literacy “pile up” as they are added to the old (651). Literacy “spreads out” as we are expected to use these skills in more aspects of our lives (652), with domestic life being no exception. According to Brandt, “Being literate in the late twentieth century has to do with being able to negotiate that burgeoning surplus” (666). While Brandt writes of an era several decades later than this cookbook, her observations can fit the messy literacy of *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES*. It makes sense then to negotiate the piling up of responsibilities and spreading out of expectations in the kitchen that women manage via remix. Women experience a practical benefit of remixing cookbooks, improving both their cooking and their lives.

### *Remix as Community*

Cookbooks themselves are an act of community. Lessig reminds us that remix wouldn't exist without community; as part of internet culture, the act of sharing with an audience is vital. Today, sharing a link to a recipe is common: websites, blogs, social media pages, and apps are devoted to the practice. Lessig explains that “[r]emixes happen within a community of remixers ... [m]embers of that community create in part for one another. They are showing each other how they can create” (77). While we might initially presume home cooks to be isolated working in their own individual kitchens, the fact is that the act of cooking is a shared culture. To Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster, recipes “exist in a perpetual state of exchange,” as they are often being shared, evaluated, and modified between women (6). The kitchen has for centuries been a gendered place of community, a site of exchange between generations of women. Miriam Meyers explains: “as the communication center for the entire household, the kitchen serves as the locus of communication between mother and daughter” (37). Women’s relationships are created and maintained in the kitchen, the central domestic space of the home. Even though a kitchen is often home to only one woman, it is still a social space. While the woman may cook alone, she uses skills taught to her by her mother, recipes given to her by a neighbor, ingredients recommended to her by a friend. The communality of food and the dinner table may be enjoyed by everyone, but the discourse involved in food preparation identifies a woman’s community. Cookbooks, therefore, are texts that both define and perpetuate community. Kennan Ferguson notes that “cookbooks *intensify*” a sense of belonging within a community (698).

While the user of this particular church cookbook may have remixed alone, she did so within a larger culture of home cooks, gathering hints and tips from other women she may have never met. As a participant in print cooking culture, particularly aimed at housewives of the 1950s, she gained ideas about what was good, affordable, or delicious from this context, remixing it to suit her own interests, desires, or skill level. Therefore, remix is not only useful as a practical benefit for gaining food literacy, but also as an empowering benefit. Remix aids the user in gaining a voice within the rhetorical space of the cookbook, albeit privately, like a diary.

Cookbook scholars describe the space of the cookbook as an active, empowering one. Andrea Newlyn, writing about nineteenth-century manuscript cookbooks, calls them “scrapbooks of women’s lives” (41). She argues that cookbooks “record women’s efforts toward legitimating themselves and authenticating the spaces they inhabited, demonstrating both the diverse mediums in which female artists worked and their attempts to control their own stories, histories, and traditions” (37). Women use these texts to empower themselves and have control over their lives, at least as much as they can control within the domestic space. Sarah Walden, writing about the cookbook as gendered space, asserts, “The rhetorical acts [cookbooks] embody ... -the authority to define, act, own, and subvert--expand women’s abilities to actively participate in their own construction: as women, as citizens, as rhetors” (171). Women use these texts to claim their voice—albeit in a socially-acceptable form. Ferguson reminds us that the user, not the text itself, is the real creator of the content: “Cookbooks do not preach directly. They allow the cook to design her own ways of making of this community what she will” (713). It is this concept of design, the idea of user as designer, that makes remix so relevant to describing this process of marking up a cookbook, as the user is an active participant in composing the text. Newlyn describes the cookbook as a design space, saying that “[t]he cookbook is both literally and metaphorically a canvas (often containing actual drawings and sketches), a frame in which to situate and arrange forms to evoke both artistic and social meaning” (37).

Within the space of the cookbook, women design their lives. They compose their ideal home through collecting and piecing together recipes, ingredients, and tips to attain what they desire: a well-run home. This is reminiscent of when Geoffrey Sirc, in his article “Box-Logic,” describes the act of composing as collecting or curating, like a designer: “It’s the writer not only as selector (Duchamp) but as collector, where the choosing is suffused with desire. The personally associational becomes key criteria. A kind of idio-aesthetic or idio-connoisseurship” (118). As the home cook desires a better-tasting meal, or more efficient home, she selects and arranges texts to pursue that desire. Of these users, Sirc says, “These are artists whose material concerns are guided by their strong visionary needs, their desires to recreate the deeply felt images that excited them” (121). The home cook has a vision for her home and uses remix to progressively attain that vision. Sirc reminds us that collection is never complete (122)—just like domestic work. Thus, the home cook relies on remix to continually design her life and get ever closer to her desired ideal.

