Comfort Food: Gastronomy and National Self-Fashioning in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century French Literature and Film

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Abstract

This project demonstrates how authors and filmmakers harness gastronomy as a tool for sculpting national identity. During times of national anxiety, food and eating provide metaphors for exemplifying threats and addressing consequent fears. During the interwar years, Marcel Rouff uses food as emotional and psychological sustenance for a population in need of resuscitation in his novel *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*. Rouff's emphasis on regional *terroir* and the simplicity of good French cooking unite the French people in their common past and orient them towards the future, in an almost spiritual turn. While gastronomy may be an ideal means of projecting a superior identity on the international stage, it may be a divisive force within the nation. I propose a new reading of Luis Buñuel's 1972 film, *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and Marco Ferreri's 1973 film *La grand bouffe* which examines gastronomy as the subject of critique at the culmination of the *Trente Glorieuses*. Playing with the notion of binging and purging, Ferreri and Buñuel strip gastronomy down to its base and call for a culinary *tabula rasa* in a discourse that anticipates the most recent nouvelle cuisine movement. And, in the struggle to retain the core of what it means to be French in the face of cultural dilution, Jean-Pierre Jeunet's hit film *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* mobilizes culinary nostalgia via quintessentially French foods and culinary spaces to shape an ideal France. These authors and filmmakers both problematize and reinforce the stereotype of France as a gastronomic powerhouse as the increasing globalization of culture over the course of the last century has worked to dissolve it. develops the larger

cultural implications of food in France and reveals gastronomy as a malleable cultural touchstone resistant to national and international change.

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À la vôtre!

Introduction

In France, food is worth dying for. On April 24, 1671, François Vatel, the *maître d'hôtel* for Prince Louis II de Bourbon Condé, famously threw himself upon his saber when he realized he might not be able to provide the fish for a dinner for King Louis XIV.[1] About three hundred years later, renowned French chef Bernard Loiseau committed suicide in fear that he was on the precipice of losing one of his three Michelin stars.[2] Rather than face culinary defeat and national disgrace, these chefs have taken their own lives. Even the animated film *Ratatouille* depicts a fictionally famous French chef, Auguste Gusteau, who passes away because his restaurant has lost one of its five stars. These three culinary events point to the seriousness with which gastronomy is considered in France and to the high stakes of such a seemingly quotidian endeavor. They also indicate the extent to which identity is bound to gastronomy.

More than any other nation, France is metonymic with food, eating, and all things culinary. For the French and foreigners alike, gastronomy has played a major role in the identification and construction of the French nation throughout time. In the world of professional cuisine, much of the vocabulary is French in origin and chefs-in-training from the world over go to the birthplace of gastronomy to learn how to cook

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[1] Upon his death, Vatel apparently said, "J'ai perdu l'honneur; voici un affront que je ne supporterai pas" (cited in Sévigné, 273). Madame de Sévigné recounts what she hears of Vatel's death in her letters dating April 24 and 26, 1671 (272-275). Dominique Michel attempts to situate Vatel and his contributions to French gastronomy in *Vatel: La naissance de la gastronomie, Recettes d'un grand siècle*. In 2000, French filmmaker Roland Joffé fictionalized Vatel's story in his film *Vatel*. While the film centers on King Louis XIV's visit to the Prince de Condé and the series of banquets that Vatel arranges, the writers Jeanne Labrune and Tom Stoppard change the ending of the story, rewriting it so that the *maître d'hôtel* kills himself not only because of the missing fish, but also because he suffers from an impossible love.

[2] Rudolph Chelminski has written about Loiseau's career and the events leading up to his death in *The Perfectionist: Life and Death in Haute Cuisine*.

and to refine their skills. In homes throughout France, the pleasures of the table structure daily life and mark important events perhaps more than in any other Western nation (Chemin). Gastronomy unites the French people through shared recipes and culinary heritage. "La gastronomie est une forme de culture particulièrement chère à l'ensemble des Français. Ils aiment bien manger et bien boire, au point d'être identifiés instantanément comme des gastronomes, sinon des gourmets, aux yeux du reste du monde" (Chevrier 17). Gastronomy is France. It is a symbol and vestige of France's history, traditions, and values and it is the tool that the French have consistently used in the construction of their national identity since the Middle Ages. [3]

In the past decade, however, France has fallen from culinary grace. No longer are French chefs and French restaurants the best in the world or worthy of the highest accolades. The World's 50 Best Restaurants of 2013 only included six restaurants in France, none of which were in the Top 10 (*The World's 50 Best*). In 2004, the number of French restaurants on the list was at fourteen, five of which were in the Top 10 (*The World's 50 Best*).[4] Pouring salt into the wound, beginning in 2003 with an article in *The New York Times*, Arthur Lubow declared French cuisine and culinary identity boring, stagnant, and second to Spain. Following along Lubow's path, in 2008 and 2009 respectively, François Simon (the most feared restaurant critic in France) and Michael Steinberger put pen to paper to publish books questioning French gastronomy and the

[3] When speaking of identity, I take it to mean the distinctive characteristics of an individual or group which form an outwardly projected self-image.
[4] For a complete list of The World's 50 Best Restaurants from 2003 to present, see the website http://www.theworlds50best.com.

consequent French cultural identity as it is constructed on and around the French table. Is gastronomy still the force it once was in France?

Running parallel to this discussion about the tarnished image of French gastronomy, there has been a counter-narrative occurring in literature and film that suggests that gastronomy continues to be a powerful force in national self-fashioning. The past two decades have seen a proliferation of literary and filmic narratives that employ gastronomic themes as a means of confronting fears and concerns arising in line with threats to the national identity. While it is true that food and eating always have a special place in France, it is during times of national anxiety when the recourse to gastronomy and the sense of comfort that comes from cuisine is most pronounced. Throughout the past century, in fact, gastronomic representations in film and literature consistently show that what, how, with whom, and where the French eat structure the national sense of self. Nevertheless, scholars have neglected to engage with the culinary metaphors and images prevalent in French literary and cinematographic heritage. When everything else fades away in the face of social discord, war, or revolution, gastronomy persists. An undying symbol of the nation, gastronomy serves to orient the French people in the present and guide them towards the future. It is the cultural constant to which the French turn in order to celebrate victories and mourn losses, a phenomenon which is evident when looking at gastronomic narratives from the past one-hundred years. This study will examine how and why authors and filmmakers harness gastronomy as a tool for national self-fashioning throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

Gastronomic Narratives

Symptomatic of the French nation's undeniably unique and intimate relationship with food is the nation's obsession with "food talk." Gertrude Stein once famously noted, "[France] is a country where they talk about eating. Every country talks about eating but in that country they talk about talking about eating" (172). It is true that talking about food is a sort of national preoccupation. After all, France is the birthplace of culinary discourse. The food critic and the restaurant review were born in nineteenth century France and food guides from Michelin and Gault & Millau continue to influence the decisions of chefs, farmers, vintners, and diners on a daily basis the world over. Long before the advent of restaurant reviews, however, the French were already engaged in dialogues which were about food and which used food as a metaphorical device. French authors turned to culinary discourse to express fears, concerns, longing, and joy as well as to structure character development in poetry, prose, and theater dating back to the Middle Ages. Gastronomy has a long literary history in France.

I have chosen the term "gastronomic narratives" to define a corpus of fictional texts and films in which some element of gastronomy is a significant literary device in the structuring of plot or character development. Traditionally, we use "gastronomic literature," a category with very little scholarly definition, to discuss any work belonging to the entire range of writing that treats any of the many subjects included under the title "gastronomy." For instance, this genre may include works of food history, cookbooks, memoirs, and academic theories of consumption as well as restaurant

reviews and blog postings. The genre lacks precision. Of further concern is the fact that there has heretofore been little room for fiction within this literary space. I believe we must open the field of inquiry to include and give prominence to the literary text; using the genre of gastronomic narrative does just this.

Because a narrative is a telling of a story, the field of gastronomic narratives also opens itself to the study of film and other visual mediums. Over the past century, literature and film have been working in tandem, responding to and building upon each other, often using similar imagery, themes, and metaphors, especially when concerning the edible. A study of fictional representations of French gastronomy would be lacking if it did not include cinema. From very early forays into the "seventh art," which is French in origin, filmmakers have employed gastronomy to situate storylines. The earliest example of this is the short film, *Le repas de bébé* (1895), in which Louis Lumière depicted his brother Auguste's family sitting down to tea and biscuits with their infant. Lasting only forty seconds, the plot is simple but it sheds light on an intimate family moment and the sharing of culinary tradition with a new generation. Lumière's short film testifies to the importance of the meal both in the lives of Frenchmen and as an artistic subject.

In France, gastronomic narratives have a long and persistent history that dates back to the Middle Ages and which we can trace through to the present.[5] Eustache

[5] There are several anthologies of gastronomic excerpts and poetry from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century that point to the enduring presence of food and dining in French literature. See Johan Faerber's *La cuisine des écrivains* and *La cuisine des écrivains*, Philippe di Folco's *La littérature gourmande: De François Rabelais à Marcel Proust*, Philippe Gillet's *Le goût et les mots: Littérature et gastronomie (XIVème-XXème siècle)*, Kilien Stengel's *Poètes de la bonne chère*: *Anthologie de poésie gastronomique*

Deschamps situated many of his poems in various culinary spaces and used food as a tool for critiquing other cultures as he traveled as a soldier.[6] In Antoine de la Sale's late medieval romance *Jehan de Saintré*, culinary comportment defines men and their place either within or outside of court society. The sixteenth century saw the birth of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, masters of the excesses of the table and the culinary carnivalesque. In the seventeenth century, Molière told the story of *Le bourgeois gentihomme* who wished to show his social arrival by throwing the perfect aristocratic dinner party and Madame de Sevigné detailed the death of Vatel in her literary letters. Leading up to the Revolution, questions of gluttony and *gourmandise* as well as matters of good and bad taste peppered the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau. One of the seminal works of the period, the *Encyclopédie de Diderot et D'Alembert* includes numerous culinary-minded entries such as those on the artichoke, taste, *gourmandise*, cuisine, apples, cocoa, and wine.[7]

The eighteenth century also saw the birth of the two men at the heart of food writing that is today so popular – Alexandre-Balthazar-Laurent Grimod de la Reynière and Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. The Revolution was a democratizing force in many

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and *Poètes du vin, poètes divins: Une anthologie des plus beaux poèmes de Virgile à Aragon*, and the anthology *Mots en bouche: La gastronomie*.

[6] Some of Deschamps culinary-minded poems include "Poulz, puces, puour et pourceaulx" (194), "Adieu Paris, adieu petiz pastez" (140), "C'est Alixandre le poing clos" (138), "Je n'en vueil point; varlet soit il au diable" (134), "Je n'ose aler souper a court" (96), and "Toujours, sanz demander, moustarde" (114).

[7] François Rabelais has been the subject of much gastronomic analysis. The most well-known and influential work on the subject of food and eating in Rabelais is Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*. Bakhtin pays particular attention to the idea of Carnival and how this period, during which Gargantua was born, affects food norms and focuses on the celebratory function of communing around the table. Ronald W. Tobin examines culinary instances in Molière's plays in *Tarte à la crème: Comedy and Gastronomy in Molière's Theater*. On matters concerning good and bad taste in the Enlightenment, see Jennifer Tsien's work entitled *The Bad Taste of Others: Judging Literary Value in Eighteenth-Century France*. Although Tsien focuses her attention on literary and aesthetic taste, she also discusses its connection to gustatory taste.

ways, not the least of which was culinary. With the dissolution of court society, chefs made their way into the streets of Paris and opened restaurants influencing life in nineteenth-century France and Europe. Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin sought to capitalize upon the opening up of gastronomy with didactic texts explaining the art and science of eating wisely. At the same time, Honoré de Balzac and Émile Zola capture the *nouveauté* of restaurant and café dining among the masses in their novels.[8] Marcel Proust united literature and the gastronomic in his *oeuvre*, carrying the nineteenth-century use of food into the twentieth. Proust's narrator visits restaurants and dines with friends on innumerable occasions. And, of course, the Proustian narrator would provide the literary world with its most iconic culinary moment – that of the *madeleine*.

The past century of French literature since Proust and the development of the film industry have been home to an increasing attention to gastronomy and its use as a structuring device despite claims to the contrary. Timothy J. Tomasik has posited that the second half of the twentieth century was home to a dearth of any "compelling gastronomic literature" because of "the changes in French cuisine and French gastronomy enacted by globalization" (241). However, I would contend that a close examination of gastronomic narratives, especially during the period which Tomasik indicates, proves quite the opposite. Authors and filmmakers including, but not limited

[8] In particular, Balzac used food and dining to demonstrate social status. In her 2010 book *Garçon, un cent d'huîtres!: Balzac et la table*, Anka Muhlstein chronicles Balzac's fascination with gastronomy as he portrays it in the *Comédie humaine*. Muhlstein focuses her discussion on the many meals at homes, bars, cafés, and restaurants that appear and reappear throughout Balzac's *oeuvre*. James W. Brown has also closely examined meals in the nineteenth-century novel including the works of Georges Sand and Honoré de Balzac in *Fictional Meals and Their Function in the French Novel, 1789-1848*.

to, Colette, Violette Leduc, Jean-Paul Sartre, Francis Ponge, Claude Chabrol, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Philippe Delerm, Murielle Barbery, and Joy Sorman have all engaged with gastronomic themes in their oeuvres in ways which challenge how we think about food and France's relationship to what and how it eats.

Certainly, the strong presence of gastronomic narratives in France does not preclude other nations from similar literary and film traditions. The gastronomic narrative and other forms of food writing exist the world over, and in fact, are growing in popularity. Notable works from this genre also come from Taiwan, Mexico, Canada, Germany and England.[9] These instances, though, are just that. They stand apart from the literary or filmic traditions in their respective homelands more than they represent it. In the United States, the past two decades, in line with the rise of the "Foodie" in American culture, has seen a growing number of food novels. With notable exceptions such as Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* or Mark Kurlansky's *Edible Stories*, most recent American food fiction would fall under the category of popular literature or "beach reads," "women's fiction," "romance," or "chick-lit."[10] These fictional forays into the food world often depict women who open a bakery after suffering a broken heart.

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[9] A few examples of gastronomic narratives from world literature and film include *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman* by Ang Lee (Taiwan), *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (Mexico), *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* by Peter Greenaway (England), *John Saturnall's Feast* by Lawrence Norfolk (England), *The Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood (Canada), and *The Flounder* by Günter Grass (Germany).

[10] Melissa Brackney Stoeger has compiled a list of such novels using these labels in her book, *Food Lit: A Reader's Guide to Epicurean Nonfiction*. She separates these novels from others which she labels "Literary." Though her distinctions are useful to the general reader, Stoeger does not provide the reasoning behind how she distinguishes one from the other. Moreover, I am not convinced that all of the novels she includes under "Literary fiction" can be categorized as such.

In the French context, however, something different is happening. The stakes are higher. Even when supping alone, the consuming characters are taking part in a larger national project. The foods and culinary spaces of which French authors and filmmakers make use have symbolic values which are indicative of the nation's history and tradition and are imbued with an inherent *francité*. Gastronomic referents that authors and filmmakers are choosing to represent are inherently imbued with "Frenchness." For example, common alimentary objects in French gastronomic narratives include champagne and other *terroir*-linked wines, the *pot-au-feu*, *foie gras*, truffles, *madeleines* and the *kouing amann*, cheeses such as camembert, and products with the distinctive label of *Appellation d'origine contrôlée*. These foods provide direct links to history, tradition, and a savoir faire that the French believe is solely their own. Likewise, the setting of these narratives tends toward culinary spaces which play an integral role in French life such as the café or the market.

French gastronomic narratives are in dialogue with culture-at-large, echoing and precipitating culinary discourse in other domains including politics and the restaurant industry. This genre responds to and takes part in a larger discourse in which food becomes a medium for diagnosing and treating that which ails the nation because of its metonymy with the nation.

> Food and its representation in [nineteenth-century French] literature characterize the cultural ethos of a people to such an extent that whether its presence in a text be oriented toward poetic evocation or realistic depiction it serves as a marker, or rather a metonym, of a society at a given moment in its evolution. (Brown 171)

More than elsewhere, the literary and filmic use of gastronomy in France is situated in relationship to the moment of its production and provides a social commentary and elucidates an understanding of French values, fears, concerns, and hopes. An examination of gastronomic themes thus not only reveals how France feeds itself, but also how it envisions itself at a given moment in time and in relationship to its history.

The long standing tradition of gastronomic narratives and their engagement with national issues in France necessarily provokes many questions: Why do authors and directors turn to gastronomy in the French context and how do they use it to comment upon or react against society at large? What do gastronomic narratives reveal about individuals and communities as consumers? How does gastronomy present itself in narrative works and are there temporal trends in its use? Particularly in the French context, how do authors and filmmakers engage with stereotypes about French foods and dining habits? Why is gastronomy so insistently and increasingly prevalent over the past century? And, what does gastronomy *do* for French literature and film?

Despite its prominence, scholars have, by and large, neglected to fully make use of gastronomy as a critical and analytical tool. Most of the scholarly work examining gastronomic themes is restricted to articles examining individual texts or films. One obvious exception is Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson's book, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*. Ferguson begins her quest to answer questions about what food does for France (4-5) with a largely historical and sociological approach and locates her argument in literature and film situated in the different periods she discusses. Building on Ferguson, but taking a different approach, the core of my research begins

with close readings of literary and cinematic works with an eye to different gastronomic themes. I enhance my reading of the gastronomic narratives at hand by mobilizing food theory from the fields of history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Through the work of theorists such as Pierre Nora, Mary Douglas, Georg Simmel, Massimo Montanari, and Roland Barthes, among others, I then nuance my understanding of what is at stake in these novels and films. Apart from Ferguson's work there has yet to be a cohesive study of twentieth-century French gastronomic narratives or any attempt to make sense of how these novels and films are in dialogue with each other and society at large. My analysis here is an attempt to fill this void. I will reveal how authors and filmmakers consistently harness gastronomic themes to critique and shape France's self-image, thus showing that there is, in fact, a cohesive narrative thread weaving through these works.

What is gastronomy?

Talking and writing about food is never as simple as it may seem. Common speech tends to conflate food-related terms such as gastronomy and cuisine. When discussing these terms in two languages – French and English – the level of complication amplifies. Consequently, some linguistic clarification is necessary. I have chosen the term "gastronomy" because it broadens the scope of analysis beyond simply just food or cuisine and because it is inherently French.