## *The Literacy Practice of Making Do*

Individuals in culture are not passive consumers but are instead active users. This use of remix to design a more useable text is supported by Michel de Certeau's concept of "making do." de Certeau explains that in mass culture, users refashion their experiences with culture and with cultural objects as a way to have control over them and claim their own identity in a mass-produced society. Similarly, home cooks remix a recipe or, like here, even entire cookbooks to help fit their needs. This reappropriation of the text not only provides the user a voice, but also adds another layer of intertext to the recipe.

Women are especially suited to developing a literacy of "making do." Having been pushed out of the public sphere whereby access to mainstream modes of literacy is limited, women had to work with the means available to them. In order to make their voice heard, they needed to create their own literacy, their own rhetorical practices, and their own discourse. Feminist rhetorical scholarship on women's diary writing (Gannett; Carr), needlepoint samplers (Goggin), signs and banners (Carter), clothing (Mattingly), as well as other modes, have been previously argued as being rhetorical practices unique to women. Because women's literacy was devalued, women had to develop a practical literacy that would permit their communication practices to continue while fulfilling the duties of their gender role. This type of literacy needed to be adaptable, with the ability to create and sustain strong networks of women, to "affirm this female sense of self as linked to others" (Gannett 133). Thus, because of gender constraints, women developed literacy practices that relied on a wide variety of modes, creating flexible, open texts that are dialectic in nature and work to maintain bonds with others in the community.

In discussing these flexible aspects of women's texts, Jacqueline Jones Royster exemplifies how author Alice Walker engages in "writing across genres" (20). This multi-genre writing, Royster claims, evidences Walker's desire to not let her voice be defined by a single expressive form. Because Walker and others are able to work within this "fluid space," they are not limited by the boundaries set by public, male-dominated genres and in effect can ignore convention. As women have been ignored by the dominant discourse, it is not surprising that women find it easy to ignore convention, as the convention marks a style they have largely not had access to. Remix, then, is women's alternative. Using remix, women may create their own voice through textual adaptation, taking and revising a text to suit their own purposes, and create their own narrative (Mastrangelo 83).

The act of remixing is reminiscent of the commonplace book or scrapbook. Commonplace books were popularized in the late Renaissance period, though Quintilian is thought to have been the first to reference the use of the commonplace book. In a commonplace book, scholars, which in this period would have been largely limited to men, would compile useful words, ideas, and quotations together to preserve them as an aid for future speaking and writing. It was used as a way to preserve memory, as the book or tablet functioned as a mnemonic device for writing. Just like any act of compiling, it was never completed, and the user would continue to add to his commonplace book, as it was a work-in-progress. Scrapbooking, which came about

during the Victorian era, was billed as a way to preserve memories—this time, specifically memories of family. Because of this focus on family and home, scrapbooking was marketed to and became a popular activity for women. Women picked up this commonplace method, collecting quotes, recipes, newspaper clippings of births, deaths, and wedding announcements, letters, postcards, poetry, Bible verses, photos, and other ephemera, for their own uses. They might put these textual objects into a bound book created just for this purpose or insert them into the pages of a Bible or diary, in a favorite novel, keepsake box, or in a cookbook.

It is no surprise that women were attracted to the commonplace book, as it was a literacy adaptable enough to fit their own lives and needs. Despite having limited access to formal education, women were able to use these commonplace books to build their own literacy skills and construct their own identities through texts. Women used the available means to create persuasive texts of their own voices. Additionally, as Theophano points out, the act of compiling a commonplace book puts emphasis on shared, not individual, knowledge, just as women come together in groups and clubs to affirm and sustain community. This act of compiling is also collaborative: the user relies on others for texts to collect, such as a friend's recipe written on an index card or a winning bake-off recipe cut out of the newspaper. This act of compilation particularly applies to cookbooks, as much of a woman's job in the home revolves around food. This act of compilation also applies to cookbooks because such a high volume of cookery texts exist, more so than texts that handle any other domestic role. Thus, cookbooks function in many ways as women's commonplace books. Community cookbooks, those particular culinary texts written by one's friends and family members, chatty and personal in tone, are perhaps the best fit for a choice of commonplace book. What other cookbook is more likely to be used, as it contains the best recipes from church potlucks, family dinners, and school bake sales? What other cookbook is closer to home and one's own foodways practices? Certainly not today's glossy-paged, magazine-perfect, aspirational-lifestyle celebrity chef cookbook. Instead, a community cookbook reflects real life, bringing together the many texts and voices of women in a group, and thus is an archive itself.

### *Remix in the Community Cookbook*

Community cookbooks, perhaps more than any other genre of cookbook, invite remix. I chose *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES* because it is doubly interesting in terms of remix: not only does it demonstrate user remixing through annotations and scrapbooking, it also is a compiled cookbook of user-generated recipes, a sort of remix in itself. One way community cookbooks invite remix is in their practicality. Community cookbooks are a text built for use, the very model of "making do." Far from the glossy, full-page color photographs of beautiful dishes in other cookbooks, this is a text to be used, not browsed. Its features point to ease of navigation (table of contents, tabbed sections, index) and ease of active use (comb or spiral binding to lay flat on the counter). In *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES*, there are no photographs, save one of the Hope Lutheran Church of Bowling Green, Ohio, on the first page of the book.

The lack of photos or special features that might otherwise be found in professional cookbooks also point to this cookbook's frugality: this is a cookbook sold for charity. Nonprofit groups selling cookbooks like these likely didn't have extra funds for color printing or extra pages. Community cookbooks are never much to look at; they are an utterly practical genre.

Community cookbooks invite remix, as well, as they invite the user to be an editor. The reader's active participation is encouraged through the cookbook's inclusion of multiple similar recipes. Instead of editing and selecting only the best recipe for nut bread, the Ladies Aid Society women chose to include four of them, respecting the fact that some women make their nut bread with brown sugar, others with white, and still others with both. Rather than dismissing this feature as a mistake or editing oversight, these women had a purpose in including these recipes, so as to value multiple perspectives. Instead of naming a single method as the "correct" way to make nut bread, the clubwomen choose to value each woman's perspective and include a range of "best" recipes for the dish. In community cookbooks, diversity of voices is valued over what is the "best" recipe. The inclusion of multiple similar recipes allows the user the freedom to choose between possibilities, thus encouraging her to participate as an editor of the text, remixing the text to suit her own purposes.

A familiar feature of community cookbooks (and, occasionally, commercially-published cookbooks) is the inclusion of blank pages at the end of chapters or at the end of the book, in which a user can write or paste additional recipes or notes, constructing herself as a co-author of the text, engaging with community through remix. These pages, usually titled "Recipes" or "Notes," are a feature of community cookbooks that help aid in the text's development as a remix, as users will take up more space in the book to write notes or recipes, insert newspaper clippings or other ephemera. *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES* includes blank pages at the end of each section, as well as blank dividers between each section, which the user has filled with handwritten reminders ("1/4 lb. Butter = 1/2 Cup" being one example) or taped in newspaper clippings of recipes (a recipe for "Out-Of-This-World Pumpkin Pie" is pasted over an advertisement for a body shop in town, within the pages of the Pie section), or both at once (a recipe for Mamie's Pumpkin Pie, a pumpkin chiffon pie favored by First Lady Mamie Eisenhower, is pasted on the divider to the "PIE" section (see Fig. 4). Surrounding the clipping is a handwritten recipe for Elderberry Pie, in pencil, with edits over top of the handwriting in pen. Here again, the user becomes editor of the text via remix, selecting the elements that help her build her food literacy to improve her domestic life.