"Gastronomy" is useful as a framework for this study because, at its origin, it is an essentially French concept. In 1801, Joseph de Berchoux published "La Gastronomie"

and introduced the world to this neologism. In this extensive poem which comes in four verses or *chants*, Berchoux desires to raise cuisine and fine dining to the level of other arts: "Je vais, dans mon ardeur poétique et divine, / Mettre au rang des beaux-arts celui de la cuisine" (2). Interestingly, Berchoux does not directly define gastronomy, but describes it at length. He traces a history of gastronomy back to Ancient Rome, lauds cooks as the most honorable men in a household, and takes a didactic tone in an effort to help shape the post-Revolutionary culinary landscape.[11] He warns against gluttony and "les repas monstrueux" (14), advises his readers on what time of day is best to eat (20), and where in both the house and in France it is best to dine (15, 20). He describes how foods should appear when they come to table (34), and suggests wines that are emblematic of the *patrie* and, thus, appropriate for serving guests (35-36). Taking the

[11] Prior to the French Revolution *haute cuisine*, or any semblance of codified cooking and eating, came from and existed almost solely within the domain of the aristocracy and court society. With the breakdown in this social structure and a democratization of French society came a democratization of how the nation fed itself. Chefs that once were tied to the kitchens of the wealthy were let free and opened restaurants throughout Paris and other cities in France. Berchoux, Grimod de la Reynière, and Brillat-Savarin were at the forefront of helping to disseminate culinary knowledge to the masses so that French cuisine, despite its now wide-spread availability, would remain *haute cuisine*. The effort to codify and normalize the nation's cuisine also took place in the kitchen. Marie-Antoine Carême (1784-1833) and then Auguste Escoffier (1846-1935) formalized recipes and ways of cooking dishes throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Their cookbooks continue to be foundational texts in the apprenticeship of French cooking, in particular Escoffier's *Le guide culinarire.* The two chefs also helped export and promote French cuisine throughout Western Europe, Russia, and the United States. For more information about the history and invention of French cuisine, see Philippe Alexandre and Béatrix De L'Aulnoit's *Les fourchettes dans les étoiles : Brève histoire de la gastronomie française*, Alain Drouard's *Le mythe gastronomique français*, Madeleine Ferrières' *Histoires de cuisines et trésors de fourneaux,* Susan Pinkard's *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800,* Jean-Pierre Poulain and Edmond Nierinck's *Histoire de la cuisine et des cuisiniers: Techniques culinaires et pratiques de table, en France, du Moyen-Age à nos jours*, Patrick Rambourg's *Histoire de la cuisine et de la gastronomie française*, Jacques Revel's *Un festin en paroles : Histoire littéraire de la sensibilité gastronomique de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, and Amy Trubek's *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession*.

stance of a teacher giving a lesson, it is clear that *gastronomie* implies a *savoir-faire* and is something to be learned.[12]

My use of "gastronomy" is founded upon Brillat-Savarin's understanding of the idea which he describes as a pursuit of knowledge and appreciation for

> tout ce qui a rapport à l'homme, en tant qu'il se nourrit […] Le sujet de la gastronomie est tout ce qui peut être mangé; son but direct, la conservation des individus, et ses moyens d'exécution, la culture qui produit, le commerce qui échange, l'industrie qui prépare, et l'expérience qui invente les moyens de tout disposer pour le meilleur usage. (62-63)

While there is overlap in how Berchoux and Brillat-Savarin define gastronomy, the latter writer popularizes and democratizes the enterprise suggesting that it is accessible to all, a belief that is pervasive in French culture today.[13] Using Brillat-Savarin's definition of gastronomy opens the field of study to extend beyond food and the act of eating. Gastronomy encompasses the ways in which someone procures, cooks and eats foods, with whom and where these activities take place, and all of the social mores that dictate behavior and interaction while cooking and eating.

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[12] Though Berchoux coined the term, it was not until later in the nineteenth century that "gastronomy" entered into common usage. The normalized use of this term was due in large part to the writings of Alexandre-Balthazar-Laurent Grimod de la Reynière. Grimod de la Reynière penned numerous culinary tracts including *Almanach des gourmands* and the *Manuel des amphitryons*. The books are part critique of the Parisian food scene, part didactic, and part commentary. Grimod published numerous editions of the *Almanach* and was always striving to provide his readers with the newest and best information about the Parisian food scene. His style and approach to the subject influenced not only his late contemporary Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, but also food writing today. In "Grimod de la Reynière's *Almanach des gourmands*: Exploring the Gastronomic New World of Postrevolutionary France," Michael Garval suggests that scholars have fallen short in their appraisal of Grimod and his influence on the French gastronomic tradition, particularly in regards to his writing about cuisine and dining. Garval argues that too much attention has been paid to Brillat-Savarin, who, in some cases, may have "borrowed" heavily from Grimod's writing and ideas. It is to Grimod, the lesser-known gourmand, which we owe "so much of the massive, later development of popular gastronomic discourse, in journalism, advertising, and tourism" (53).

[13] Brillat-Savarin asks, if a meal served at "une table frugale […] peuvent-ils ne pas être excellents" (148)?

In comparison, the idea of "cuisine" is more problematic, as is the general idea of "food." In the French language, the verb *cuisiner* means "to cook." The noun *la cuisine*, however, is quite complex. The substantive *la cuisine* signifies not only the way in which a group feeds itself, but also the space in which cooking and food preparation occurs. One could consequently say, "Dans la cuisine, je cuisine la cuisine française pour le dîner" (In the kitchen, I am cooking French cuisine for dinner) even though the sentence would be overwrought. By contrast, in English, "cuisine" is a set of characteristic ingredients, cooking methods, and dishes which are representative of the way in which a group feeds itself. For instance, we may speak of regional or national cuisines. French cuisine is simply one part of French gastronomy. Likewise, all cuisines are made up of foods. Food is an alimentary object which, when combined with other foods, creates a dish, a meal, and a cuisine.

An Emotional Eater

As I argue in what follows: France has an eating disorder. The continued recourse to gastronomy, time and time again over the past century suggests that the French are emotional eaters. They use food and dining to shape their national sense of self. Emotional eating is defined as "the tendency to overeat in response to negative emotions such as anxiety or irritability" whereas the normal physical response to stress is a loss of appetite (van Strien et al, 106). People diagnosed as emotional eaters turn to food to make themselves feel better, physically and emotionally, when they are stressed or anxious. Applied to the national level, it would seem that the natural response to

internal and external identity threats would be to ignore the culinary to focus attention elsewhere such as on military or economic strength. Under such circumstances in France, however, the nation turns towards gastronomy to shape its sense of self. Gastronomy provides the necessary metaphors for addressing fears and concerns that arise during periods of national anxiety. Over the last one hundred years, this recourse to food and dining has occurred and reoccurred with relative frequency. I will examine three distinct times when the turn to food is most pronounced – during the interwar years; at the culmination of the *Trente Glorieuses*, the thirty year period or rapid economic growth and industrialization between 1945 and 1975; and at the turn of the twenty-first century. These three periods demonstrate that, in order to confront and overcome threats to identity, authors and filmmakers both perpetuate and break down myths and stereotypes about French culinary excellence as a means of national self-fashioning.

In Chapter One I examine how Marcel Rouff employs traditional French gastronomy in his novel *La vie et la passion de Dodin Bouffant, gourmet* to sustain and revitalize the national body and to proclaim national superiority over a once and future enemy – Germany. This novel is part of a more wide-spread regionalist discourse that began prior to the First World War and was highly prevalent in the years following the war. The nation was nothing without its regions and gastronomy was an apolitical and widely-beloved aspect of French history and tradition through which everyone could come together. Rouff's emphasis on regional *terroir* and the simplicity of good French cooking unite the French people in their common past and orient them towards the

future, in an almost spiritual turn. Foods and meals throughout the storyline are representative of German and French national cuisines, and thus, of national characters. Germany's sickening food is symbolic of a tasteless and barbaric people who will never be able to destroy that which makes France a great nation. Contrarily, food in France is symbolic of the nation's god-chosen people and is a guarantor of moral superiority.

While gastronomy may be an ideal means of projecting a superior identity on the international stage, it may be a divisive force within the nation. In Chapter Two, I propose a new reading of Luis Buñuel's 1972 film, *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and Marco Ferreri's 1973 film *La grand bouffe* which examines gastronomy as the subject of critique. At the culmination of the thirty year period following World War II (1945-1975), known as the *Trente Glorieuses*, the value of gastronomy became increasingly problematic and questionable in terms of its use in grounding a national ideology. These two films break down stereotypical notions of French gastronomic superiority, highlighting the inherently divisive foundations of the nation's highly-regulated dining norms and *la cuisine bourgeoise*. Playing with the notion of binging and purging, Ferreri and Buñuel strip gastronomy down to its base and call for a culinary *tabula rasa* in a discourse that anticipates the most recent *nouvelle cuisine* movement.

At the dawn of a new century France engaged itself in a battle against the dilution of cultural identity due to increased globalization which presented itself in gastronomic narratives during a roughly ten year period from 1997-2007. Jean-Pierre Jeunet's hit film *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* is representative of a trend in literature and film which emphasizes the nostalgic value of French gastronomy as a

means of shaping the nation's future. Nostalgia is more than just a way of remembering the past; it is a mean of imagining a utopian future. Jeunet employs highly-charged and distinctively French foods and culinary spaces to frame and make possible his nostalgic rendering of Paris. In doing so, he draws upon the idealized historical importance of gastronomy to suggest an image in which France can sculpt itself in a new era.

My conception and use of national self-fashioning is an extension of Stephen Greenblatt's work in *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. In this foundational text, Greenblatt argues that the sixteenth century marked a period of heightened awareness about the ability for individuals to intentionally form, or sculpt, their identity (2). Greenblatt's theory posits that the self is a cultural construct, an idea that is entirely applicable to the nation. The nation is a group of individuals bound by a common culture; thus, it is a cultural construct of the first order, especially if considering Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, which suggests that the nation is first and foremost built upon the belief in common cultural touchstones which bind together individuals.[14] Furthermore, Greenblatt contends that the sixteenth century was a period in which individuals realized the potential for performing and creating their own identities, a practice in which national bodies engage as well. Nations are constantly trying to maintain the upper hand in terms of soft and hard power. Shakespeare's famous line, "All the world's a stage" becomes a metaphor for the acting out of national identities in front of a global audience. This performance, one could argue, becomes more and more important in the effort to appear singular in the face of

[14] Anderson's conception of the nation will inform my discussion of the nation specifically in Chapter One, and will serve as an undercurrent to Chapters Two and Three.

modern globalization and cultural homogeneity, a phenomenon more prevalent now than it was in the Renaissance.

Several scholars have employed the term "national self-fashioning" in their work, though never with any uniformity, which attests to its fluidity as a concept and its varied scholarly applications. For instance, Lawrence Kritzman relates national self-fashioning to the formation of the national imagination (*A Certain Idea* 167). Svetlana Boym uses the term twice in her work *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*, though each time with different significance, either to refer to how members of a nation choose to dress themselves (the fashion or style of clothing common to a nation), or to indicate an attempt at distinguishing the cultural identity of one's home nation in reaction to travel abroad (98, 74). It is Boym's latter use of the term which has resonance with my own study. My own understanding of national self-fashioning indicates the shaping or molding of a collective identity at the level of the nation in order to project a certain self-image.

Concerted efforts to sculpt a national cultural identity are reactions against the threats of homogenization or total loss of a unique identity on the global stage. Self-fashioning necessitates the creation of distinctions between self and other. It is a way of developing "a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning* 2). Efforts to self-fashion consequently occur in the presence of a "threatening Other" that is "alien, strange, or hostile" (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning* 9) and consequently provokes feelings

of anxiety and stress.[15] To mediate these emotions, people try to fortify their own sense of identity. At the national level these real and perceived threats may take the form of war, oppression, famine, social inequality, or globalization.

The turn to gastronomy during times of distress is logical given that food choice is an easily accessible means of exerting control over the nation when all else seems uncontrollable. While Stephen Greenblatt situates his theory of self-fashioning in literature and language, I would argue that, more precisely, literary and filmic representations of gastronomy are in fact the privileged domain of French national self-fashioning. Greenblatt locates self-fashioning in literature because the effort to shape identity is an effort at "representation of one's nature or intention in speech or actions" which "invariably crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one's own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control, the attempt to fashion other selves" (*Self-Fashioning* 3). Literary language becomes a mode of self-expression in which it is possible to shape an identity that is other than reality; in other words, literature opens up the possibility of an ideal which might otherwise be unattainable.

The Language of Gastronomy

More than in literature generally as Greenblatt suggests, I posit that these filmic and literary stories are the central locus of national self-fashioning. The films and novels

[15] The presence of a "threatening Other" is one of the "governing conditions" of self-fashioning (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning* 9).

which form my corpus provide the central point at which language, nation, and gastronomy come together to form a collective French identity.

At the most basic level, food and eating are intimately connected to the construction of the self. They provide direct and immediate ways of intervening in the body, be it an individual's body or the social body. To eat is to break the boundaries between inside/outside and between self/world through the incorporation of food into the body. Food changes the biological composition of the human body. The absorption of nutrients changes one's physical, emotional, and psychological expression. Thus, gastronomy is a privileged tool in the construction of the self both at the level of the individual via what one chooses to eat for dinner and at the level of the nation via the national cuisine and gastronomic norms.

Gastronomy is a system of communication that replaces spoken or written language. Food is never simply food; it is a sign with multiple significations that change and develop over time. For instance, in France, turnips signify cowardice and popping a champagne cork is a sign of luxurious celebration. Roland Barthes argues that once food has lost its nutritive function, once the ability to procure food is no longer a daily struggle, it begins to function as a grammatical unit (*Psychosociology* 168). Each grammatical unit, or each culinary item, come together with behavioral norms and cooking methods to form a syntax through which a larger system of communication is born. Over time, layers of signification build upon each other in such a way that food as a sign has multiple significations and connotations depending upon the social register in which it is used, much like linguistic significations.

In French society, food has so long been a sign that, "One could say that an entire 'world' (social environment) is present in and signified by food" (*Psychosociology* 170). Culinary communication, like a shared linguistic language, unites individuals through shared forms of expression. Massimo Montanari notes that "like language, the food system contains and conveys the culture of its practitioner; it is the repository of traditions and of collective identity. It is therefore an extraordinary vehicle of self-representation and of cultural exchange – a means of establishing identity to be sure" (133). While this is true for any culture which has an established cuisine and culinary system, Barthes contends that self-identification through food is stronger or more prevalent in France than elsewhere and does so by repeatedly situating his argument in the French context (*Psychosociology* 172-173).[16] This is to suggest that more so in France than elsewhere, the essential use of food is as symbol rather than as sustenance.

Because they function similarly, gastronomy and narrative thus enter into a mutually beneficial relationship. Gian-Paolo Biasin suggests that the symbolic and communicative values of food and eating are heightened when they occur in the literary context.

> If alimentary referents become verbal and culinary signs in gastronomy, with even greater reason they become so in literature, and particularly in the novel, where they constitute an integral part of the technique used for representation, narration, and characterization, and hence are meant to establish (and to make us understand) the quality and the value of the text, its literariness. (Biasin 11)

[16] It is important to note that in this article, "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," Barthes makes sure to identify that he is speaking in a purely French context. For instance, he says, "I am speaking of French themes" (170) and situates his discussion "in contemporary French society" (172).

Systems of communication are layered on top of one another. The symbolic value of food and dining norms is heightened in the literary or filmic context and the value of the narrative is as well. Consequently, it would seem that gastronomic narratives are privileged loci for identity construction. While Greenblatt situates his argument in the study of written language in literature, it is clear that scholars must read literature and film through the language of gastronomy to fully comprehend efforts at identity construction.

Comfort Food[17]

In the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, the American people turned to comfort foods to deal with their emotions.[18] Because of their connection to past events and sentimentality, comfort foods help maintain a sense of unity or continuity over time and help to mediate change or distress. Comfort foods are any group of usually traditional dishes and ingredients that people consume, often when feeling stressed or anxious, and which evoke positive emotions because the foods are associated with nostalgic memories or important interpersonal relationships. While a meal's designation as comfort food is often highly dependent upon the individual, it is possible to apply the notion to national tastes and preferences given that cuisine is deeply embedded in social and cultural systems that stem from the national level.[19] Especially

[17] I would like to thank Cheryl Krueger for suggestion I consider the idea of comfort food in this study.
[18] The Associated Press reports that September 2001 sales of snack foods and items like instant mashed potatoes increased at least 10% over September 2000 sales ("A Nation Turns to Comfort Food").
[19] Numerous scholars have addressed how culture constructs gastronomy. Claude Lévi-Strauss has examined how cooking techniques reflect a society's social structure in *Le cru et le cuit*. Pierre Bourdieu links the way in which people eat and the culinary choices they make to socioeconomic status and

when a food is a "national dish," meaning it transcends political, geographical, and socio-economic boundaries, it provides a common touchstone that unites individuals into an imagined community of collective consumers. As in the American post-9/11 climate, the turn to comfort food in the face of threats to the nation has marked recent French history. When the going gets tough, France binges on its gastronomic heritage.

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expendable capital. Norbert Elias, Georg Simmel, and Bourdieu all argue that culinary comportment is an essential factor in class distinction. Likewise, Stephen Mennell notes, "the major forces which have shaped [tastes] are religions, classes and nations. […] People have always used food in their attempts to climb the social ladder themselves, and to push other people down the ladder. Today it is possible to speak of élite or highbrow food, popular or mass cooking, fold cookery, even junk food" (17). Massimo Montanari goes so far as to conclude, in a sweeping fashion, that "food is culture" (xi).

Serving the Nation: Resuscitating Interwar France in Marcel Rouff's *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*

"La destinée des nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent," declares Brillat-Savarin in his foundational culinary text, *La Physiologie du goût* (19). The self-proclaimed "gastronome patriote" (149) came to this conclusion at the end of his life, having spent the end of the Revolutionary period living, and dining, abroad. Brillat-Savarin couches this statement in a series of aphorisms suggesting that it is embedded in general truth and removed from doubt or question. And, if there were any doubt about the truth of this aphorism, one of Brillat-Savarin's most ardent, albeit fictional, disciples attempts to eliminate it.

In Marcel Rouff's highly nationalistic 1924 novel, *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*, the gastronomic hero Dodin returns to his home in France physically weary, psychologically depressed, and emotionally scarred after having survived an "infernal séjour" (178) in neighboring Germany. The horrendous meals he consumes while on German soil make him ill and serve as a counterpoint to the magnificent French cuisine to which he is accustomed and to which he has devoted his life. Much like the French nation exiting the Great War, fatigued and desolate, Dodin is in need of spiritual and physical resuscitation after his prolonged contact with the German nation and its cuisine. And so, he dines on familiar French cuisine. The nourishing and resplendent meal that his wife Adèle cooks for him shortly after returning home, causes Dodin to conclude, "Plus de doute: la cuisine d'un peuple est le seul témoin exact de sa

civilisation" (178). The gastronome's experience reaffirms Brillat-Savarin's aphoristic statement that the fate and culture of a nation is dependent upon its cuisine.

In *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*, food does more than reassure Dodin about the superiority of his nation and its cuisine, it functions as a rejuvenating culinary call to arms for a post-war nation. According to both the gourmet and his author, national cuisine is a symbol of geography, tradition, history, and the moral stance of the nation, making it the ideal medium for bringing life back to France.[20] In this novel, Marcel Rouff harnesses French cuisine to create an image of an enduring and unified France that is superior to Germany in an effort to bolster and mold the French nation in the wake of the First World War.

In his gastronomic narrative, Rouff weaves a descriptive tale of Dodin-Bouffant, France's greatest gastronome and culinary mind. Dodin has devoted his life to the pleasures of the table and to the study of French gastronomy through the literary productions of Brillat-Savarin and Grimod de la Reynière. The narrator tells of Dodin's many gastronomic exploits as he entertains kings and friends alike and of his difficulties finding a cook who can live up to his nearly unattainable standards. After a lifetime of indulging in food, Dodin and his wife Adèle fall ill. Their doctor sends them to Baden-Baden to consume the town's supposedly healing waters. While there, however, they fall victim to an oppressive and disgusting national cuisine and encounter Herr Stumm, a man bent on returning the German national cuisine to its prehistoric origins including

[20] Enrico Cesaretti discusses the nationalistic use of food in Italy at the same time in his article, "Recipes for the Future: Traces of Past Utopias in *The Futurist Cookbook*." In *The Futurist Cookbook*, author F. T. Marinetti sought to make use of food as a unifying force within the Italian nation, but unlike in France, culinary tradition and heritage were put to the side in the name of building an ideal future (843).

the total abandonment of cooking. Under a material and philosophical culinary attack while on foreign ground, Dodin and Adèle become sicker than ever, and confirm Brillat Savarin's nationalist sentiment.

Though not widely known outside of gastronomic circles, *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet* is an iconic gastronomic text of the twentieth century. Lawrence R. Schehr has noted that the novel's many editions attest to its popularity over time (124). Despite the novel's oft mentioned importance as a gastronomic narrative, few scholars have responded to Schehr's suggestion of approaching the text as a "literary document" (125). Schehr himself examines the novel by focusing on descriptions of menus and meals from the text and concludes that it belongs to a hybrid genre "that sits somewhere between fiction and cookbooks, menus, and Food TV" (125). Consequently, Schehr grounds his analysis in the words and discourse which the author employs, determining that "for Rouff, the question of gastronomy is as much a question of the words with which one eats as the foods themselves" (129). My own analysis will follow Schehr's focus on discourse, but will expand from this approach to elucidate the underlying meaning of Rouff's discursive and culinary choices to unveil a very deliberate nationalistic use of gastronomy.

In a similar vein, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson has proposed that Rouff's novel functions as a moral support for the French nation, claiming it "*reassures* the France of 1924 that, whatever the losses sustained in the war, France remains whole, its cultural integrity entire, its culinary superiority not only unchallenged but unchallengeable" (*Taste* 178, emphasis mine). While Ferguson's claim is certainly true, the way in which

she arrives at the conclusion lacks support and fails to take into account other significant themes at play in the novel. She suggests that French culinary superiority is a result of the relationship between the cook and the consumer, implying that the act of cooking is what is most important in creating gastronomic distinctions among nations (*Taste* 179). However, it is not the ability to cook which determines national culinary greatness, for even the Germans cook their food, albeit poorly. As I will argue, throughout the text, Rouff emphasizes the superiority of the French people through a demonstration of their inherently "good" taste via the themes of simplicity, the French land, and a God-given people. These factors are much more convincing and salient to the proclamation of France as a superior nation than the symbiosis of cook and consumer precisely because they directly designate the nation and its attributes. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet* does more than just reassure France; it serves as a gastronomic power play in the wake of the war and in response to the national apprehension during the Ruhr Affair occurring at the time of publication.

A Hungry Nation

Food was the focus of much attention and worry in France in the years during and immediately following the First World War. During the war, the French population suffered from significant food shortages due to an intersection of a decline in agricultural production, the military's requisitioning of food, and public hoarding of goods. These food shortages contributed greatly to the low morale of the French

people, particularly in the nation's cities (Perreux 95, Stovall 67). By the end of 1914, obtaining and maintaining adequate food provisions became the primary goal of municipal authorities throughout France (Nivet 153). Over time, war weariness and the difficulties of everyday life resulted in a significant slump in morale. Coming to the fore in 1917 (Martin 6-7, Stovall 57), the low morale of French men and women endured to the end of the last battle and well into the post-war years. The pervasive depression and relative stagnancy in France during the interwar period which culminated in the 1930s led Eugen Weber to label the period as "The Hollow Years."

The struggle to put dinner on the table during the war caused the French to use food as a political tool. Tyler Stovall details the political uses of food in war-time Paris in his book, *Paris and the Spirit of 1919: Consumer Struggles, Transnationalism, and Revolution*. For instance, residents of the French capital "wanted their consumer purchases to support the war effort, and refused to buy from those they viewed as enemies of the nation" (Stovall 32). Parisians rioted at German-owned food outlets and made accusations of price gauging (Stovall 31). Food, thus, had a powerful political value and was a tool for demonstrating national pride and enemy resistance. Because food that a family could put on the table symbolized the ability to maintain a decent life during war-time difficulties, food demonstrated the German inability to disrupt French culture (Stovall 48). One manifestation of this defiance to change was the government's effort to regulate bread supplies. The government's increasingly strict rules for

production and sale of bread resulted in the creation of the "national loaf."[21] This loaf of bread was produced with limited ingredients, increasing the availability of bread supplies throughout the country (Stovall 72). Such a product tied consumption to the national project by extending limited food supplies to feed more people, and it demonstrated an effort to maintain accord among citizens who struggled to feed their families. And, indeed, in the spirit of sacrifice, the majority of the French population accepted the alimentary restrictions imposed by the government (Perreux 105).

Over time, however, the nationalist sentiment tied to food dissipated and food became a source of contention among the French people. As Stovall shows, there was a decline in the belief in a *Union sacrée* that the French shared at the beginning of the war (284). By the latter years of the war, the French were no longer breaking bread together in a show of national communion. Access to food became more and more difficult both due to cost and supply (Perreux 92-94). Increasing taxes and regulatory measures over agricultural production incentivized underground commerce and dissimulation of real agricultural yields (Perreux 98). The fight to put food on the table became a symbol for other micro-political struggles that afflicted French society, but which national sentiment had disguised at the beginning of the war (Stovall 284).[22] The effort to provide food for their family that each person endured exposed rifts that had long-existed within society.

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[21] Perreux details how flour and grain were the first products to succumb to strict government regulation during the war (98-104).

[22] Regarding the larger political struggles involved in supplying France with adequate food sources, particularly the international politics involved in feeding northern France, see the chapter "Food" in Helen McPhail's *The Long Silence: Civilian Life under the German Occupation of Northern France, 1914-1918*.

While the fight for food at reasonable prices and in sufficient amounts divided the French people at home, quintessential and familiar foodstuffs united fighting soldiers. Pierre Boisard says of red wine and camembert on the front during the First World War: "A patriotic ritual equivalent to the Catholic rite of communion, the partaking of cheap red wine and Camembert served to remind the combatants of what they were fighting for: the land and its produce" (113). Eating an unripe camembert and drinking even a poor Bordeaux wine reminded soldiers of the splendors of their nation and united them through communion. For soldiers in the trenches, food became a symbol for and direct representation of the nation they were defending.

After the war, the entire French nation, demoralized and claiming an unstable victory,[23] would need a force around which to rally much as the soldiers did in the trenches. While precise statistics are unavailable, the war caused the loss of approximately 1,400,000 French lives in addition to the other one-million people who had been gassed, mangled, disfigured, or suffered amputated limbs (Weber, *The Hollow Years*, 11).[24] Farmlands were left ravaged, industrial resources had been realigned, there were great demographic divides in the population, and the country had suffered deep emotional scars. Jean-Jacques Becker and Serge Berstein go as far as to suggest that for the twenty year period in between the First and Second World Wars, the entirety of France lived continually under the shadow cast by the Great War (155). The

[23] Benjamin F. Martin notes, "Victories are often illusory, as the 1920s and 1930s proved [the French victory of 1918] to be" (10).

[24] Becker and Berstein detail the magnitude of human loss, particularly among adult males, and the further consequences of these losses such as concerns birth rates (156-163).

sheer magnitude of the losses – agricultural, industrial, human, and emotional – resulted in an emotionally empty nation in need of resuscitation.

To rejuvenate the ailing national body and soul, gastronomic writer and novelist Marcel Rouff proposes a national recommitment to cuisine. According to the author, the rich tradition of French cuisine is the best medium for drawing the nation together. To demonstrate his assertion, Rouff transposes the physical suffering inflicted by the Germans onto the character of Dodin himself. When Dodin falls ill and is in a state of "souffrance" (140), he says to his friends gathered around his dinner table, "en ces heures sombres … la gastronomie – signe et *patrie* de la haute culture – *comportait une morale inspiratrice d'énergie*" (140, emphasis mine). It is precisely during times of suffering that food can be its most powerful, particularly if food is used as recourse to tradition and values. Rouff links food's imparting of physical strength through caloric energy to its ability to foster social cohesion. The nation's cuisine is "un élément séculaire et appréciable de son charme" (Rouff 9); it transcends politics and religion, bringing together all factions of society. More profoundly, Rouff suggests that French cuisine lies at the very heart of the French nation, it is "un reflet de son âme" (9). French cuisine represents the nation as a whole. It is a manifestation of French history, tradition, culture, people, and a symbol of French greatness.

In the paratext to the novel, Rouff composes a "Justification" in which he defends his decision to write and publish the text. Herein, he acknowledges that some readers might find his subject frivolous in the wake of such devastation from the war. When the nation faces such seemingly insurmountable challenges as rebuilding its

population, industry, and morale, is it appropriate or worthwhile to devote oneself to food? In turn, he asks his readers, "n'est-ce pas l'heure et le lieu de glorifier ces créations spontanées de la fantaisie et de la sensibilité humaines" (7)? Rouff directly answers his own question :

> A cette heure où la France, qui n'a sauvé la liberté qu'au prix de profondes meurtrissures, compte, en face de l'avenir, les gloires de son passé et fait, pour ainsi dire, l'inventaire de ses trésors devant la tâche de demain, il m'a semblé qu'il ne pouvait pas être nuisible à ses destinées de parler avec conviction et amour d'une œuvre par où elle a toujours surpassé les autres nations. (8-9)

Rouff contends that it necessary to talk about French cuisine. The nationally shared patrimony of French gastronomy should and could be a means of drawing the people together and exerting cultural superiority because it is a representation of the nation's glorious past and rich tradition. It is a mark of the nation's immutable superiority upon which France could build its future.

The Return to Gastronomic Tradition

The gastronomic rhetoric of the interwar years argued for recourse to tradition and the nation's rich regional and agricultural past. This discourse was part and parcel of the proliferation of patriotic literary and cinematic works that came out of France beginning at the end of the Great War. Literary texts and films were put to use to provide negative commentary on the German enemy as well as to exalt the French nation and provide a memory of the trials France had suffered.[25] An upsurge in the effort to link

[25] Becker and Berstein briefly discuss how authors and filmmakers approached the War in their texts and films (171-175).

the regions to the nation through the promotion of regional identity and culture marked this patriotic discourse.[26] In fiction and non-fiction texts alike, authors continually returned to French national cuisine to enhance and exemplify the nation as a whole.[27] French cuisine, especially regional cuisine, figured prominently in the nationalist post-war discourse that attempted to draw the nation together.

One iconic gastronomic narrative that situates French national identity on the cuisine of its regions is Pampille's *Les bons plats de France: Cuisine régionale.*[28] Originally published in 1913, the purpose of the cookbook was to "grouper dans ces pages quelques-unes des bonnes traditions de la cuisine française et donner les recettes des plats les plus caractéristiques de chaque province" (Pampille 18).[29] Pampille's

[26] Ferguson notes that these values were present leading up to the First World War, but that the war exacerbated fears of losing the national identity of France (*Nationalism* 104).

[27] In her discussion and analysis of interwar period documentary films, Alison Levine shows that this artistic genre was central to efforts to create a unified nation. She notes, "No longer dismissed as cultural backwaters in need of reform, these rural areas of metropolitan and overseas France were now seen as important sources of national regeneration. Both public and private organizations sought to use film to educate rural peoples about the French nation and to educate city dwellers about the importance of the regions and the colonies to that nation" (5).

[28] Predating Pampille's cookbook, *Le tour de France par deux enfants* by G. Bruno also seeks to create a picture of the nation based on regional differences. Written as a schoolbook and widely read throughout France, this book may have influenced the work taking place during the interwar years which also sought to link region and nation.

[29] In recent years, there have been several significant attempts to explore the role of cuisine in the formation of national identity, paying particular attention to the role of cookbooks in this process. These studies take as their focus India, Mexico, and countries on the African continent. In his work on India, Arjun Appadurai suggests that in India, those pushing for the codification of a national cuisine are following the process that the French underwent in the eighteenth century (5). However, Appadurai posits that the effort to construct a national cuisine in India is not coming from within the country, but from expatriates who wish to recapture the cuisine of their ancestors (19-20). Appadurai's findings are similar to Igor Cusak's contention about the development of culinary national identity in Africa. Cusak suggests that the Western desire for African cookbooks has driven the development and formalization of national cuisines, and that these outwardly defined cuisines will become important tools for solidifying national identities in Africa's near future (207-225). The case of culinary nationalism in African countries is interesting because it is highly dependent on outside forces and desires for a nationally-linked cuisine rather than on the desires of people within nations who hope to define their cuisine as nationally unique such as is the case with France. Additionally, Jeffrey Pilcher in his study on Mexican cuisine, shows that, like Pampille in *Les bons plats de France: cuisine régionale*, Mexican cookbook authors employ a

insistence that the national cuisine, *la cuisine française*, was a composite of regional cuisines was meant to craft an image of France as a nation unified through food and the rich culinary traditions found throughout the nation. Thus, Pampille opens her cookbook with a section on "les plats nationaux" – dishes which she believes transcend regional difference and belong to everyone such as the *pot-au-feu*, *l'omelette au naturel*, *le boeuf à la mode*, and *la soupe à l'oignon*, the first two of which will also receive central importance in Rouff's text.

Focusing on the regional variants of French cuisine, Pampille makes clear the nationalistic discourse she seeks to craft.[30] At the beginning of each regional section of the cookbook, she extolls the virtues of the people, customs, geography, and cuisine of the region, thus lending the book a narrative quality, a practice that, today, has become nearly standard for cookbooks. For example, Pampille describes the cuisine of Provence as "la meilleure de toutes les cuisines" because of its "pays béni" where anything and everything can grow with ease (171). And, in Lorraine, "aussi presque toutes les recettes lorraines sont-elles parfaites; elles doivent plaire aux gourmets" (138).[31] It is

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nationalistic tone while attempting to unite regional cuisines to the national whole (201-203). The struggle to define a national cuisine in Mexico is one which continues today despite that the process began in the nineteenth century, and part of this struggle comes from the fact that Mexican cuisine had to fight against the country's elitist desires to incorporate European influences in repeated attempts to appear *civilized* (210, 215).

[30] The strong national fervor of Pampille's cookbook is perhaps also a consequence of her family ties. Pampille is the *nom de plume* for Marthe Daudet, the wife of Léon Daudet, who founded *L'Action française*, and a member of the extreme right.

[31] The author's choice to include Alsace and Lorraine is furthermore telling given that at the time of first publication, these two regions were politically part of Germany. Pampille overlooks this, including in her cookbook, the lands which, in the heart of many Frenchmen, were part of the patrimony. Similarly, the reference to Provence is important given that much of the region belonged to Italy until mid-way through the nineteenth century. Cities such as Nice, though with long personal histories, had yet short-lived French histories. Thus, the inclusion of such regions and emphasis on their quality of cuisine helps to buttress the image of a cohesive nation albeit composed of many distinct peoples and histories.

clear that the best dishes come from the regions where produce is grown and traditional culinary values remain intact. On the other hand, in the introduction to Ile-de-France, focusing on Paris, Pampille notes, "reconnaissons, pour être juste, que l'on mange beaucoup mieux dans les provinces, où toutes les bonnes traditions existent encore, qu'à Paris même [… où] on néglige totalement les principes fondamentaux de la cuisine" (68). In the French capital, Pampille suggests, people only play at cooking, having either neglected or forgotten culinary traditions. "Pampille insistently fixes the nation in its parts, in the regional products and dishes that make the whole that is French cuisine" (Ferguson, *Nationalism* 102). Moreover, the title alone connects regions to the nation suggesting that France's best foods are regional dishes.[32] Rather than a nation that emanates from the Parisian capital, regional cuisines come together to form the national cuisine.

Marcel Pagnol fictionalized Pampille's efforts situating his literary and cinematic works far from Paris in the pastoral and regional life of France. Appearing about fifteen years after Rouff's novel, Pagnol's film, *La femme du boulanger* (1938),[33] employs food to comment on French national identity at a time when the nation was on the brink of what would become another World War. Dana Strand argues that Pagnol's film emphasizes the role of bread in uniting the rural community and in reaffirming the community's values during a period when France was pervaded with feelings of insecurity and uncertainty (207-208). During such times, bread is the object that binds

[32] Ferguson provides a similar analysis of Pampille's cookbook also noting the importance of the title. The word "bon", Ferguson argues, carries many distinctions beyond "good" including "overtones of authenticity, of tradition, of distinction" (*Taste* 130).
[33] Pagnol's film is based on a play by Jean Giono of the same name.

together the threads of the social fabric, or causes them to unravel, particularly in the tightly-knit Christian community of the film. *La femme du boulanger*, like all of Pagnol's films, is definitively pastoral and nostalgic, traits that "[serve] to reinvent a common past" (Strand 211). These pastoral images also present a naturalistic, albeit romanticized view of *la France éternelle*, a nation imbued with a privileged destiny given its illustrious history (Jenkins 13-14). In this vein, Rouff and Pagnol appear to have similar goals; they both hope to bring forward in the memory of Frenchmen the historical importance of food to culture and community.

Like Pagnol, Rouff also situates Dodin's home away from Paris, placing the hero of French cuisine away from the nation thus reinforcing the notion that the grandeur of France's culinary identity emanates from the provinces. Living in the Rhône countryside, Dodin has immediate access to the finest quality products that come from the French soil. But the splendor of French cuisine does not reside solely near Dodin's home, it is present everywhere in France. While traveling to Germany to partake of the healing waters at Baden-Baden, Dodin and Adèle find throughout France

> une nourriture confortable qui, sans atteindre aux beautés complètes de leur ordinaire familial, avait son charme. Sur les hauteurs où il planait, le goût de Dodin avait acquis dans sa perfection même de la bonhomie et de l'indulgence. Même certains plats locaux, certaines manières indigènes d'accommoder les mets séduisaient tout à fait le Maître. Il voulut bien leur reconnaître une réelle valeur et en demander les recettes. Il retrouvait, à ces moments-là, toute sa verve lyrique pour se réjouir et pour analyser. Sa parole redevenait abondante. Quelques vins imprévus lui rendaient sa bonne humeur, son entrain, sa joie de vivre. (150-151)

In every dish he eats, Dodin finds pleasure, value, and a purpose for living. Even when the food does not exactly meet Dodin's standard of excellence, it is still full of charm.

His culinary curiosity gets the best of him and he collects recipes in hopes of being able to recreate the new dishes and methods of cooking which have given him a *joie de vivre*. Even more important than joy, French cuisine puts words in Dodin's mouth, giving him the power of lyrical and coherent self-expression. In describing the lexical effects of French food, the narrator directs attention to the power of gastronomy in the construction and articulation of identity. The omnipresence of fine food and culinary prowess found in every corner of the nation underscores the belief that gastronomic excellence belongs to all French people and will provide the necessary vocabulary for shaping the post-war identity.

That Dodin would travel through France and discover the delicious nuances of regional cuisines is unsurprising given that his creator, Marcel Rouff, was a friend and co-author with Curnonsky (né Maurice Edmond Sailland), a culinary chronicler of early twentieth-century France. Throughout the interwar period Curnonsky worked with Rouff and others to make the treasures of French cuisine accessible to everyone during a period in which the French population was becoming more mobile. Between 1921 and 1928, Curnonsky and Rouff published a series of regional gastronomic travel guides in 13 volumes called *La France Gastronomique: Guides des merveilles culinaires et des bonnes auberges françaises*. The goal of these guides was get the people out of the cities and into the countryside (*Taste of Place* 35-38) to experience and enjoy the delicious and various regional foods that, together, composed French cuisine. As the title suggests, food preceded lodging or attractions in these guides and mark what was perhaps the beginning of the gastro-tourism movement so popular today.

Curnonsky's most well-known and important work *Le trésor gastronomique de France: Répertoire complet des spécialités gourmandes des trente-deux provinces françaises*, was meant to inform the French about not only culinary specialties but also the integrality of gastronomy to the welfare of the nation. Written with Austin de Croze in 1933, this book was meant for the "fidèles du Neuvième Art" (gastronomy) as well as for "touristes et à tous ceux qui savent concilier le culte de la bonne chère avec les intérêts généraux du pays" (9). It is thus evident the authors are not shy about their purpose for the book; they hope to demonstrate the importance of French cuisine to the whole of the nation and its interests. The book's format reflects its goals and is set up similarly to Pampille's cookbook, but contains no recipes. Each of the thirty-two chapters opens with a regional map and a "Notice" in which the authors briefly situate the regional cuisine within its geographical and cultural context. The authors then provide a categorized list of regional products and specialties. One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the list of towns and their accompanying specialties which closes out each chapter. This element of the book demonstrates its touristic function, but also creates a space in which even the smallest of towns becomes valorized, recognized and put *on the menu*.

In French, the word for "menu" and "map" is the same, *la carte*, and Curnonsky also had his hand in a gastronomic cartographic project which mapped regional specialties onto France. He commissioned André Bourguignon, a chef, to create the *Carte gastronomique de la France* which Bourguignon finished in 1929 (http://www.nla.gov.au). Bourguignon's highly detailed map contains thousands of

regional dishes and situates the name of each dish in close geographic proximity to where someone might actually be able to order it if travelling through France. This map is yet another example demonstrating and promoting the importance of regional and national cuisine during the interwar years.

The work of Curnonsky and his co-authors not only maps French regional cuisine, it also engages readers in a larger project of preservation, protection, and promotion of France's regional culinary wonders. "Ces richesses, tous les Français se doivent de les connaitre et de les utiliser aussi. Ils se doivent de les maintenir jalousement et de les faire largement connaître à l'étranger" (Curnonsky and Croze 11). These men advocate more than simple culinary knowledge; they suggest that the French should engage themselves in a national effort of gastronomic self-promotion.