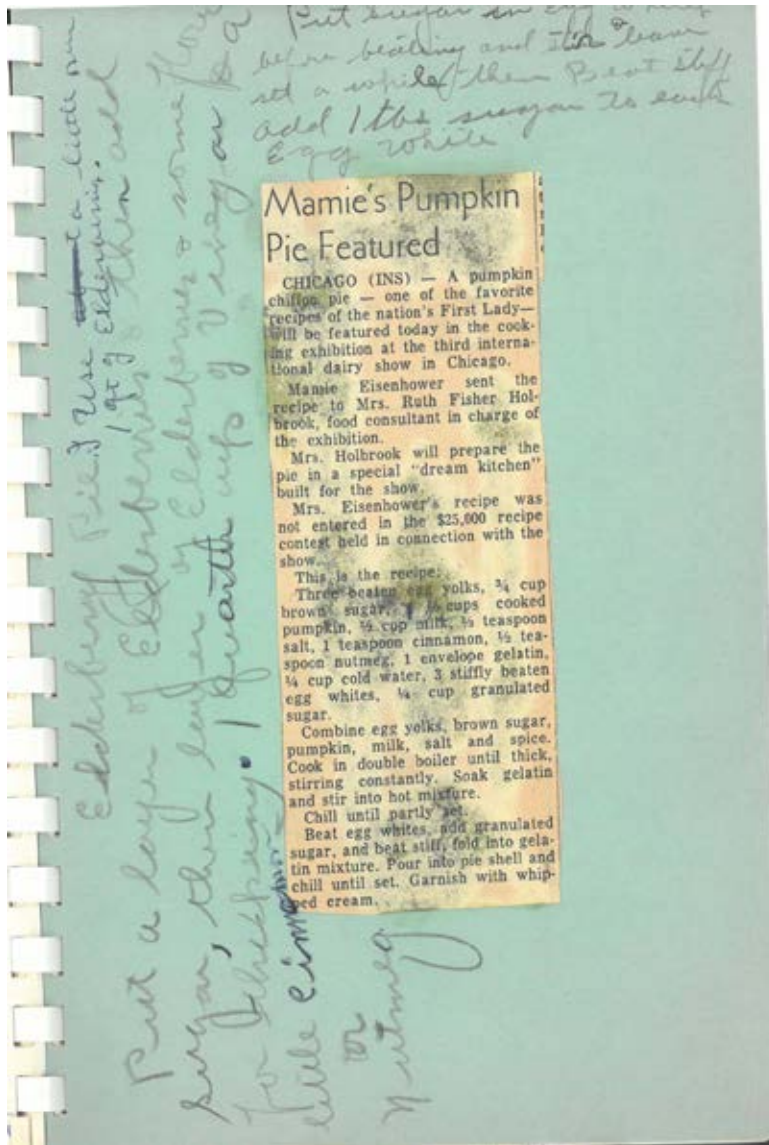


Figure 4. Front of PIE divider with newspaper clipping and handwritten text

Community cookbooks invite remix through their tone. The authors of these recipes frequently offer substitutions or alternative variations, encouraging the user to remix the recipe to suit their own taste or budget. By offering alternatives, the recipe writer's tone is one of possibility. By suggesting these options, the writer adds humility to their recipe. While substitutions or variations are a common occurrence in recipes in general, community cookbooks, authored by home cooks, seem to give these

alternatives more frequently. These authors don't claim that their recipe and ingredients list is the best solution; without judgment, these authors suggest equally effective options, such as giving alternatives for butter, suggesting revisions to their recipe if margarine, lard, or shortening is used instead. For example, a recipe for Hot Pineapple Eggnog suggests serving "with grated orange peel if you like," noting that the beverage is also excellent cold. These offers of substitutions or alternatives open up the text to remix, inviting the user to make changes based on their own preferences. Here again, she is encouraged to become editor of the text.

Similarly, community cookbooks invite remix through their tone with their use of pronouns. While pronouns are usually scarce in most commercial cookbook recipes, second-person pronouns are often used in community cookbooks, in order to rhetorically engage the reader within the text through direct address. The inclusion of pronouns in a recipe indicates the presence of authentic women in the process of food preparation. Command-type instructions may be more direct (such as "Fold in the cheese") but using personal pronouns such as "I" and "you" explicitly acknowledge the women who participate in a recipe's creation and re-creation. These pronouns perpetuate a dialogue between the reader and the contributor, as if the writer were speaking to the reader personally. The use of direct address emphasizes the active participation necessary on the part of the reader to interact with the text.