The goal of defending French cuisine extended beyond Curnonsky, Croze, and Rouff, serving as one of the principle aims of Le Club des Cent. This gastronomic club of one hundred men from the upper reaches of French society was wedded to the valorization of French regional gastronomy as part of a nationalist project. Louis Forest, a member of a patriotic Jewish community from Lorraine hostile to Germany, founded the club in 1912 in an effort to "faire oeuvre de propagande gastronomique et touristique" (Csergo, *Le Club des Cent* 184, 177-181). The Club viewed its defense of the national cuisine as a means of contributing to prosperity and of growing of the economy (Csergo, *Le Club des Cent* 190-193).

La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet is thus emblematic of a prevalent interwar trend that emphasizes tradition and shared values and that links

regional and national cuisines.[34] Philip Whalen describes this fascination with the regional as "a highly popular French interwar fold stereotype that reflected and informed contemporary desires reproduced in debates concerning French identity, participatory politics, social order, and sustainable economic development" (28). Writing from the interwar period celebrated differences in regional cuisine while simultaneously drawing these cuisines into the national context.[35] Pampille, Rouff, Curnonsky, and the members of Le Club des Cent situate regional cuisine at the heart of the French nation in order to advance the image of a nation composed of culinary differences.

However, whereas most gastronomic writing at the time stops at the conflation of regional and national cuisine, Rouff, and the prevailing discourse coming from the Club des Cent, crafts a narrative of cultural superiority exemplified through food. And this cultural superiority isn't over just any other nation, it is over a once and future enemy.

Barbaric Consumption

Though Dodin and Adèle's culinary misadventure in Germany does not occur until the last episode of the novel, it is perhaps best to begin this analysis here because German cuisine serves as the gastronomic *Other* to which the narrator contrasts French cuisine, and this *Other* is necessary for creating a hierarchy based on polemic differences of

[34] Even Colette, a Parisian icon, described her passion for "les provinces" in 1939 noting that Paris only exists because of the agricultural abundance of the French countryside (*Ma poésie, c'est ma province*).
[35] This evidence seems to contradict Eugen Weber's assertion that, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, France worked to create a sense of homogeneity within its borders (*Peasants into Frenchmen*).

good/bad, delicious/disgusting, and the blessed versus the damned which are drawn out in the contrasting descriptions of the two national cuisines.

As soon as Dodin and Adèle cross the Franco-German border, they are subject to dubious meals and signs of German incivility. The couple stops for breakfast at a small restaurant wherein they experience their first encounter with German cuisine. It is strikingly offensive. The meal looks and tastes disgusting. Inside the restaurant, the couple stares aghast, "avec des yeux ébahis" (153), at the gluttonous, gelatinous spectacle of a young German woman eating "un couple de saucisses dodues" (152).

> Tenant de l'autre main un fort morceau de pain, elle se mit à mordre à pleine bouche dans les 'Würstchen' qui craquaient sous ses dents, projetant hors de leur petit boudin de peau crevée une graisse chaude qui dégoulinait de ses lèvres roses, huilant de leur vernis gluant la peau satinée de son menton. Deux autres, puis deux autres saucisses, accompagnées toujours de pain de seigle, succédèrent aux premières. (152-153)

This meal is not a delicate one and shows none of the trappings of contemporary table manners. Having apparently eschewed norms of civility, the girl eats with her hands, placing sausages and giant pieces of dark bread into her gaping mouth. As she eats, hot grease escapes from the sausage casings and drips from her lips, covering her chin with a viscous glaze of fat forming a "masque de graisse qui la barbouillait" (153).

The meal of sausages consumes the girl and the two exist in a single image. The food is "lardé", "épais", and "cochonneux", terms which equally suit its consumer given the narrator's previous depiction of her covered in grease. Eating *wurst*, a pork product, the young girl appears a pig. She, like the food she consumes, is "cochonneuse." This young girl quickly becomes what she eats.

Claude Fischler has extrapolated from the adage "you are what you eat" and has lent to it a theoretical grounding. Fischler attributes the transformation of the body and the formation of identity while eating to what he calls the *principe d'incorporation* (66-70). Fischler asserts that man forms his identity as it exists biologically, psychologically and socially, through what he consumes during the acts of eating and drinking because, at these moments, there is a breakdown of the boundaries between inside/outside and between self/world (Fischler 66). At the moment of culinary consumption, the human incorporates the world into the physical body. Food and drink enter through the mouth and are digested, becoming a part of the body. Food gives us not only the energy we need to live, but also "la substance même de ce corps" (Fischler 66). Food gives the body the elemental or biological substance that the body needs to survive. For this reason, food is necessarily important to the rebuilding of a strong French nation. The national body needs to be nourished and energized so that it has the physical strength to move forward.

Additionally, and most importantly for the analysis at hand, food has the capacity to structure identity because of its symbolic attributes. Fischler posits:

> On pourrait soutenir que tout aliment est réputé avoir un effet sur le corps, bon ou mauvais, et que, en ce sens, le principe d'incorporation est consubstantiellement lié à l'idée même de médicine: tout aliment est de bonne ou de mauvaises médicine, en soi ou au moment de son ingestion, en fonction des états internes et des autres aliments ingérés. (68)

All foods have a representational value. As foods become part of the body through digestion, so too do the representational qualities of that particular food. For instance, many people consider vegetarianism to be a feminine characteristic because masculine,

virile men eat red meat and are most often responsible for hunting and killing the animal, a further show of masculinity. Incorporation of different foods through the processes of ingestion and digestion transforms an individual's identity and how others perceive him or her based on a given food's representational or symbolic characteristics.

The formation and transformation of identity through food consumption is not, however, bound solely to the individual. The *principe d'incorporation* applies to the construction of the identity of a given community such as the nation. In fact, Fischler exemplifies his theory through the model of national identity (68). National cuisines create communities of like-consumers. Consequently, to describe a national cuisine as either transcendent or toxic is to describe the national population in the same way.

Though written *avant la lettre*, Marcel Rouff depends upon the validity of Fischler's *principe d'incorporation* to distinguish the French from the Germans. The clear distinction between the two national groups is set up through the opposing of lightness and heaviness of their respective national cuisines. In Rouff's novel, if French food is heavy, it is only "lourd[e] de beauté" (78). Rather than suffocate under the oppressiveness of thick sauces as German foods do (179), French foods are "*oints* de crème" and "*enlacées* de fromage fondu" (78, emphasis mine). The terms "oints" and "enlacées" imply a lightness of touch and a sense of delicacy. Any semblance of heaviness in a dish renders it "onctueuse" (78, 179), an ideal quality in *haute cuisine*. The narrator consistently describes French dishes as "légère" (9, 178), "fine" (9, 59, 80) "subtile" (178), and "délicat" (9, 154, 171, 178). Following Fischler's *principe d'incorporation*, these qualities result in an enlightened French nation. Food gives

France its “richesse raffinée… tout son esprit, toute sa gaieté des mauvais comme des bons jours” (10). French food is a never-ending source of joyfulness, even during the most difficult days.

Contrary to the image of French cuisine, German foods are consistently “lourd” (153, 161, 179) and “épais” (9, 153, 159) resulting in German philosophy, art, and literature which are also heavy and bloated (9). By the end of their trip, Dodin and Adèle feel the effects of the heavy Germany cuisine; they are “rompus de fatigue, de désespoir et de dégoût” (156). The physical and representational attributes of German cuisine transpose themselves onto the consumer and have detrimental effects.

German cuisine takes hold of Dodin from his first bite and the reader witnesses the transformation of Dodin’s body from the outside in. The dutiful foreign guest, Dodin remains undeterred after watching the young, pig-like woman, and braves the sausage only to his own detriment. As soon as he picks up the first sausage with his fingers, he is repulsed and his entire body is affected: “on le vit soudain pâlir et froncer les sourcils” (153). Simply touching the sausage is enough to make him feel and appear ill. He must overcome his own disgust to eat just one “imprudente bouchée” (153). All while attempting to swallow this ill-fated bite, Dodin must try to also “évite[r] à son habit le flux de maudite graisse chaude qui polluait déjà ses joues bien rasées, son menton impeccable et, le long de sa main soignée, envahissait sa manche en le brûlant” (153). The hot grease dripping from the plump sausages “pollutes” his body from the outside in, sullying his neatly-kept appearance and making him feel bloated.

Furthermore, this episode introduces the spiritual danger of German cuisine and the consequent damnation of its consumers. The meal is "maudit" which is suggestive of something cursed, damned, and wretched. Coupled with the adjectives "chaud" and "brûlant," the narrator creates an image of food that comes straight from the depths of hell. The sausage is toxic, especially for the civilized Frenchman, who, as noted later in this chapter, is a man blessed by God. The Frenchman, "bien rasé," "impeccable," and "soigné", must be careful not to fall victim to that which can *pollute*, *invade*, and *burn* its consumer. Eating this meal, Dodin risks polluting himself and ending up like the German people.

Consequently, Dodin rejects the meal. In a powerful display of disgust and rejection, Dodin, after taking one bite of the plump, grease-laden sausage, throws what remains on his plate to the restaurant's resident dog: "[il] jeta les restes de saucisse au chien du postillon et, tout en essayant de dégager sa mâchoire de la pâte gluante de pain noir qui l'empêtrait" (153). The conjured image of the dog eating the sausage harkens back to the other figure who devoured the meal, the German woman. Rouff creates a structure in which German consumers are compared to animals, all of whom are so hungry and so without taste that they gobble down the greasy sausage. This comparison reoccurs later in the narrative when Dodin compares the whole of German cuisine to dog food: "Tout votre 'Idée' de la cuisine n'est que pâtée à chiens" (170). After spending multiple weeks in the country, he reduces German cuisine to nothing but dog food.

Dodin's refusal to eat and outright rejection of German cuisine reveal the underbelly to communal dining. As Massimo Montanari offers, "eating together does not necessarily mean all is love and harmony. If the table is the metaphor for life, it represents in a direct and exacting way both membership in a group and the relationships defined within that group" (Montanari 95).[36] The dining arena creates hierarchies of individuals and tastes, offering opportunities for self-distinction. For example, sitting at the head of the table indicates a position of power. The intense communality of dining with others within a given space renders self-distinction in these settings to be especially powerful because of the marked distinction of the individual. Choosing to not take part in the communal rituals of dining marks an individual as an outsider.[37] Consequently, Dodin's refusal to take part in the dining community of the restaurant is a method of self-distinction. Dodin refuses entry into the collective identity of the *wurst*-eating Germans.

As Dodin retreats from the dining room, the narrator underscores the imminent danger Dodin senses by employing military vocabulary. After throwing his sausage to the dog, Dodin leaves the restaurant in an effort to "se barricader" against "les influences malignes" (153). His desire to remove himself from the group of consumers is so strong that he feels the need to barricade himself off from the German other – be it

[36] Numerous scholars have documented the complex relationships between people gathered around the same dinner table. For further reading see Claude Fischler's *L'Homnivore,* Deborah Lupton's *Food, the Body and the Self*, or *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* by Caroline Korsmeyer.

[37] *Jehan de Saintré*, a late-medieval romance by Antoine de la Sale, also situates the creation of hierarchies and the around the dining table, Jehan, a knight, and the Abbé, a man of the Church, distinguish themselves respectively as within and outside of the court community. The table is also used as a place where people come together in a show of unity amongst consumers who would otherwise be enemies. Hubert Mignarelli's novel, *Un repas en hiver*, is one such work.

cuisine or people. The ever-astute gastronome that he is, Dodin knows that his presence at the meal exposes him to potentially toxic ramifications to his health and character. Furthermore, the term *se barricader* recalls the long history of the French people setting up barricades in the streets of the Parisian capital as a method of defense. Barricades figure prominently in French history from the Journée des barricades in 1588 to the French Revolution to the Révolution de Juillet in 1830 which Eugène Delacroix immortalized in his painting *La liberté guidant le people,* through to the barricades set up during the Commune de Paris. Like his ancestors, Dodin attempts to secure himself from that which threatens. Dodin's desires to protect his stomach from the malignancy that is German cuisine echo his own nation's desires to protect itself against its neighbor.

In addition to the dangerous and disgusting content of this meal, its form is likewise offensive to Dodin's gastronomic sensibilities. It is only ten o'clock in the morning when the gastronome and his wife bear witness to this scene (153). A meal of six grease-laden sausages and dark bread is too large and heavy to be comprehensible as breakfast to the Frenchman. The weight and content of the meal violates Dodin's (French) notion of what constitutes *le petit-déjeuner*, with an emphasis on *petit*. Mary Douglas has shown that eating is highly patterned and culturally regulated (*Deciphering* 62; see also S. Freeman 100). Certain dishes in certain quantities belong to distinct meals. To Dodin, sausages and beer belong to one of the day's later meals, and their presence at breakfast is so out of the ordinary and so unacceptable that he and his wife are taken aback and unsettled from the very sight of this over-laden breakfast.

Another particularly offensive meal which helps to distinguish the Germans and the French comes shortly after Dodin and Adèle enter into Germany. A lunch-time omelette makes Dodin "frémir" because it is "proprement écoeurant" (154). The description of the omelette betrays is vileness. It is "de proportion inaccoutumée," overflowing with a pink, red currant gelatin that "tremblotait piteusement et baignait de tous les côtés le monstre roussi" (154). It is, like the people who cook and consume the dish without thought or consideration, monstrous and pitiful at the same time; a pathetic, overcooked, overgrown object. Even worse than the omelette's vile appearance is its taste: "le brûlant de poivre et l'empoisonnant de mille gouts nauséabonds" (159). The omelette is so revolting that it tastes poisonous. Lastly, the narrator again uses the term "brûlant" to describe a German dish, extending the previously established metaphor of hellishly dangerous food.

During a third meal, the narrator draws a clear distinction between the civilized French and the uncivilized German diners through their respective reactions to the meal. When Adèle and Dodin are too nauseated to eat another bite, the former even contemplating self-starvation (155), the Germans in the restaurant let out moans and groans of delicious ecstasy: "Des murmures admiratifs et des interjections rauques fusaient de ces goinfres remplis. Quelques-uns, gonflés et suffoquant, poussaient en un soupir, des invocations mystiques de jouissance : 'Ach ! Gott !...'" (155). Their language devolves into a series of indistinguishable guttural utterances that betray any sense of propriety at the dinner table. Furthermore, Dodin finds these grunts especially offensive because they take the lord's name in vain, "mêlant le nom de Dieu à cette

ratatouille" (155). "God" is just another monosyllabic utterance in a mélange of grunts and groans. Lastly, the use of the word *goinfre*, in an onomatopoeic turn, is particularly telling given that it is a pejorative term suggesting a *greedy pig*. Thus, these diners recall the image of the young, "cochonneuse" woman at Dodin's first German meal. When Adèle looks around the room, the people she sees echo this description. The narrator describes, "le bourgeois bruyant et boursouflé," "un vieillard poupard et barbu," a "commis voyageur aux yeux féroces" who all "se régalaient intensément de cette abomination" (155). These men are themselves like animals, overgrown, covered in hair, and with menacing eyes. That they eat without regard to taste, voraciously consuming the food in front of them only amplifies their animalistic nature.

The German diners which Dodin and Adèle witness thus serve as the archetypal warning of Fischler's *principe d'incorporation* which permeates and grounds the novel's culinary discourse. German foods have profoundly negative consequences for the German people, reducing them to tasteless "barbarians." The word *barbare* suggests an uncivilized person, and there is little less civilized than consuming food fit for animals or in parallel ravaging the French countryside in war. Both the narrator in the text and Rouff in his "Justification" repeat the use of the term "barbares." First, Rouff labels the Germans as barbarians before the novel even begins. In the "Justification," he speaks of the "barbares [qui] sont plus que jamais aux portes de Rome" (7) perhaps making reference to the German encroachment during confrontation between the two nations in the Ruhr which was ongoing at the time of the novel's publication. Here, the narrator aligns France with Rome impelling an association of France with ideal models of

civilization and civility. This rhetorical maneuver is common within discourse arguing for a superior civilization and dates to the Middle Ages, at which time the French attempted to establish themselves as direct descendants of the Roman people (Beaune 15-16). Within this discourse and particularly during the reign of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century, Paris was referred to as the "new Rome" (Mukerji 15-16). These claims situate Paris and France, forever and always, as the epicenter of European civilization. Thus, France comes to embody the ideal of civility, and French citizens are distanced from their barbaric German neighbors.

Additionally, within the novel, Dodin and Adèle travel to Baden-Baden, "chez les barbares" (143). This circumlocution of the nation's actual name is the title of the book's penultimate chapter. Of importance here, is also the fact that the terms "Germany" and "German" are absent throughout the text. Instead, Rouff and his narrator use other rhetorical clues to indicate about whom they are speaking such as the location of Baden-Baden, the vision of "des sujets de Prusse" (161), and the term "teutoniques" (161, 179). This latter term is historically loaded because it directly references the Teutons, a Germanic tribe that devastated parts of Gaul in the second century B.C. It is, thus, a pejorative word used to indicate a German (*Grande Larousse* 6041). Dodin is also subjected to distinct German foods such as "Würstchen" (152), "Rehbraten" (9, 160), and "Gänsebraten" (161), all of which are set off by quotation marks within the text. These references all unquestionably indicate the foreign land of Germany, rendering the culinary attack distinctly against one nation. The refusal to

write the name "Germany" or "German" into the text is a means of denying legitimacy to the other nation.

In a final instance, the narrator again uses the label of "barbarian" when he notes that Adèle finds Herr Stumm's conception of cuisine and his use of the term "métaphysique" to be "barbare" (165). According to Herr Stumm's *métaphysique*, German national cuisine should be returned to its primitive origins. Rather than continue to eat as "des peuples civilisés" (167), he insists it would be better to subsist on "les morceaux de viande crue" (168). Herr Stumm sets up a dichotomy between his own idea of cuisine and civilized eating seeking a departure from the way in which *civilized* people now feed themselves including a complete rejection of the cooking processes.

The barbarism of their national cuisine indicates that the German people are morally inferior to the French and reflects their fundamental lack of good taste. David Hume once noted that "we are apt to call *barbarous* whatever departs widely from our own taste and apprehension" (197, emphasis mine).[38] Hume suggests that different or "bad" taste is indicative of moral wantonness and incivility. On the other hand, "good" taste is a "refined achievement" (Tuan 227); it is a sign of moral and intellectual strength and civility. To pass judgments of taste, gustatory or aesthetic, is to pass moral

[38] Prior to Hume, Montaigne, in his *essai* "Des Cannibales," states that "chacun appelle barbarie ce qui n'est pas de son usage" (205). According to Montaigne, truth and reason arise out of the customs of a certain land such that anything from a foreign land would be different and false because it exists outside the realms of one's own experience. Man's tendency, he purports, is to deem barbarous anything that is not removed from nature and, thus, lacks civility (205). However, Montaigne goes on to note that what is really false and barbarous are the practices and objects that "nous avons alterez par nostre artifice et detournez de l'ordre commun" (205). Consequently, considering Montaigne's view of barbarism, in Rouff's text Herr Stumm and the Germans would not claim the title of barbarians because their cuisine and manners of eating are closer to nature.

judgment.[39] Taste can measure moral and intellectual worth because there are, we believe, certain general standards of taste which dictate what is "good" and "bad." Despite variations in judgments of taste that will necessarily arise over time or across society, there are "certain general principles" which guide human judgment (Hume 201). "Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease; and if they fail of their effect in any particular instance, it is from some apparent defect of imperfection of the organ" (Hume 201). In other words, if necessarily abhorrent foods fail to produce a negative judgment on the part of the consumer, the fault is also in the person sensing the object, not necessarily in the object itself. Consequently, taste is what matters in distinguishing good from bad. That the Germans in Rouff's narrative delight in a disgusting cuisine demonstrates an imperfection within the entire nation. While the gross qualities of their food are certainly a fault, the German's positive assessment of this cuisine is an even bigger fault.

During and after the war, Germany was considered both a nation with bad taste and, worse, a nation with no taste at all.[40] The Club des Cent's *Journal de guerre* described Germany as a "nation où triomphent le mauvais goût, la fraude et la chimie

[39] For a further reading on the evolution of taste from a gustatory sensation to a subjective judgment, see Chapter Two. See also Fischler (*L'Homnivore* 89), Haden (245-260), and Strong (x-xi).

[40] Casting Germany as the "gastronomic Other" and creating national distinctions based on food choices dates back to at least the fourteenth century and the poetry of Eustache Deschamps. While traveling with the French court, Deschamps described the Bohemian soul as consisting purely of "poulz, puces, puour et pourceaulx" and "pain, poisson sale et froidure" (195). The soul of these people is dark and, perhaps dangerous, because their cuisine consists of "choulz pourriz" and "char enfumée, noire et dure" (195). Deschamps equates the Bohemian people (those who belonged to what is present-day Germany) with the food they eat suggesting that their lowly character is but an inevitable product of their poor taste. The use of the term "pourceaulx" is particularly interesting because Marcel Rouff uses this same image to characterize the German people through his depiction of the sausage-eating woman.

alimentaires" (cited in Csergo, *Le Club des Cent* 193). If taste is an indication of both good judgment and civility, the Club's nationalistic discourse suggests that Germany was a nation without either, a point which Rouff extends to the extreme. In *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*, German food, underneath all of its heavy sauces and strange ingredient combinations, is tasteless (Rouff 161). This lack of taste within the cuisine itself results in an entire nation suffering from "le manque de goût" (Rouff 161).

Contrarily, the French represent the ideal of "good taste" and civility. The exemplary gustatory taste of Frenchmen far and wide translates into their superior moral standing in comparison to their barbaric German neighbors. To demonstrate the immutability of French good taste, Rouff directly draws upon French cooking in the middle of the war zone during the First World War. "En 1916, parcourant le front de Champagne, dans Reims bombardé, dans Fismes menacé, dans Soussons à moitié détruit, on m'a servi des repas plantureux comme je n'en ai jamais mangé, en pleine paix" (10). So much a part of the French people, exemplary taste is always prevalent in France, even during times of strife and food shortage. The movement at the beginning of the twentieth century to tie the regional to the national had the corollary effect of democratizing French cuisine and good taste, further allowing authors such as Rouff to harness gastronomy as a means of asserting national cultural superiority.

Pronouncements of taste both judge and assign hierarchies, thus taste functions as a means of differentiation and distinction, a practice which Pierre Bourdieu is famous for having elaborated. In *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*, Bourdieu insists

that taste is an expression of one's membership in a social class. While Bourdieu's argument about social distinctions of taste does not have a place here, his work does show that taste is, at least in part, a social construct. Additionally, Bourdieu suggests that someone is either born into a group (class) with taste, or is not, and will thus never possess "good" taste. This postulate is applicable to Rouff's work if extrapolated to a national level. Because taste is "a cultural experience transmitted to us from birth, along with other variables that together define the 'values' of a society" (Montanari 61), extending Bourdieu's theory to the national level is well-grounded, even warranted. Consequently, Rouff seeks to draw on the belief that someone is either born into a nation with taste (France), or is not. Speaking of the French people he says, "le goût de la gastronomie est inné dans la race" (Rouff 10). Martigny suggests that the French have consistently relied upon the belief in their superior taste to reinforce their "place symbolique dominante" within the world (41). This suggests that the French consistently embrace their national taste as exemplified through cuisine as an immediate and direct means of expressing cultural and moral authority. The French are not only gastronomically superior to their German neighbors, but morally superior as well.

Que tout soit simple, mais parfait

The simplicity of French cuisine is omnipresent in *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*, and is a theme which Rouff manipulates to distinguish and elevate the nation's food. Simplicity in food and cooking is the manifestation of French good taste, and is a

concept central to the idealization and valorization of the nation's cuisine throughout history (Assouly, *Simplicité*). Simplicity and subtlety are markers of excellence in Western cooking (Tuan 230), and underlie attempts to streamline, modernize, and evolve French cuisine over time. For instance, both *nouvelle cuisine* movements, the first occurring in the 1740s and the second in the 1970s, were based on a simplification of ingredients and preparations in already existing dishes.[41]

According to Dodin, the best foods and drinks are in some way simple. For example, after his first cook passes away and he is in the depths of gastronomic despair, he finds solace in a "simple vin du pays" (38). In this same scene, the wine's "simplicité limpide" surprises and delights Dodin (39). Later, offering a meal to a friend, he chooses to serve a dinner composed of "des plus simples" dishes and ingredients (59). When Dodin serves the Prince d'Eurasie, he again chooses to have a liver "simplement cuit au chambertin" (81). Here, the word "simplement" tempers the apparent complexity, grounding dishes in every-day practices and ingredients. At yet another meal, Dodin again finds solace and spiritual awakening while eating kidneys in a sauce "de senteurs à la fois simples et nuancées comme les couleurs d'un arc-en-ciel" (179). Foods that can lighten the soul, ease hardship, and encourage conviviality, the narrator suggests, are *simple*.

Throughout the narrative, there is a juxtaposition of simplicity and excellence, the latter a consequence of the first. The "repas simple, court, bourgeois" that Dodin

[41] For a complete discussion of *nouvelle cuisine*, see Chapter Two. Susan Pinkard examines the move toward simplicity in the 1740 *nouvelle cuisine* movement in her book, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* (156-157). In the 1970s, Gault & Millau specifically call for a simplification of cooking methods and a return to fresh, local ingredients (*Gault & Millau*).

serves the Prince turns out to be the ultimate example of "l'art profond" that cuisine can and should be (84). Moreover, while descriptions of what Dodin is eating may seem complex, particularly to the twenty-first century reader, a dish may be "simplement prodigieux" (17) or "tout simplement un chef-d'oeuvre" (77). While the repetitive use of the adverb "simplement" does not directly indicate that a meal was simple in its preparation or composition, the narrator is able to discursively pair simplicity with excellence. When it comes to food, in the end, all that Dodin desires is that "tout soit simple, mais parfait" (157). Perfection can only arise out of simplicity.

A similar vocabulary of simplicity is found in Curnonsky and Croze's *Le trésor gastronomique de France*: *Répertoire complet des spécialités gourmandes des trente-deux provinces françaises*. Throughout the text, the authors highlight the importance of simplicity as a marker of excellence in regional French foods suggesting that "toute l'admirable cuisine régionale française" is simple (25). For example, in Anjou, Maine and Perche, the people "a créé une cuisine qui reflète sa pureté et sa finesse. Point de violence, point de complications, ni de dissonances, aucun souci d'étonner" (87). Culinary simplicity translates into a lightness of hand that does not violate the purity of the ingredients original tastes and flavors.

The true prize of simple cuisine in Rouff's novel comes during the meal that Dodin serves to the Prince of Eurasia. After suffering through the overly complex and bloated meal that the Prince of Eurasia served him, Dodin invites the Prince for dinner to show him what culinary excellence is. Dodin opts for a simple meal of *pot-au-feu* and a minimum number of courses. After the repast, he looks around the table and realizes

that he has won the battle for culinary perfection. "Aux somptuosités culinaires si vaines du prince, il avait répondu par un repas simple, court, bourgeois, mais dont l'art profond avait convaincu de son indignité jusqu'au dispensateur de ce faste superficiel" (84). French cuisine is not vain or superficial. The *pot-au-feu* is a typical peasant dish with various regional forms and ingredients, and is "l'emblème d'une cuisine populaire" (Csergo, *Pot-au-feu* 21).[42] By choosing the *pot-au-feu* as the centerpiece of the meal, Dodin situates the excellence of French cuisine in the people, not in the aristocracy. While the ingredients which Dodin includes in his *pot-au-feu* are of an abnormally excellent quality (goose liver, a large leg of beef, white asparagus, and artichokes among a plethora of other ingredients, 77-80), the dish remains reminiscent of its humble origins and exists in its one pot. The sharing of a meal out of one pot also evokes the republican values which were a product of the Revolution and that came to the fore in the wake of the First World War (Ferguson, *Taste* 179). Eating from the same *pot* underscores the *égalité* and *fraternité* amongst diners. Thus, Dodin chooses to serve a dish which is not only *simple* and *bourgeois*, but also an emblem of communion and community.

The community which the *pot-au-feu* emblematizes is the nation. Over time, the *pot-au-feu* has come to exemplify France in part because it assimilates various ingredients to produce one dish, just as people from each of France's regions come together to form the nation. The *pot-au-feu* exists throughout France, transcending

[42] The *pot-au-feu* has been the center of much attention scholarly attention and is considered one of, if not *the*, foundational dish of French gastronomy. The collection of essays in Csergo's *Pot-au-feu: Convivial, familial, histoires d'un mythe* provides an excellent source of varied perspectives on this dish.

regional boundaries albeit with minor adjustments of ingredients depending on what is available given the season or locale. As a testament to its universalism in regional variants of French cuisine, the first recipe Pampille shares in her cookbook is for the *pot-au-feu* which she classifies as "un plat national."

The simplicity of Dodin's meal for the Prince d'Eurasie manifests itself also in the author's prose. The meal is the subject of an adjective-laden description. For instance, when describing the *pot-au-feu*, the narrator says, "Et pour étayer cette triple et magique superposition, on avait glissé audacieusement derrière la chair blanche de la volaille, nourrie uniquement de pain trempé de lait, le gras et robuste appui d'une confortable couche de foie d'oie frais simplement cuit au chambertin" (81). The description of the ingredients is almost recipe-like in its precision. It is completely devoid of "gastrographic shorthand;" it is garnished with descriptive adverbs and adjectives as well as verbs which extend beyond traditional culinary terms such as "ajouter" or "mélanger." Additionally, in this description the narrator emphasizes the dish's clarity and purity through his use of *white* images such as "la chair blanche" and "pain trempé de lait" which harkens back to the notion of simplicity within a dish. The *pot-au-feu*, and the prose which describes it are harmonious. Rhetorical attention in the narrative imitates the attention that Adèle paid to the food in preparing it. Composed of courses which flow naturally one from the next, the meal merits an equally eloquent description.

In contrast, the narrator distinguishes the very un-gourmet nature of the Prince's meal through a lack of description. The length of the phrases which describe the *pot-*

au-feu, with long clauses connected linked together with commas, serves as the distinct opposite discursive strategy to the short, truncated list which details the Prince's meal for Dodin. Lawrence R. Schehr notes that Rouff is incapable of narrating the Prince's meal because describing each of the dishes which compose the meal would require too many pages of text and the narrator would risk losing the narrative thread of the novel (127). I argue, however, that the meal is indescribable because it lacks coherence or gastronomic foundation. Speaking to his friend Rabaz following the meal, Dodin laments, "l'œuvre qu'il nous a servie est touffue, abondante, riche, mais sans lumière et sans clarté. Point d'air, point de logique, point de ligne. De la coutume, mais pas de règles. Un défilé, mais pas d'ordonnance. Quelles fautes dans la succession des goûts et des touchers" (Rouff 70)! Neither the cook nor the Prince gave thought to the flow of the meal or what dishes might best accompany those which precede or follow and thus reveal themselves as faux gourmets. Without any coherence in the succession of dishes and their corresponding flavors and textures, how could a descriptive narrative of the meal maintain coherence and structure? To attempt to describe the Prince's meal any further would only result in the degradation of the narrative, causing it too, to be without logic or narrative thread. Only the form of a list can make sense of the chaos which expands over the table dish by dish, and even it has trouble doing so, winding across three pages of text. Moreover, the list itself is difficult to read and *ingest*. The various labels indicating geographic or familial origin of the dishes, what Schehr refers to as "gastrographic shorthand" (131), require either a vast knowledge or a large culinary catalogue to be understood. The meal becomes inedible and illegible to the reader.

A Gift from God and Ground

In order to affirm France's moral superiority, Rouff employs a religious theme throughout the text in which eating is akin to a religious experience. Sharing a meal with his four closest friends, or rather those he has deemed worthy of a seat at his table, Dodin enters a state of ecstasy upon seeing and smelling a dish of sweetbreads. He loses himself "dans une extase comme si, presque délivré de la douleur, il avait réellement dégusté ce plat magnifique" (142). This meal is so exquisite that, before even consuming it, it causes Dodin to feel relieved from the sadness and anxiety he feels leading up to his dubious journey. In an almost religious moment of salvation, he is "délivré." The food lifts his soul and relieves him from pain. To reinforce the religious motif in this scene, Dodin appears as a spiritual figure. He leans over his dish and "pencha la tête et apparut comme un dieu dans une nuée" (142). The steam coming off of the sweetbreads becomes a fog-like aura which surrounds Dodin as he inhales the sublime aromas of the dish he and his companions are about to consume.

Rouff foregrounds Dodin's god-like nature throughout the text. Dodin is the "Empereur de la gastronomie" (155) and "la figure du Roi des Gourmets" (68). While not God himself, he at one moment "éleva son âme vers le dieu du foyer et de la Cuisine française" (179). Dodin is God's messenger and voice in the here and now. Dodin is a Jesus-like figure, "la figure du Roi des Gourmets," the messenger for the gastronomic god's voice. Furhtermore, like the Son of God, Dodin has followers and devotees. Dodin will only eat with gastronomic believers – those who appreciate as he does the glories

and subtleties of French cuisine (48). He attempts to surround himself with those who have, through practice, study and devotion, demonstrated exemplary good taste. Beaubois, Magot, Rabaz, and eventually Trifouille, Dodin's closest companions, prove themselves worthy. These men have more than just good taste ; they possess the best palates in France (17). Their exemplary taste coupled with recurring meals in the company of the king of their religion renders them "des fervents éclairés et compétents du grand culte" (18). They are Dodin's "apôtres" (47). Dodin repeats this metaphor himself at the end of the third chapter, "Le quatrième apôtre," when he refers to gastronomy as a "culte sacré" (56). It is important here to note that, in French, "culte" indicates a religion conceived of in its external manifestations and practices. Dining at the table, good manners, good taste, and appreciation of culinary pleasures all come together to form the external manifestations of the gastronomic religion of which the men are fervent believers and of which Dodin is their master.

The book's title also alludes to Dodin as a gastronomic holy figure and signals that the text might ressemble hagiography. In the Middle Ages, tales of saints' lives were often given the title "La vie de…" The title of Rouff's novel begins in an identical fashion – *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*. Dodin, like religious saints, possesses an elevated degree of holiness, though his faith is marked by a belief in God's culinary gifts. Moreover, because Rouff presents Dodin as a holy figure, the term "la passion" may also take on a religious value referring to the Passion of Christ. The series of episodes in the bible that form the Passion includes the Last Supper, an event to which Dodin himself makes reference. His physical and emotional suffering is also

suggestive of Jesus Christ's suffering, an important element of the Passion story. Dodin suffers in the name of French cuisine – so that he may continue to promote and revel in his nation's gastronomic splendors. And, he suffers because of food – as a result of what he is forced to eat while in Germany. Thus, Rouff plays on the meaning of "passion" suggesting that Dodin has not only an intense love for food, but also a religious devotion to the sanctity of the French gastronomic art that nearly causes his death.

At their most basic level, Dodin believes that the kitchen and the dining room are spiritual sites akin to the most holy spaces in the Christian tradition. First, the kitchen is a "sanctuaire" (35). It is a place of worship where Dodin and his cook create menus and meals honoring food, and where they make use of God's great agricultural gifts. Second, Dodin's dinner table is more than just a sanctuary; it is the contemporary equivalent of one of the most important dining tables in the history of Christianity – the table of Jesus' Last Supper. After naming Trifouille an "apôtre," Dodin declares, "[Il] est désormais des nôtres. Il est digne d'être admis dans notre cénacle" (56). Dodin's use of the term "cénacle" directly references both the space of the dining room and event of the Last Supper. This term reinforces the notion that Dodin sees himself as a Jesus-like figure sitting in the central position at the table, which, like the kitchen is a holy space. Additionally, the term "cenacle" emphasizes the notion of communion and the celebration of gastronomy as an intellectual pursuit as it can also signify a circle of writers or artists who gather to discuss their craft.

Throughout the novel the religious experience that is eating is centralized in France through the constant evocation of France as a land blessed by the hand of God. Rouff announces the notion that France is a favored land in his "Justification." He notes, "toute l'âme de sa terre grasse, féconde et travaillée dont ses crèmes parfumées, ses volailles neigeuses, ses légumes délicats, ses fruits juteux, son bétail savoureux et ses vins francs, souples et ardents, sont les manifestations bénies" (10). Rouff creates an image of agricultural abundance and splendor. The products of the fecund soil are an expression of the soul of the French ground, and they also offer themselves as material proof of the sacredness of France. This narrative thread continues when Dodin announces that God has chosen France as the sole recipient of his blessed agricultural gifts. Responding to Herr Stumm's *métaphysique*, Dodin proclaims, "nous usons des dons que Dieu nous a *prodigués*. Apparemment, la Divinité, qui est l'Idée des Idées, n'a pas semé sur notre pauvre terre *mille* trésors délicats pour que nous nous nourrissions de quartiers de viande crue" (171, emphasis mine). God chose France as the recipient of his abundant "dons" and "trésors" because they have the natural culinary *savoir* necessary to make use of these gifts. Frenchmen know how to work the land and derive from it the best that nature and God have to offer. Dodin further suggests that the rejection of cooking and of making full use of these gifts is a direct and immediate rejection of God himself. By renouncing cuisine, Herr Stumm and his German compatriots renounce God.

In contrast to the sacred French soil lies the hellish German land. After returning to France, Dodin characterizes his brief stint in Germany as an "un infernal séjour" (178)

evoking Hell. He says that he feels "happé à la géhenne germanique" (177). *La géhenne* is a reference from Judaism to the fiery pit in which the eternally damned would reside in the afterlife. Jacques Le Goff, in *La naissance du purgatoire*, notes that Gehenna is largely defined in geographical terms; Gehenna is located immediately next to Eden (61). Given the important juxtaposition of Eden and Gehenna, the narrator's reference to "la géhenne germanique" gives the implication that neighboring France is akin to Eden. It is the land of creation, birth, and earthly delights. The narrator further compounds the image of Hell noting that Dodin and Adèle were in fear of losing their souls forever when they were in the gastronomic wasteland forsaken by God (178-179). While dining in France incites conviviality and communion, in Germany, dining puts the consumer in danger both here on earth and in the afterlife.

The insistence on the land from which French food comes permeates Rouff's text and coincides with the widely held myth that France is an especially fertile and bountiful nation. Scholars, chefs, agricultural workers, and laymen alike believe that France has a privileged geography and soil which contributes to its gastronomic heritage (Frémont 35; Barthes, *Psychosociology*). This belief has persistently been part of French thought and stretches back to before the Middle Ages: "L'image favorable se répète, depuis les *villai* [sic] de la Gaul romanisée jusqu'aux villages du XVIIIe et du XIXe siècle, en passant par les grands domaines carolingiens ou les défrichements du bas Moyen Âge, même si des épisodes plus noirs s'intercalent entre ces grandes époques" (Frémont 35). Despite this long-standing notion about France's soil, Frémont suggests that there is nothing in the nation's history or geography that makes it exceptional among its European or

global counterparts (34-35). And yet, unable to escape the influence of this belief, Frémont himself is quick to use phrases asserting the nation's exceptional soil. He contends that in France, "le patrimoine des paysages ruraux apparaît d'une qualité exceptionnelle" (42) and there exists "la quasi-perfection de la maîtrise du sol, enfin" (42). He even suggests that France is superior to its European neighbors and all the world: "La France se distingue de la plupart des autres grandes civilisations paysannes, en accordant à la terre plus de richesse et de vertu qu'ailleurs, en Europe et même dans le monde" (54). Just after conceding that France's land is no more exceptional than the land of any other country, Frémont reproduces the myth in a turn which attests to its prevalence and inescapability.