### *The Home Cook as Remix Literate Composer*

Kyle Stedman, in his article "Remix Literacy and Fan Composition," discusses the habits of effective remix composers in online fan communities. Stedman states:

An effective remixer will show proficiency using the technical skills and tools needed for a task, an astute understanding of the expectations and generic considerations of a chosen discourse community, and a well-practiced system for internally and externally evaluating the quality of a given text. (109)

Just like the user of *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES*, remix literate composers are capable of using the tools involved in remixing (in this user's case, pencil, tape, scissors). They are aware of the genre (recipes), audience (family, guests, themselves), and purpose (taste, efficiency, affordability) of remixing the domestic space, and of identifying texts worthy of inclusion to achieve this purpose. Stedman observes that remixers do "inventional research": they explore texts for remix by asking the question "what could I *do* with this?" (114). For anyone who has searched a cookbook, magazine, blog, or Pinterest board looking for a recipe, this is the question in their mind. A remix literate composer searches for text with an eye towards how they will be used, like curating a collection.

Stedman identifies several skills of remix literate composers to describe how users engage in the process of remix, which are relevant here to describe how the user of *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES* illustrates remix literate skills. One skill he identifies is: "Attends meticulously to the details needed to achieve compositional goals, refusing to be satisfied with anything but the most effective delivery possible for a given audi-



ence” (119). Remixing the cookbook is reliant on details, as she edits recipes to suit her own tastes and improve upon them. She engages directly with the printed text and edits the recipes. For example, on page 44, she corrects a typo, from “cook” to “cool.” On page 51, she adds a line missing from the ingredients list for “Ice Water Cake,” including the essential ingredient of four egg whites. She also comments on some recipes, marking some with an “X,” its meaning unclear to anyone other than the original user (51, 72), or writing “Good” next to the ingredients list (such as for “Rolled Oats Drop Cookies” on page 79), aiding her memory for future use.

Another skill Stedman describes is that the remixer “Is community- and collaboration-minded, following an ethic of content reuse developed along with others and attending to the demands of genre, audience, and purpose that make the most sense in a given discourse community” (119). As previously discussed, cookbook users (in particular, community cookbook users) consider themselves part of the authorship of the text, feeling comfortable writing in notes and edits, adding their own recipes or ones they’ve collected to enhance the text, or marking recipes that they prefer. A cookbook user becomes an editor, curator, and remixer. Often, she will write notes in the page margins. For example, on the divider tab of the “SALADS DRESSINGS” section, she writes a recipe for cranberry relish, fitting it in below and beside the taped-in recipe that takes up most of the open space (144-145). At the end of the “COOKIES” section in the space at the bottom of the page below the final recipe, she fits in a handwritten recipe for a faux meringue made with jarred marshmallow creme (108).

The remix literate composer “searches widely for inspiration, integrating remixing into [her] everyday life to such an extent that it seems natural to find new artistic and rhetorical possibilities in any area of life” (119). Remixing the cookbook is part of domestic life—those women with an interest in gaining food literacy and improving their home will attend to these skills regularly, finding relevant texts anywhere. I myself have a pocket folder stuffed with magazine and newspaper clippings, as well as handwritten recipe cards that I’ve collected based on my taste preferences over the years, not to mention several Pinterest boards, several Saved folders on Facebook, as well as bookmarks and notes in my cookbooks to mark my future cooking goals. In *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES*, along with the previously mentioned handwritten recipes, a wide variety of clipped recipes from different publications are taped or glued into the book, indicating an ongoing remix occurring over time, rather than a one-time edit. This ephemera includes magazine clippings from different publications, handwritten notes in multiple colors of ink, and different dates noted. On the front of the “BREAD - ROLLS” section divider alone (see Fig. 5), the “piling up” of literacy is shown in multiple pieces of ephemera as well as several handwritten notes. Pinned to the top of the divider with a straight pin, at the top of the pile, is a small note in pencil listing spices to avoid for those with ulcers. Underneath is a black and white magazine clipping for “Juicy Meat Loaf” from *Farm Journal*. Beneath that is a piece of lined paper with a recipe for “Rice Meat Loaf” in pencil. Under all of these items is the divider itself, on which is written a series of quick notes in different pencils and inks. “House Hold Hints” is at the top, about how adding salt to a candle’s wick will prevent it from dripping. Below these lines is a series of “X”s as a visual divider in red pencil,

plus a note about using potatoes to remove refrigerator odor, also in red. A note in plain pencil reminds the original user about a flower's bloom and a date. At the bottom of the page, in black ink, is a note about stain removal. This series of ephemera and handwritten notes indicates a process of adding to this text over time—a constant process of remix.