This myth of a superior French "terre" is cultivated as a means of explaining French culinary, and thus cultural, superiority. For instance, August Escoffier, one of the most famous chefs in the history of gastronomy, and the man responsible for simplifying, standardizing, and promoting French cuisine in the nineteenth century, goes so far as to attribute the superiority of French chefs to the excellence of French agriculture. When asked why so many great chefs come out of France, Escoffier responds:

> La réponse me paraît simple : il suffit de se rendre compte que le sol français a le privilège de produire naturellement et en abondance les meilleurs légumes, les meilleurs fruits et les meilleurs vins qui soient au monde. La France possède aussi les plus fines volailles, les viandes les plus tendres, les gibiers les plus variés et les plus délicats. Sa situation maritime lui fournit les plus beaux poissons et crustacés. C'est donc tout naturellement que le Français devient tout à la fois gourmand et bon cuisinier. (191)

Being a gourmand or a great chef is a natural attribute for the Frenchman given that he is a product of a gastronomically privileged land. Gourmandise need not be learned, but rather is a gift of the nation. Arising from the land, the Frenchman inherits the attributes of that land and the *savoir-faire* of working the land. By emphasizing the "naturalness" of French gastronomic superiority, Escoffier binds the Frenchman to the land and vice versa. His use of the word "sol" is integral to this goal given that the soil is "la partie vivant de l'écorce terrestre" and the "terre des paysans" (Frémont 330). The ground is the living witness to French history and tradition. It is the tie that binds Frenchmen together.

Land was at the center of nationalist discourse before and after the war and was integral to the work of his contemporary, nationalist author Maurice Barrès. Barrès' brand of nationalism was founded upon an ardent belief that "la terre est indissociable des morts, de la culture ancestrale dont elle est le vestige" (Schenker 9). The inseparability of land and ancestors becomes the foundation for identifying the nation and creates a bond between individuals that links the past to the present.[43] Maintaining a grasp on one's own history and culture was integral to the survival of Barrès' ideal because cultural loss was a sign of degeneration and weakness that would inevitably harm the future of the nation (Schenker 14). At the heart of French culture, was thus, the *paysan*. Regional culture was integral to the national project.

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[43] While Barrès' discourse is indicative of the increase in nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is not representative of Rouff's own nationalistic message. Barrès' nationalism is contentious because it is imbued with racism. An ardent anti-Dreyfusard and politically situated on the far right, Barrès' nationalistic stance resulted in the identification of the "other." For Barrès, the "others" which he sought to set apart from the French nation were not foreigners such as Germans, but people outside of the Catholic faith such as Protestants and Jews.

Even in the midst of the First World War, French land as an agricultural resource was an emblem for national unity and strength. In a newspaper article from July 1, 1916, Ernest Bilodeau referred to the "agricultural battalion" of women who worked the fields to feed the country and to "assure the economic livelihood of the country while the soldiers face death at the front" (73). Bilodeau imagines a future that pays homage to the soldiers on the battlefield and the women in the agricultural fields:

> Before the spectacle of French soil being drenched in blood and sweat of so many heroes and heroines – their fathers, brothers, mothers, sisters – the children of France will better understand the sacred responsibility of the post-war generations, and devote themselves, body and soul, to the resurrection of French agricultural society. (73)

Bilodeau's war-time call for a resurrection of the nation's agricultural industry speaks to the economic and symbolic importance of France's land as a national resource and to its ability to unite the nation through a common history to build a future together.

If *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant* was to serve as a tool for rallying the nation, expression of soil-based themes was vital to Rouff's cause. "La terre rassemble toutes les valeurs d'une civilisation paysanne dont les racines plongent dans les millénaires et qui paraît encore vivante sous les paysages contemporains" (54). In the ground lie the roots of the vines, trees and grasses that Frenchmen planted hundreds of years ago. The richness of the soil and the food that comes from it are testaments to the passing on of traditional agricultural and culinary values and practices. Furthermore, roots connect people to their past and to each other. The land connects today's farmer who tills the land or feeds his cows to produce milk for cheese with his ancestors who did the same hundreds of years ago.

Rouff goes to great lengths to *ground* his gastronomic text in the historical preeminence of France's soil in a stroke of *translatio imperii* and *studii*, a literary tradition stretching back to the Middle Ages. Medieval writers were able to establish imperial and cultural authority through their use of *translatio studii* and *imperii* (Gertz 186). *Translatio imperii* is the transferal of secular or imperial power based on the assumption that transmission of power derives naturally from a point of origin (Rothstein 334). In the French case, the point of origin dates to Ancient Greece and Rome.[44] *Translatio studii* functions on the same principle of natural transmission from a source of origin, but concerns the transmission of knowledge, learning, and notions of civility (Rothstein 334). These two forms of *translatio* have a close relationship and are often intertwined as it is nearly impossible to separate cultural and political power (Gertz 187, M. Freeman 34). Because of this interdependence, culture becomes a means of expressing the power and superiority of one group over another.

Rouff relies on this tradition to underline the value of gastronomy and its importance to the French nation's strength. Michelle A. Freeman comments on the use of *translatio studii*: "As a topos, the *translatio studii* proclaims that when put to the service of truth and cultural values, poetic activity is of the highest dignity" (34). For Rouff, what is at stake in his work is not so much poetic dignity, but gastronomic dignity. He asserts, "La cuisine française est sortie de la vieille terre gallolatine; elle est le sourire de ses campagnes fécondes" (10). Rouff intertwines France's rich agricultural tradition

[44] When Rouff mentions the "barbares [qui] sont plus que jamais aux portes de Rome" (7) in his "Justification" to the text, he emphasizes *translatio studii* because he is juxtaposing barbarism with civilization.

with its wider cultural tradition and ancient civilization. In his passage on wine and vineyards in Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*, Durand uses similar language: "Bienfaits apportés par les Grecs et les conquérants romains, vigne et vin sont contemporains des origines de notre civilisation qui nous fait participer à l'Europe gréco-latine" (803). According to Durand, vineyards, with roots stretching deep into the ground, bring the past into the present, as they create a vivid and tangible link between the earliest Greco-Latin civilizations in France and the living French people. These two twentieth-century authors proclaim the French as the direct inheritors of Classic civility. At once, gastronomy exemplifies the notion of tradition and the transmission of knowledge over time, and is also a mark of France's eternal superior civilization, thus emphasizing the nation's power, however symbolic that power might be.

The inherent connection between food, land, tradition, and heritage is the basis for the French conception of *terroir*, a concept and belief that lies at the heart of attempts at regional and national self-preservation. *Terroir* is a term for which there is no direct translation in the English language because it necessitates the coming together of soil, climate, history and tradition, and the *savoir faire* of the people who work the land. To it, the French ascribe an entire system of beliefs that elevates peasant traditions to the level of high culture. "Terroir and goût du terroir are categories for framing and explaining people's relationship to the land, be it sensual, practical, or habitual. This connection is considered essential, as timeless as the earth itself" (Trubek, *Taste of Place* 18). Because distinctions of *terroir* lie at the heart of the French agricultural industry, particularly in vinification, it is often mobilized to economic,

political, and heritage claims. Marion Demoissier calls the deliberate use of *terroir* to achieve these ends as "strategic deployments of *terroir*" and notes that these attempts make use of *terroir* as a means of self-identification (687). Self-identification through *terroir* becomes "a discursive strategy for advancing claims of individual, regional, and even national interests" (Demoissier 689). Grounded in the French language and culture, over time, the expression of *terroir* "has come to describe an aspect of French identity that is locally defined, but perhaps it is also ultimately part of a national project to preserve and promote France's much-vaunted agrarian past" (Trubek, *Taste of Place* 53).

In *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*, the narrator evokes the notion of *terroir* to preserve and promote the values of the whole nation through the excellence of French wine. During the meal which Dodin offers the Prince d'Eurasie, he serves

> un merveilleux châteauneuf-du-pape qui soufflait dans l'esprit, comme un bon vent du large dans une voile, tout le soleil qu'il avait dérobé, toute la ferveur de cette terre chaude de la vallée du Rhône, patrie de son âme et qui, dans ses ondoiements où la framboise s'enlaçait au tanin, apportait au cerveau une merveilleuse lucidité. (79)

The châteauneuf-du-pape, one of the most iconic and valued French wines, is a direct expression of its *terroir*. In the color and taste of the wine exists the sun that shone down upon the grapes in the vineyard and the nutrient-rich soil that, in turn, fed the roots of the vines. Through the process of transmission, given the *principe d'incorporation*, the man who drinks the wine becomes a further expression of the *terroir*. Playing with the metaphor of light, the narrator describes how drinking the wine

results in enlightenment. As the Prince takes the wine into his body in an almost religious gesture, the sunshine and the warmth of the soil transform into cerebral clarity. The wine is the medium through which the land and climate express themselves and become a part of the enlightened, spiritual Frenchman.

While a widely-developed use of *terroir* post-dates *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*,[45] loose notions of the concept are omnipresent in French history and within the novel itself. Both Demoissier and Trubek argue strongly that notions of *terroir* as perceived today were championed at the beginning of the twentieth century (Demoissier 689-690; Trubek, *Taste of Place* 22). I would argue that this development is a product of the national self-consciousness in France during the inter-war period. The defense of *terroir* and the development of the AOC system appear to be a direct extension of the national project in which France was engaged in the wake of the First World War and on the brink of a second German aggression. The AOC system was born in 1935 to protect the nation's wine and to legally intertwine quality and origin as the AOC system purportedly guarantees both (www.inao.gouv.fr). Of particular import is that the desire to establish a system of control and protection for French agricultural products and the nation's geography came from the people, rather than from the government. Joseph Capus, one of the men who spearheaded the effort to delineate a strict system of protection, noted a decade after the birth of the AOC system: "il n'a pas été imposé aux producteurs, mais bien réclamé par eux pour tenter de mettre fin à une crise des plus graves, provoquée par des abus sans nombre et dans laquelle allaient

[45] The prominence of this essentially French ideal stretches back to at least the seventeenth century and the writing of Oliver de Serres and Vidal de la Blanche.

sombrer une des principales richesses de la France et une de ses gloires nationales" (www.inao.gouv.fr). Wine-makers throughout France wanted official protection of their goods both at home and abroad, attesting to the wide-spread sense of nationalism that pervaded France at the time, upon which Rouff sought to capitalize.

Gastronomic Exceptionalism

Dodin's expression of admiration and debt to "notre bonne terre" (141) is emblematic of the dichotomy which he creates between France and Germany, and which he draws out in his use of pronouns throughout the narrative. Dodin's rhetoric is founded upon the division between *nous* (the French) and *vous* (the Germans) and their respective cuisines. Assessing the Prince of Eurasia's grandiose yet failed dinner, Dodin declares, "De la cuisine, ça? Alons donc! pour des Iroquois, pour des princes, pour des Allemands. Pas pour nous" (72). The final *nous* in this statement is a clear reference to the French given Dodin's references to social and national groups directly preceding it. As we have seen, the prince's meal is not *cuisine* – a system of food production – because it lacks systematic preparation, order, and refinement. Such an amalgamation of dishes is suitable only for those who have no appreciation of gastronomy and who have yet to engage in the intellectualization and artification of food, practices which arise out of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in France. Thus, denying the title of cuisine to these groups is to suggest that they lack certain norms of civility and intellectual development. Moreover, in his retort, Dodin equalizes Native American Indians, princes, and Germans, elevating the French above all. Amongst common men and royalty alike, the French

stand out. By separating "pas pour nous" from the list which precedes it, Dodin uses both syntactical emphasis and the collective pronoun "nous" to separate the French from everyone else.

The distinct opposition between Dodin's nationalized pronouns *vous* and *nous* is particularly pronounced at the end of the text when Dodin refutes Stumm's *Métaphysique de la Cuisine*. After listening to Stumm's diatribe against contemporary cuisine, Dodin exclaims:

> Mais je ne m'étonne pas que la folie soit venue dans ce pays de réduire la Cuisine à une Idée pure, incarnée par surcroît dans un quartier de viande crue. Assurément, votre nourriture nationale y gagnerait, monsieur. N'espérez pourtant pas qu'un citoyen quelconque de ma patrie comprenne un mot de votre prétendue philosophie et encore moins l'approuve. (170)

Here, he again refuses to dignify German food with the label of *cuisine*, speaking of it rather as "votre nourriture nationale." Herr Stumm's gastronomic proposal to eat raw meat and return to the culinary origins of man does not shock Dodin in the least. German food is so atrocious, in fact, that Dodin believes it would benefit from a lesser degree of German culinary intervention. However much Herr Stumm's culinary philosophy may improve his nation's cuisine, it, too, is absurd. The only explanation for the *Métaphysique de la cuisine* is the apparent "folie" that has descended upon the German nation – surely a consequence of ingesting so much horrible food. The French, however, having perfected gastronomy over time, are still sane and sage, so much so that not one member of the French patrimony could understand even one word of Stumm's "prétendue philosophie," let alone approve of it. In the face of Stumm's

pathetic attempt at developing a gastronomic treatise, stand the iconic and long-admired French gastronomic texts by Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin.

In his next breath, Dodin emphasizes French gifts to gastronomy as a means of proving the nation's superiority and speaks for all Frenchman, the men of his "patrie."

> Nous avons inventé le confit d'oie, le ragoût de morilles, la poularde à la crème, les truffes au lard, les gâteaux de foies de volaille, le lièvre à la royale, les feuilletés aux écrevisses, nous monsieur, et tant d'autres choses ! Nous avons la Bourgogne, le Bordelais et l'Anjou, nous, monsieur. (170)

Dodin lists off some of the most notable dishes from French gastronomy such as "le lièvre à la royale," the ingredients of which are also indicative of *haute cuisine* such as morels and truffles. The culinary splendors of and from France are so many that Dodin could not possibly begin to list them all and thus is resigned to including them in the statement "et tant d'autres choses." As if all of these gifts are not enough, Dodin commences another list of French regions, again asserting the importance of French land. Nowhere else is there a Burgundy, a Bordeaux, or an Anjou. Highlighting three different regions from distinct geographical areas in France, Dodin becomes a defender of the French nation as a whole, not just its gastronomy.

Furthermore, given Dodin's pronoun use in this passage, it is clear that he is the *porte-parole* for all French people. Here, the only pronoun of which Dodin avails himself is "nous." This "nous" stands apart from his repeated use of the nationalized "votre" in the previous passage. He accentuates and sets off "nous" from the rest of his speech using repetition and pauses, indicated with commas in the text. In his last two statements, Dodin employs the collective pronoun four times. Especially in his last

sentence in this speech, Dodin makes it clear that *we* are not *you*, the French are not like the Germans, when he voices the collective pronoun one last time, in a clear attempt at emphasis and distinction.

Discourse which elevates one national cuisine over another is characteristically political and can function as a tool for exercising power. Following DeSoucey's conception of what she terms *gastronationalism*, nationalistic claims about food have an inherently political objective. Such claims presume "that attacks (symbolic or otherwise) against a nation's food practices are assaults on heritage and culture, not just on the food item itself" (433). Thus, food serves as a "vital tool in the exercise of hegemony" (Higman 162). Of importance is that DeSoucey's characterization of *gastronationalism* necessitates the manipulation of food on an international plane. Beyond a nation's boundaries, attacks on cuisine are equivalent to attacks on the nation and exist to assert political power as well as cultural power.

La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet is highly successful at bolstering the national character precisely because it pits French against German, creating an immediate opposition between two national cuisines. Using gastronomic claims, Rouff attempts to assert French cultural superiority over the Germans by drawing out gastronomic singularities of the two nations and by appealing to France's rich, long-standing gastronomic tradition. Because gastronomic claims are often based on assertions of difference, they distinguish a polarity between goodness, taste, and civility on one end and badness, tastelessness, and barbarism on the other. In fact,

gastronationalistic claims thrive upon these polarities (DeSoucey 442) because of the hierarchies they create.

Gastronationalistic claims are founded upon beliefs in exceptionalism (DeSoucey 447) which is a common theme in French gastronomic discourse.[46] From Escoffier's postulation that French chefs' greatness comes from the land on which they grew up to Rouff's positioning of the nation as culturally superior because of its gastronomy, there is a general consensus when it comes to French gastronomic exceptionalism. Roland Barthes has heralded a propagandist rhetoric regarding the unique relationship between the French and their food in his article "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." According to Barthes, the French are privileged in their ability to touch upon national themes through their cuisine:

> food permits a person (and I am speaking of French themes) to partake each day of the national past. In this case, the historical quality is obviously linked to food techniques (preparation and cooking). These have long roots, reaching back to the depth of the French past. They are, we are told, the repository of a whole experience, of the accumulated wisdom of our ancestors. (*Psychosociology* 170)

Promoting a brand of national identity, Barthes uses the term "our" in much the same way as Dodin does when he attempts to definitely distinguish himself from his German counterpart. Both men emphasize the collective nature of French history, working to incorporate the individual into the nation, but do so in a way which sets France apart from all others.

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[46] Exceptionalism is a thread common to arguments which attempt at valorizing and justifying the aims of the French nation. "Ever since the Revolution, the French state, especially in its democratic form as *la République*, has promoted the idea of France as an exemplary nation with a universal vocation, a world power with a *mission civilisatrice*, a country whose values were those to which the rest of humanity aspired, and whose duty it was to disseminate these values" (Jenkins 15).

Barthes' statement reveals the twofold political value of food as both capable of dividing and uniting. Food unifies people and brings them into a collective community such as the nation because it has a powerful assimilative function. "Eating pot-au-feu and sipping a glass of Beaujolais [is] a way of being French and a statement of belonging" (Steinberger, *Au Revoir* 209). For instance, consuming the essentially French *foie gras*, an eater absorbs the representational *francité* of the dish. He becomes part of the larger community of (French) *foie gras* eaters, taking part in a common experience. Additionally, he absorbs the *terroir* from where the *foie gras* comes and he symbolically absorbs the tradition in which *foie gras* has been crafted through the ages in regions such as the Périgord. He becomes part of the food system that encompasses the collective identity of France.

The assimilative value of food consumption is a manifestation of Benedict Anderson's concept of *imagined communities*. Anderson argues that nations and nationalism are imagined entities created through unifying forces such as the novel and the newspaper (24-25). Though Anderson does not mention recipes or cookbooks in his work, I believe that these texts have the same unifying force as the newspaper. Given that a significant portion of the French population could not read at the beginning of the twentieth century (Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*), recipes perhaps had an even more significant effect on forging an imagined community because they connected not only those who read and cooked from the recipe, but also those who ate the dishes and meals the recipe dictated.

Igor Cusak and Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson have both suggested that cuisine is essential to creating the nationally imagined community that is France (Cusak 208; Ferguson, *Nationalism* 107). Ferguson suggests that within the French nation in particular, "The hegemonic, absolutely conventional culinary discourse constructs a nation without history, without politics, a nation rooted in terroir and tradition" (*Nationalism* 105) because the hegemonic discourse is one which transcends political boundaries. Food unites and unifies groups of people who may otherwise be separated by difference be it social, economic, political, or geographic.[47] Ferguson defines the capacity of food to unite people *within* a nation as *culinary nationalism*. Marcel Rouff thus uses food to structure a narrative which attempts to bring people together and level differences among French citizens. This use of food brings him to the second goal of his project, the resuscitation and regrouping of the French nation.

Food's strong communicative value renders it a powerful tool in identity construction. The food one cooks and consumes "contains and conveys the culture of its practitioner; it is the repository of traditions and of collective identity. It is therefore an extraordinary vehicle of self-representation" (Monatanri 133). Thus, Rouff turns to

[47] My argument here is not to suggest that Rouff and his contemporaries created a national French cuisine, but that he made use of an already solidified image of the French national cuisine to bolster a flagging nation. The development of a national cuisine in France was the culmination of centuries of effort. By the end of the nineteenth century, men such as Grimod de la Reynière, Escoffier and Brillat-Savarin had established and codified what we consider to be the national French cuisine today in cook books and culinary treatises. Higman dates the development of a French national cuisine to the seventeenth century and the 1651 publication of La Varenne's *Le Cuisinier François* (170). To understand the formation of French cuisine, see Susan Pinkard's work, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* and *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* by Amy B. Trubek. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson also recounts the construction of a national cuisine in the first chapter of her book, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*. Rebecca Spang details the institutionalization of the restaurant in France, particularly in Paris, and how the restaurant helped to construct dining practices which are integral to conceptions of gastronomy in France.

the national cuisine as a means of asserting French national superiority over a once and future enemy. Through the foods and culinary practices that compose a national cuisine, people communicate their belonging in a group with a specific heritage and values. In the French case, these values are ones of tradition, quality, a sense of superior taste, and connections to the land, all of which come through in Rouff's narrative. Consequently, French food communicates a long-standing privilege and superiority.