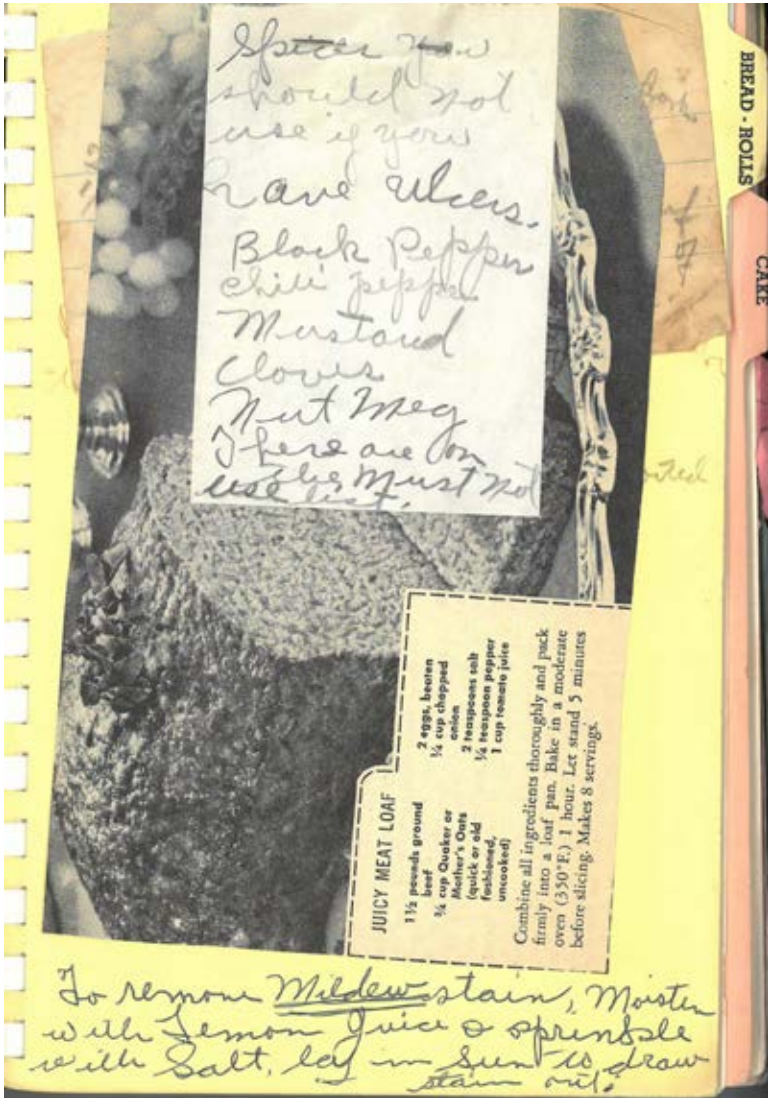


Figure 5. The front of the BREAD - ROLLS divider with pinned ephemera and handwritten notes

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Stedman also observes that a remix literate composer “Accommodates various purposes/exigencies in her remixed composition, often using multiple layers of meaning that exist simultaneously” (119). She doesn’t just focus on food in her remix; she attends to all relevant aspects of domestic life that she’d like to improve upon or use as a memory aid. For example, sometimes literary texts will be included. On the “CAKE” section divider, a poem clipped from a magazine, titled “Inevitable,” is about children sampling a cook’s baked goods, and the joy of having people enjoy one’s cooking. A curious edit by the user is the change of the children’s gender in the poem, writing in “Girls” below the line “Two boys hustle in for a lick” (30-31). While it may have been more accurate to this woman’s own personal experience, we can’t be certain. Whatever the reasoning is, this woman was comfortable enough with this cookbook genre to insert the poem, and edit it as well, to fit her own experience in the kitchen, remixing this community cookbook and localizing her experience further.

Domestic tips are also added to the cookbook. On the reverse of the “PIE” divider, the entire page is filled with handwriting in pencil, titled “Care of Azalea Plants” (108-109). Other times, she writes notes to herself, without further context: on the back of the “MISC. Canning - Preserves” section divider, above a handwritten recipe for ham salad, are the words “Pertussin Cough Medicine,” circled in pencil. Underneath is the handwritten line “Course with Cold Meats” (212-213). While these phrases mean little to an outside reader, the user of this cookbook was comfortable enough with her remix skills to use this text for notetaking.

The user of this cookbook is remix literate. She meets the three dimensions of remix literacy, as described by Lankshear and Knobel: First, technical—knowing the processes and tools for remixing (14). She is competent in how and where to search to find relevant texts to add, and has the skills to do so, using the text as a commonplace book. Second, discourse—using cultural knowledge in remixing (15). Her remix choices reflect the cultural expectations of the time period, with her focus on food, health, and a clean household, helping her fit into her gender role. Finally, third: evaluative—knowing how to enhance or improve the practice/remix (15). She is able to evaluate the text as originally printed in the cookbook and make necessary edits or mark which recipes are the best, as well as know what texts need to be added to enhance the text and improve the usability of the cookbook.

Naming the user as remix literate is important here to establish the level of skill she employs in this practice. Her competency in manipulating and combining these texts to serve her kitchen in an improved way is important to observe, to define her process as skillful and rhetorically powerful. She remixes in pursuit of a better domestic life. Lankshear and Knobel cite Gee in their work, who explains that humans feel empowered when they can use tools that expand their effectiveness (15). Thus, this user remixes to gain literacy and improve her life; she also remixes to empower herself and her situation.

### *Conclusion: Cookbook Remix as Empowering Practice*

This copy of *OUR FAVORITE RECIPES* has multiple discourses embedded within it—first, the rhetorical moves afforded by the collection of women’s recipes printed in the book, which was used to political and economic advantage by these women, raising money and awareness for their local church. The text also implicitly constructs these women as part of a community of women cooks, sharing advice and recipes for foodways practices that best fit their likes, needs, economic access, and ingredient availability. The recipes shared are ones popular at this time among these women and are most familiar to them and the surrounding community. These recipes are practical, not aspirational—these recipes are written to be used and include ingredients both available in the area and affordable for the community. This is a text that is meant to be engaged with.

Indeed, this copy has been used quite frequently. Not only has the book been used to make the recipes from, it has also been manipulated to compile the user’s own foodways practices and construct a more useable document. In this embedded discourse, she has worked outside the capitalist system, creating her own text for free by assembling a series of found ephemera into a framework suitable for her own use, avoiding the formalities of publishing or editing, and working outside of copyright rules. Like a Duchamp Ready-Made, these *objets-trouvés* of newspaper clippings and handwritten notes are arranged rhetorically to form a new meaning—this time, to aid in the improvement of one woman’s domestic life. This new meaning is a material meaning, as the text’s placement and physical appearance are rhetorical choices meant to form a useable text.

This new meaning is also transformative, as the process of composing often transforms the resources at hand, as well as transforms the composers themselves (Trimbur 263). Theophano explains the power of a community cookbook, saying that “women have written a place into being” (84). The unnamed user transforms this text by her literacy practice. Even though she does not use her name, her act of remixing this text helps her claim authority as a user, restyling the genre and reinventing the genre’s rules as she remixes. Her collection of texts and handwritten notes, placement of such, and visual cues throughout the text function rhetorically to create a more useable text, making do with the resources available to her. Theophano describes the idiosyncratic nature of the compiled texts within a community cookbook: “Alive with the personal traces of its owner, a woman’s cookbook became a talisman for those who followed” (89). This textual remix, rhetorically compiled by its owner, is more than just an assortment of ephemera: it functions as an act of resistance, allowing the user to speak her authority and expertise and craft an original text based on her own literacy practices. The text is transformed into a useable text for her own kitchen. The ephemera themselves are now not temporary, as their name implies, but instead are memory aids. Thus, these women of the cookbook and our unnamed user prove that, to paraphrase Cheryl Glenn, invisible and silent are not the same as absent (3). While they may have been silenced in the public sphere due to their gender, they were able to make do and express themselves within the space of the cookbook. Their literacy practices speak through their act of remix.

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