More than just a symbol of France's preeminence, food was the frontline of national self-defense and self-identification during the interwar years. By 1935, due to the hard work and lobbying of farmers and vintners in regions throughout France, the French government established the Institute national de l'origine et de la qualité (INAO), taking up the national defense of agriculture and cuisine. This organization is responsible for protecting and promoting French agricultural products at home and abroad. The INAO designates AOC status and is responsible for delineating specific geographical areas which are commonly used in winemaking to designate the precise geographical origin of grape vines. Citing the uniqueness of terroir, the INAO states as its mission "la préservation d'un patrimoine collectif notamment à travers la sauvegarde des appellations et de la pérennité des exploitations agricoles" (www.inao.gouv.fr). In protecting and preserving France's land and agricultural goods, it defends the nation's identity and cultural heritage at home and abroad: "L'identité d'un produit AOC ou IGP repose sur un nom géographique dont le respect doit être assuré en France, en Europe et partout ailleurs à l'étranger" (www.inao.gouv.fr). The INAO is a defender of French

terroir, working to insure the statute of unique AOC products around the globe. Ensuring the singularity of these products and the regions from which they come is more than the safeguarding of a name or a product. The INAO is the first line of defense for the French nation, protecting "tout l'édifice des dénominations géographiques dont les composantes sont de nature tant sociale et culturelle qu'économique" (www.inao.gouv.fr). Kolleen Guy has discussed the development and subsequent efforts of the INAO as a means of protecting economic interests during the economic depression of the 1930s, and how this protectionist movement was highly nationalistic (192-194).[48] This move, however, can also be conceived of as a nationalist attempt to protect more than the French economy. DeSoucey claims that efforts to formalize protection of traditional foodstuffs often arise during times when identity is perceived to be in danger (442). The self-conception of the organization is, thus, telling; the INAO is the protector and defender of French identity as expressed through geographical domains and gastronomic products. After a period of gastronomic self-defense and on the brink of a Second World War, the French government took a significant step in the protection of the national identity.

An Enduring Nation

French food is a testament to and symbol of the enduring strength of the nation. Its ability to endure the many trials of French history makes the national cuisine a powerful tool for nation building. Pierre Boisard speaks of Camembert's status as a national

[48] For more information on this discussion, see Amy Trubek's *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir* (24).

symbol that serves as a point of reference to Frenchmen because it is "laden with a prestigious history, a witness to the Republic's greatest hours to all of the changes that have occurred in French societies over the past two centuries" (226). If this is true of Camembert, then the same is true of its host – gastronomy. In the case of the latter, however, the history is longer, deeper, and more inclusive. French cuisine is one of the few elements in France which has resisted and withstood the trials of time, war, discord, and even, ironically, famine. The unfaltering strength and supremacy of French gastronomy render it "an emblem of French civilization" (Ferguson, *Taste* 4; see also 9). It is a symbol of French strength and solidarity; it is a reflection of patrimony and the soul of all Frenchmen. Marcel Rouff directly draws upon the immutability of French gastronomy in his "Justification" to not only rationalize his decision to publish his novel, but also to affirm his belief in gastronomy as the foundation upon which the nation should rebuild itself. "La grande, la noble, cuisine est une tradition de ce pays. Elle et un élément séculaire et appréciable de son charme, un reflet de son âme" (Rouff 9). It is "une des traditions les plus vieilles et les plus essentielles de sa patrie" (Rouff 11). In France, gastronomy is equivalent to the culture of the nation. Gastronomy is France.

At the end of World War I, Georges Clemenceau pronounced, "France, yesterday the soldier of God, today the soldier of Humanity, always the soldier of the Ideal" (cited in Martin 10). Rouff's narrative takes up this rhetoric and couples it with French gastronomy. An ideal and an expression of humanity, food would reorient the French nation towards strength and greatness. In his last moment of discourse, Dodin echoes Clemenceau, uniting France's past, present and history, though through cuisine.

Through the veil of his own trip to Germany, he recounts the horrors that France has suffered: “Nous avons acquis l’expérience cruelle qu’il n’est point de crises de maladies, de morts même qui vaillent en souffrances et en horreur les semaines que les médicastres nous ont imposes” (Rouff 180). Yes, France suffered great loss and bore witness to unmentionable horrors, but out of this war, “nous sommes désormais suffisamment éclairés sur la valeur et la perfidie des régimes” (Rouff 181). The horrors inflicted by the hands of Germany – be them culinary or military – only serve to validate the supremacy of the French nation. This supremacy, Dodin continues, is best expressed in the French values of home, family, and cuisine. Dodin’s last words call upon all Frenchmen to return to the kitchen, to rebuild their lives on the foundation of their past, and to take up one more time, French cuisine as a symbol of eternal unity and strength: “Reprenons, pour ne plus la quitter, notre bonne vie et notre bonne cuisine d’autrefois et, dans la paix ou la souffrance, suivant ce qu’il plaira à Dieu de nous envoyer, achevons nos existences dans le culte de la chère et dans la joie de notre foyer” (Rouff 181). In an almost sermon-like speech, Dodin emphasizes the connection between the national cuisine and the social body by juxtaposing a “bonne vie” with “bonne cuisine.” He also perhaps plays upon the word “chère” meaning “food” and its homonym “chair” meaning flesh. Calling upon the symbolism of the Eucharist, the national cuisine comes to represent the national body. A daily necessity, the most basic of human needs, food could and should provide the spiritual and elemental foundation of France’s future.

Cleaning the French Kitchen: The Problem of Gastronomy in *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and *La grande bouffe*

The repercussions of May 1968 manifested themselves in French gastronomy as much as in the rest of society. As the growing bourgeoisie increasingly defined itself through its relationship to *haute cuisine* and kitchen appliances, French food and restaurant dining came to represent "à la fois l'égoïsme des nantis face à la déréliction du prolétariat et du tiers monde, et l'absurdité antinaturelle de la 'société de consommation'" (Ory, *Discours gastronomique* 175). What was once a sign of individual and national distinction became a mark of derision. In attempting to fashion themselves through the appropriation of culinary knowledge and perceivably civilized dining behavior, the bourgeois social class revealed the danger lurking underneath the nation's preoccupation with gastronomy. Gastronomic metaphors turned back on themselves and gastronomy became the focus of critique rather than a coalescing force as it had been prior to the Second World War.

In no two narratives is the critique of French gastronomy more apparent than in Marco Ferreri's film *La grande bouffe* (1973) and Luis Buñuel's *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (1972). These two films are indicative of a shift in the use of food and dining in gastronomic narratives during the *Trente Glorieuses*.[49] In the thirty years following the Second World War, authors and filmmakers questioned and problematized the value of self-identification through gastronomy by increasingly revealing and calling into question gastronomy's inherently divisive foundations and by

[49] Jean Fourastié coined the term *Trente Glorieuses* in his 1979 book *Les Trente Glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975*.

framing these discussions in relation to the concurrent purity movement which was spreading across France.[50] In their respective films, Buñuel and Ferreri exploit the potential dangers that lie beneath the glossy surface of *la gastronomie française* and propose a culinary *tabula rasa* which anticipates the advent of *nouvelle cuisine* in 1973.

The *Crust* of the Matter

At first glance, the critical message of Buñuel's *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and Ferreri's *La grande bouffe* appears to be quite transparent. The films are clearly critiquing the growing French bourgeois class.

Buñuel's film tells the story of six bourgeois friends who repeatedly gather for dinner parties. Each of Buñuel's characters has climbed the social ladder through corruption and their ability to manipulate and navigate a society in flux. Don Rafael Acosta is a single, older man who is in Paris as the Ambassador from Miranda, a poor South American country. Together with his friends and French business counterparts, Monsieur Thévenot and Henri Sénéchal, he runs a drug smuggling business. Messieurs Thévenot and Sénéchal are married to Simone and Alice, respectively. Simone brings her younger sister, Florence, with her everywhere in an attempt to acculturate her to upper-class society. Florence, young, beautiful, and political, represents the unsettled population responsible for the events of May 1968.[51] Buñuel structures the film

[50] Kristin Ross suggests that with the end of colonization outside of the Hexagon came an internal "colonization of everyday life" within in France (77). This movement manifested itself in efforts to cleanse and purify how people lived, and, in fact, Ross argues that the French population of the 1950s and 60s was obsessed with cleanliness (see Chapter Two, "Hygiene and Modernization" in Ross).

[51] At various points throughout the film a Colonel and a priest join the six compatriots underscoring the notion of moral corruption in French society and allowing Buñuel to turn his critical camera eye on the

through a series of failed or nearly-failed meals. Each time the friends gather, a strange occurrence ultimately interrupts the dining sequence preventing the guests from eating a meal from start to finish. Buñuel eases the viewer into these missed meals, escalating the disturbing nature of the interruption throughout the film. At first, meals fail because of miscommunicated invitations and deaths of restaurant owners. As the film progresses, however, the interruptions suggest that the meals are part of a dream sequence which unveils some moral evil (incest, murder, torture).[52] In the end, the six companions are unable to indulge themselves in their gastronomic refinement, appearing almost to starve from the very structures they have created for themselves.

In 1973, just one year after the release of Buñuel's *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, Marco Ferreri presented audiences with *La grande bouffe*. In this film, four bourgeois men – Philippe, an infantile judge with a fetish for his childhood wet-nurse; Marcello, a misogynistic airline pilot; Michel, an effeminate television producer; and Ugo, a passionate restaurant chef – seclude themselves in an estate in the middle of Paris to gorge themselves to death on copious amounts of only the best foods that their bourgeois money can buy.[53] The estate belongs to Philippe's family and is an immediate

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military and the Church. For instance, the priest kills a local farmer in retribution for his own parents' deaths at the hands of the farmer decades ago. Rather than practice forgiveness and mercy, the priest quickly abandons his religious principles and commits murder.

[52] Buñuel's use of the dream is distinctive of his Surrealist roots. In Surrealist texts and films, the dream state provides an antidote to reality's ability to persuade the mind that oppression is constructive and morally sound, and in this state, the unfounded "rationality of bourgeois morality" is forgotten (Francis 74). In *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, however, the bourgeois friends awake from dreams undisturbed, content to go on living the life they have built for themselves.

[53] While Ferreri has said that the notion of suicide rests solely in how viewers interpret the film – "Ce sont les spectateurs qui voient ça. Les quatre copains de *La Grande Bouffe*, par exemple, ne disent pas une seule fois qu'ils veulent se suicider" (in Volta 39) – there are certain clues that point to the intention of death on the part of the characters. For instance, each of the four men puts his affairs in order before

sign of the man's wealth and prestige as it is the former home of Nicolas Boileau, the seventeenth-century author.[54] So that each of the four men may live out his last days in the pleasure of women, they invite three prostitutes – Danielle, Anne, and Gita – and Andréa, a school teacher, to join in the feast. Though they gather under the auspices of a "seminaire gastronomique," the men glut themselves in a continuous orgy of opulent food and bizarre sex where one becomes intertwined with the other to the point that they are indistinguishable. Unable to fill the existential void that the men experience in an insatiable bourgeois society, the only option is to drown themselves in consumption. And that they do. By the end of the film, one by one, each man kills himself from over consumption.

Numerous scholars have examined these films always to the conclusion that they are clearly caustic critiques of a rampantly growing bourgeoisie that the two directors structure through their use of food and dining. For instance, Martine Gantrel examines *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and concludes, "le dîner mondain représente ici le

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leaving for the retreat. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly in deciphering intent, Philippe warns Michel, "Si tu ne manges pas, tu ne vas pas mourir."

[54] In the seventeenth century, Nicolas Boileau drew upon distinctions in social class, so it is not without consequence that Ferreri chooses Boileau's home as the setting for his film. Often referred to as *Le Repas ridicule*, the narrator of Boileau's third satire recounts his experience at a neighbor's home. The narrator, rich in culture and culinary knowledge, equates the quality of the meal to being poisoned. The food is so horrible, in fact, that he eventually proclaims, "Jamais Empoisonneur ne sceut mieux son métier" (v.68, 182). The host's lack of culinary knowledge, the personal trait he believes to possess and wishes to convey, exhibits itself in the strange combinations of ingredients (lemon juice and eggs in the *potage*), the lack of appropriate courses ("Point de glace, bon Dieu!" (v. 83, 182)), and the poor quality of the wine he serves. The poor quality of food echoes the bad literary taste of the host which becomes the center of a drunken dinner debate and eventually provokes a food fight. The well-mannered and well-cultured narrator describes the affair as "barbare" (v. 225, 186). Barbaric behavior is, of course, the opposite of that which is civilized; barbaric behavior betrays any attempt to play at social roles above one's true status. While there are distinct differences between the feast in *Le Repas ridicule* and those in *La Grande bouffe*, it is of significance that the men in each narrative use contemporary conceptions of *haute cuisine* to assert their social status.

moment par excellence où la bourgeoisie se met en scène et se persuade 'discrètement' (Bourdieu dirait 'avec distinction') de ses qualités et de sa supériorité sur les autres classes sociales" (698). Zeenat Saleh looks at *La grande bouffe* through the lens of consumption and claims that the film presents viewers with a ferocious critique of consumer society by condemning gluttony (79). James R. Keller uses the framework of manhood and masculinity to analyze *La grande bouffe* and comes to the same class-driven conclusion:

> Their binging signifies the decadence of genteel while males and the progressive decline of that social group's political and financial affluence. The gustatory enterprise carnivalizes the excess and covetousness of the bourgeois male, revealing the shameless materialism and hedonism of this dominant social class. (58-59)

The imagery is too obvious to be ignored.[55] The characters are readily identifiable as part of the bourgeoisie through their occupations, dress, and lifestyle choices. And, at the end of each film, all of the characters experience death in some fashion – a seemingly clear message about the fate of the bourgeoisie if it were to continue on its consumption-driven path. Moreover, both Ferreri and Buñuel built their careers upon continually engaged efforts to expose the potential dangers of societal hierarchies and

[55] Other analyses of *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* include Gwynne Edwards take on the plot structure which she situates in relationship to the bourgeois status of the characters and the collection of essays in Marsha Kinder's edited volume, *Luis Buñuel's* The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie. In this latter collection Juan Roberto Mora Catlett examines the film through the dream sequence. Victor Fuentes reads the film as a postmodern approach to cultural void created by the bourgeoisie in 1960s Paris. Laura A. Lindenfeld claims both Buñuel's film and Ferreri's "the subject of food and eating as a pathway for expressing social criticism" (7). Likewise, Pascal Ory claims that Ferreri's film should be understood "comme une fable cruelle sur la décadence du monde bourgeois" (*Discours* 174). Pascal Bonitzer gives a Marxist reading of *La grande bouffe* in "L'expérience en intérieur : à propos de *La Grande Bouffe* par Marco Ferreri" which falls in line with the argument that the film sets out to denigrate the bourgeois consumer society. Finally, Keith Reader takes a different approach and looks at *La grande bouffe* from the perspective of the abject and examines the role of sex and women in the film's "lampooning of the consumer society" (166).

the bourgeoisie in particular.[56] However, this perceived transparency has blinded scholars from other readings of these two films.

Rather than understand gastronomy as a framework for critiquing the bourgeoisie, I propose a rereading of these films that focuses on gastronomy as the object of critique. By examining how Buñuel and Ferreri carefully strip away the artifice of gastronomy to reveal its fracturing foundations, it becomes clear that the two directors propose that France purge itself of its gastronomic traditions and norms that have been handed down from the *Ancien Régime*. The breakdown of French dining norms and *la cuisine bourgeoise* in these two films foreshadows changes to the approach to French gastronomy that arise shortly after the release of *La grande bouffe*. If France wished to continue using gastronomy as a recipe for self-fashioning in the wake of the revolutionary events of May 1968, it would need to start with a clean plate.

A Distinctly French Perspective

Because my analysis and argument are situated in the French context, it is important to address the fact that neither Buñuel nor Ferreri is of French origin. Nevertheless, both of these films are *French* at heart. Buñuel was Spanish by birth, but lived a great deal of

[56] Particularly for Luis Buñuel, the leading surrealist filmmaker, the late 1960s and 1970s were a period rich with material for social critique, a mainstay in Buñuel's oeuvre. For members of this surrealist movement, which was born before the Second World War, subversion, critique, and reflection on society were central tropes. Surrealism "was a concept that could be used to shake the fragile balance of bourgeois life and values" (Francis 74). Thus, surrealist expression was particularly useful with the rise of consumer society and the growth of the bourgeoisie, and this may help explain Buñuel's continued interest in and success with film making throughout his lifetime. Like Buñuel, Ferreri leaned to the political left. By the time Ferreri made *La grande bouffe*, he had already established himself as a political filmmaker and a master of satire. "In the 1960s, his films dissected the sexual and existential traumas of average Italians caught […] during their transformation into the homogenous petit-bourgeoisie that would eventually become the global standard" (Bertellini 195). Ferreri built his career on providing social commentary through film, attacking in particular the rising social classes and conservative politics.

his life outside of Spain due to political strife and consequent impositions on his artistic freedom. He started his film career in France and some of his most famous works come from the two periods he spent in his adoptive country. From his iconic first film, *Un chien andalou*, Buñuel frequently chose French as his own filmic *lingua franca*, even choosing to write his autobiography, *Un dernier soupir*, in French. Specifically regarding *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, Buñuel produced the film in conjunction with Jean-Claude Carrière, with whom he collaborated frequently for his later films. Carrière helped write the script for the film, and the screenplay would later be nominated for an Academy Award. Though the screenplay did not win an Oscar, the film did win the 1972 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film representing France. And, rightly so. The film was made in France with French actors,[57] a French crew and production company. It is in the French language and has French cuisine at its heart. Likewise, in the 1970s, the Italian Marco Ferreri filmed a series of movies in France using French actors and giving the films French titles to reflect the language of the film.[58] Ferreri filmed *La grande bouffe* on the rue Boileau in Paris and used a largely French crew and production company.

Causing great scandal, *La grande bouffe* debuted at the 1973 Cannes Film Festival and was chosen as one of three films to represent France at the Festival.[59] Upon exiting the theater at Cannes, movie goers were in shock. Critics were quick to

[57] Buñuel's Spanish heritage does come through in the character of Don Rafael Acosta, played by Spanish actor Fernando Rey. Rey acted in several of Buñuel's later French films including *Cet obscure objet du désir*. Likewise, Ferreri references his Italian heritage through the character of Marcelo, played by the great Italian actor Marcelo Mastroiani.

[58] These films include *La grande bouffe*, the Franco-Italian western set in Paris *Touche pas à la femme blanche* (1974) and *La dernière femme* (1976).

[59] The other two French films at the festival were Jean Eustache's *La maman et la putain* and René Laloux's *La planète sauvage*.

declare the film a “spectacle dégoûtant” (Tallenay). In *Le Figaro*, Louis Chauvet claimed the film “heurte le goût” and was worthy of “l’oscar mondiale de la vulgarité.” It was a depiction of “extravagant grossness” (Kinder, *Life and Death* 4). All of the negative publicity from the film only served to fuel public interest, making it one of Ferreri’s few box office hits (Taillibert 130). Though many scorned Ferreri’s picture, it did win the International Critics Award at the Festival. Aligned with France, the film was thus more than a film; it was a film that represented the French themselves.

Arguably, given their gastronomic foundation, the films would not have had the same effect if they were Spanish or Italian. The gastronomic fervor of France was absent in Spain and Italy. Fabio Parasecoli, a historian of Italian cuisine, indicates that under the Communist influence in 1960s Italy, “food was to be appreciated only as the fruit of the labor of farmers and peasants” (29). In Italy, the pursuit of culinary pleasure, always important to life in France, was seen as a waste of time and was “viewed with slightly contemptuous suspicion” (Parasecoli 29). Food was much more utilitarian in Italy and the nation seemed to lack an appreciation for the refinements of *haute cuisine*. As such, imagery which turns refinement on its head would lose some of its satiric impact in front of Italian audiences, and perhaps others. Ferreri himself remarks upon the French sensitivity to viewing a perversion of their gastronomic heritage. To the question, “Pensez-vous qu’en Italie *La Grande bouffe* fera autant scandale qu’en France?” he responds, “Je ne le pense pas. Les Italiens sont plus terrestres. La nourriture les inspire, plutôt qu’autre chose…” (in Volta 40). Ferreri acknowledges that, for the French, food is much more than food. Not only is it a source of inspiration, it

carries the power to function far beyond itself as a symbol of tradition and decadence, community and exclusion, purity and disgust. Consequently, any perversion of French gastronomy has the possibility of inciting national scandal. Given the metonymy between France and gastronomy, an attack on the latter is a direct affront to the entirety of the nation.[60]

How Not to Drink an Apéritif

The behaviors that define *la gastronomie française* – table manners and dining norms – are inherently exclusionary and are founded upon the creation of social distinctions, making gastronomy a questionable tool for sculpting an inclusive and cohesive national identity. Table manners, in France as elsewhere, originate in court society and are an immediate and deliberate effort to create lines of distinctions along class boundaries (Lupton 21). As the upper classes seek to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, they develop increasingly complex rules of behavior.[61] These rules include the use of the fork and knife, individual plates, the placement of the napkin, topics of appropriate conversation, and how much one eats. As society attempts to project an increasingly civilized identity, the dining room becomes an arena of refinement and self-exhibition through which individuals can demonstrate their belonging to a group. Dining together becomes a means of delineating community membership via the exercise of proper or improper comportment (Montanari 97). Norbert Elias, in fact, argues that adaptation to

[60] For an explanation of this metonymic relationship, see the Introduction.

[61] Norbert Elias characterizes the progressive development and standardization of dining practices as part of the *civilizing process* in which people attempt to increasingly distinguish themselves from others and to dissipate any semblance of an animal nature (102-107).

these models of behavior is one of the most important and influential effects on the shaping of individual and national identity (108-114). At the table, people can define themselves in relation to others.

Social distinction through dining norms comes to the fore in Buñuel's *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* in the dry martini scene when the friends gather for dinner at the Sénéchal's home. To ensure that his fellow dinner companions are aware of his own cultural prowess, M. Thévenot gives a lesson on how to mix a dry martini. He starts by instructing his dinner companions about the correct glass for the martini, "le verre classique en forme de cone." He further signals his up-to-the-moment knowledge, noting that regarding the proper martini glass, "la mode a changé." He continues to describe how to make a martini beginning with the ice and ending with how to drink the beverage. The martini, M. Thévenot comments, "se boit comme champagne." The reference to champagne is itself telling and signals membership to a particular social class as it is a luxury product which gained its popularity in the aristocracy.[62] In order to exemplify his own social standing in comparison with others less fortunate, the Ambassador invites the chauffeur, Maurice, inside to share a drink. Mary Douglas' work "Deciphering the Meal"[63] demonstrates that this is not a deeply congenial and welcoming invitation because the shared consumption will exist only on the level of the fluid. Sharing drinks rather than meals expresses "only too clearly the detachment and impermanence of simpler and less intimate social bonds" (*Deciphering* 68). In an effort

[62] I provide a longer discussion of champagne in Chapter Three.
[63] Douglas' article first appeared in 1972, the same year as the release of Buñuel's film, pointing to the importance of meals and table manners at the time.

to further distinguish themselves, the Thévenot's and the Ambassador do not drink to Maurice's toast. Maurice's presence is only necessary to demonstrate the social detachment between him and the true dinner guests. He is the other against which the arriviste bourgeois hope to define themselves in an upwardly mobile society.

In this scene, the divisiveness of gastronomy comes to the fore. The bourgeoisie use the mannerisms that are part of the acting out of gastronomy to create schisms within society. Maurice's social backwardness, or otherness, further reveals itself when he gulps down the martini in one mouthful only to be sent back out to the car. Maurice's mannerism is, explains M. Thévenot, "l'exemple même de ce qu'il ne faut pas faire avec le martini dry." Maurice teaches by counterexample. Madame Thévenot excuses his gauche behavior because he is "un homme du peuple." Her distinction of the "people" is important here because it indicates that she and her friends situate themselves above the masses. Moreover, it indicates a divide in French society that gastronomy brings to light.

Image 2.1: Maurice drinks the martini

Social education, like academic education, varies along lines of class and accessibility, leading McGinn to declare dining etiquette “a device of repression” (203). According to Madame Thévenot, Maurice “ n’a pas eu d’éducation.” Rather than teach Maurice how to drink a martini through model behavior, the bourgeois guests mock him, inflicting their educated, superior gaze upon him. Maurice arrived after the lesson dictating how to properly drink a martini. He missed out on the opportunity to learn the accepted behavior and is thus continually marginalized.

The strict codes of civility that Buñuel’s characters attempt to demonstrate fold back on themselves and become a mark of their own *incivility*. Because of their desires to appropriate and adhere to gastronomic norms passed down from the French aristocracy of the *Ancien Régime*, they are unable, and perhaps unwilling, to relate to their compatriots. The gastronomic experience which the French hold so dear devolves into a corrupted and disingenuous social event purely meant to suppress those without invitations to dine.

Dinner Theater

Civilized dining norms are increasingly harmful to efforts at self-fashioning because they may serve to simply mask identity rather than shape it, creating superficial folds in the fabric of humanity. Acting out behaviors at the dinner table is precisely just that; to eat in public is to play a role and to appropriate gestures that are otherwise completely

unnatural.[64] The performativity of French gastronomy that Buñuel highlights reveals the very inauthenticity that lies at the heart of gastronomic self-fashioning. The unquestioned performance of codes of etiquette makes dining with others an inherently uncivil experience (Finkelstein 12) precisely because these behaviors are inauthentic, artificial, and purely performative. Gastronomy is, therefore, illusory. And so, to use gastronomy as a tool for national self-fashioning could lead to the construction of a false sense of self that has no relation to the French reality.

Scholarly attention to the performativity of the meal has focused on restaurant dining. In her seminal work, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture*, Rebecca Spang notes: "Like a theater, a restaurant was a stable frame around an ever-changing performance, a stage where fantasies might be brought to life" (*Restaurant* 236). This act of performance, Joanne Finkelstein argues, contributes to the pleasure that dining out can provide because it enables people to play at being someone they are not (7, 14). Both scholars emphasize the artificiality of being within this very public culinary space and attribute a certain positive affect which arises from playing roles.

Though Spang and Finkelstein discuss restaurant meals, I would extend their arguments to the dinner party, a venue where people hope to display their best selves in an artful and intricate performance governed by strict codes of etiquette. Indeed, there may be more social pressure to act the part at dinner parties because the setting is more intimate. With fewer guests and distractions than in a restaurant, the dining

[64] Norbert Elias contends that absolutely "nothing in table manners is self-evident or the product, as it were, of a 'natural' feeling of delicacy" (107).

room leaves little space for a faux pas to go unnoticed or overlooked. The success of the event will depend on the cohesive performance of all involved. Like actors in a play, each diner plays a part. The dining room is the stage, the host is the director, and the menu will be the basis of the script. And, each guest is expected to have memorized his lines. Conceived as such, the dinner party gives new meaning to the term "dinner theater."

In *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, Buñuel engages with the idea of dinner theater and makes evident the performativity of the meal in the scene in which a dinner becomes a theatrical work on stage. To enter the setting of this event, the six guests walk through a large amount of scaffolding outside of the building as if using the backstage actors' entrance at a theater. The scaffolding is reminiscent of that which is seen on the back side of a stage set. Buñuel then uses a jump shot to show the six guests entering the stage. The director situates the camera so that it provides a direct frame of the scene as if to create the sensation of actually watching a play from the audience. As the six friends walk around the room, the trompe l'oeil walls and furnishings become increasingly noticeable to the viewer. The whole room is a lesson in the artificial parading as reality.[65] And indeed, Buñuel's characters will reveal themselves to be trompe l'oeil figures, attempting to be something they are not.

[65] All of the guests but one, Florence, fail to recognize the false construction of the dining room. Florence, who represents the younger, political French generation, is able to see through the artistic imitation just as she is able to see through her sister's own imitation.

Image 2.2: The dinner stage

Buñuel continues his use of the theatrical with the lifting of a stage curtain to signal the start of the show. After the guests sit at the table, a vibrant red curtain draws back, revealing their place on stage and the notion performance in which they are taking part. The camera then turns to reveal the audience. In the darkness sits a room full of spectators. The director again uses the image of the red stage curtain in the tea room where the women of the group gather one afternoon, but are unable to order anything but water. Here, the curtains cover most of the walls and windows, framing the room, an effect which the director amplifies by opening the scene with a downward panning of the red fabric. This camera technique is suggestive of the closing curtain at the end of a play or performance and helps to remind the viewer that they, too, are watching a performance. Everything is but an act. Afraid they will not be able to play their part, the characters in *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* leave the table as quickly as possible. Monsieur Sénéchal, who sits in his chair the longest, tries to recite lines which a hidden stage hand feeds to him, but he is so overcome by nerves – he is sweating

profusely – that he too runs away. He does not know the lines of the play. He does not possess the vocabulary necessary to express his chosen identity and thus reveals the artificiality, up to this point, gastronomy has allowed him to conceal.

Image 2.3: Dinner Theater

This scene therefore demonstrates the dual use of gastronomy. On the one hand, gastronomy is an ideal medium for self-fashioning both on the individual and the national level because it involves a high degree of performativity, particularly when dining with others. This performativity allows for a manipulation of a projected self-image. On the other hand, because the behaviors which govern the culinary moment are artificial and are built upon creating distinctions, gastronomy creates an inherently divisive and inauthentic identity that could never truly be national in scope.

La Cuisine Bourgeoise

Classic French gastronomy is a product of the nineteenth century and the rise of the bourgeoisie after the French Revolution and thus it is called either *la cuisine classique* or

la cuisine bourgeoise.[66] However, long before the nineteenth century, the French culinary tradition began in courtly homes of the medieval and early modern periods (Trubek, *Haute Cuisine* 3). From the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century, to dine on French cuisine meant to dine on opulent dishes that were grandiose in appearance and plentifully spread across the table as the meal was a moment of spectacle more than consumption. Great chefs and culinary knowledge were solely within reach of the upper classes. With the Revolution came a democratization of French gastronomy as chefs were freed from working solely within the court structure. Concurrently, the new bourgeois class sought to model itself after the old aristocracy of the Ancien Régime and did so through food (Drouard, *Les Français* 89). As a consequence of this new appropriation of gastronomy, *la cuisine bourgeoise* was born.

La cuisine bourgeoise is a relatively loose concept but it is indicative of many of the classic French dishes that are part of "traditional" cooking in France. In its purest form, *la cuisine bourgeooise* is "luxuese, fastueuse, et décorative" and "utilise et combine de manière complexe et sophistiquée des produits rares et chers à l'intention d'une clientèle fortune et privilégiée […] qui se veut gastronome" (Drouard, *Les Français* 90). This type of cuisine is inherently grandiose and meant to signal one's disposable income and, as such, is not available to everyone – not even the entirety of the bourgeoisie. Alain Drouard suggests that there is, consequently, a second tier of *la cuisine bourgeoise* which is simpler and more accessible to society-at-large. This second

[66] Given that *la cuisine bourgeoise* became the standard in French cooking, Amy Trubek classifies it as *la cuisine classique*, noting that by 1975, it was firmly rooted as the French culinary tradition (*Haute cuisine* 13).

tier cuisine is composed of "les plats 'mijotés' y côtoient les garnitures dites 'bourgeoises' à base d'articles simples apparteant à la cuisine sans faste comme les carottes tournées, les oignons glacés, la laitue et les céleris braisés" (Drouard, *Les Français* 93). Both tiers of *la cuisine bourgeoise* were the product of two French chefs – Antonin Carême and August Escoffier, the latter of whom continues to influence classical French culinary education. These two men engaged themselves in a continued effort to codify and streamline French dishes, though Carême because of his proximity to the French aristocracy was still rather focused on the appearance of food as well as its composition. Escoffier, on the other hand, was purely concerned with developing and regulating the dishes that the nation would call its own.

If we consider Marco Ferreri's film, *La grande bouffe*, to be a critique not only of the bourgeoisie, but of French gastronomy, it is clear that Ferreri is crafting a negative image of *la cuisine bourgeoise*. After the Second World War, Drouard notes, there was a swift turn to the thick, heavy dishes that mark this type of meal: "Avec ses sauces et ses plats mijotés, la cuisine bourgeoise répondait à leurs attentes. Elle a donc été célébrée aussi bien dans les restaurants étoilé que dans les familles" (Drouard, *Le myth* 100). The penury through which people lived during the war caused people to want to fill themselves in the most substantial way possible. However, like all forms of over consumption in France in the thirty years that followed the war, la cuisine bourgeoise became a source of national indigestion.

The meals upon which the four men gorge themselves in *La grande bouffe* are clearly part of the highest form of *la cuisine bourgeoise*. They cook *les rognons*

bourguignons, crêpes Suzettes, boudin à la ronde, bone marrow, and multiple *purées*. The eat dozens of oysters and drink endless bottles of Perrier Jouet champagne. In another scene, the men bring an entire suckling pig to the table into which they have skewered dozens of small birds. All of the meals are abundant not only in size, but also in composition. Needless to say, these are not dishes for the health-conscious.

When they receive their provisions at the beginning of the film, the quality and abundance of what they have ordered for themselves comes to the fore. Off of the butcher's delivery truck come

> un farouche cochon sanglier prêt à tous les marinades les plus subtiles, deux superbes chevreuils à l'œil doux dont la chair à tous les parfums de la forêt des goûts, dix douzaines de pintades mi-sauvages nourries aux graines et au genièvre, trois douzaines d'innocents coquelets des Ardennes, 20 douzaines de poulets de Bresse, [une] partie intérieure de bœuf d'embouche de très riches pâturages de Charolais, cinq agneaux innocents de présalé de Mont-Saint-Michel.

To the side of the truck, sitting on top of the bird bath are multiple *tête de veau*. The description of the meats, their origin, and the way in which they were raised is almost comical in its grandiosity and precision.

Image 2.4: The Meat Delivery

While filming the meat coming off of the truck, Ferreri uses a voice over of the butcher's voice announcing the carnal order. Layering sound on image, Ferreri amplifies the notion of abundance. The viewer not only sees the proliferation of meat, but also hears an itemized list of the types of meat coming off of the truck. This verbal list extends over several shots, fading into the background and then resurging again. Its duration attests to the large amount of meat the men have ordered. One of these shots which the viewer sees while listening to the butcher's list in the background presents an image of a second truck filled with food. This truck contains fruits, vegetables, eggs, grains, and various types of rare mushrooms. Just as the viewer comes face to face with the back of the meat truck, Michel and Marcello stand face to face with the opened back of the second truck. The camera presents a direct shot of the over-flowing cornucopia. At the sight of all of this food, Marcello says to Michel, "Regarde. Quelle splendeur cette arrivage, non?" The food is a feast for the eyes before it is a feast for the stomach – a common trait of *la cuisine bourgeoise*.

The garden of delights which Ferreri presents to the viewer is not, however, as celebratory and splendorous as Marcello would like to claim. In her analysis of a similar display of food in the David Wong Louie's novel, *The Barbarians are Coming*, which is set in the 1970s, Wenying Xu claims that the image gastronomic excess is a source of fear. Sterling, the young protagonist who has worked his way out of the lower classes by becoming a chef, "is both overwhelmed by the joy of recognition of good living and the fright of senseless consumerism that is a jungle with no outlets" (70). The same ambivalence is present in *La grande bouffe*. When the final piece of meat leaves the

truck, Marcello exclaims, “Que la fête commence!” But he does so with a look of ambivalence bordering on fear. His face and his voice do not express the same emotion. Like Sterling, Marcello appears to be torn between overwhelming joy and a fear of the gastronomic endeavor lying before him.

The architectural design of many of Ugo’s culinary creations signals *la cuisine bourgeoise*. The film opens with a view into Ugo’s restaurant where he is working to with a photographer to capture a still image of his latest culinary sculpture, a creature resembling a bird. He says of his own work, “Il est tellement beau il a l’air faux.” The dishes that Ugo creates transcend food and become works of art such as Carême describes in *Le pâtissier pittoresque*. This short guide is a cross between a cookbook and an architectural manual for bakers. It includes not only recipes for cakes and pastries, but also the instructions and visual aids necessary for transforming a dessert into an architectural model. Ugo proves to be a modern-day Carême, creating dishes so elaborate that they no longer appear to be food at all, but sculptures.[67]

The domed masterpiece of *pâté* that Ugo crafts as his final dish is the epitome of *la cuisine bourgeoise*. First, its form places it in the realm of the artistic. Ugo calls is “un poème” and says that if he sold these creations he would instantly be a millionaire which underscores the perceived value of this type of dish. The top of the dome lifts off of the base revealing a mélange of three types of *pâté – d’oie, de canard, de volaille –*

[67] Numerous scholars have given attention to Carême and his role in shaping French gastronomic history. Philippe Alexandre and Béatrix De L'Aulnoit devote an ample part of their work, *Les Fourchettes dans les étoiles : Brève Histoire de la gastronomie française* (2010) to the chef and have also written his biography, *Le Roi Carême* (2003). Ian Kelly has also written a biography of Carême, *Cooking For Kings: The Life of Antonin Carême, The First Celebrity Chef* (2005). For a more general discussion, see Patrick Rambourg 2010 history of French gastronomy, *Histoire de la cuisine et de la gastronomie française.*

which he patiently made from scratch earlier in the day. Furthermore, *pâté de foie gras* is luxurious dish whose texture and content underscore its decadence. It is smooth, creamy, and unctuous, yet thick and dense. The majority of its substance – *foie gras* – has a double nature; it is a gastronomic luxury of the highest order, but it is also "un peu ingrate, meme aureole de gloire, ce morceau d'alabâtre piqué de sang" (Lucas 69). As Ugo cuts into it, Ferreri shows a close up image of his face grimacing from the effort necessary to penetrate the thick layers of *pâté*. His grimace is one of both pain and ecstasy. The dish is the gastronomic gateway to cardiac arrest yet also symbolic of French *haute cuisine*.

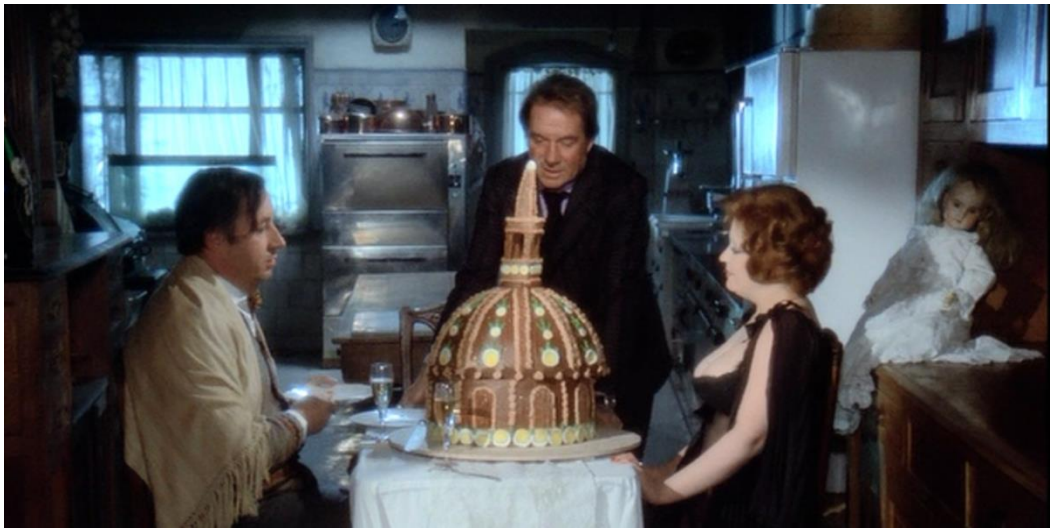

Image 2.5: Ugo's *pièce montée*

In relation to Buñuel's film, scholars have tended to focus on the absence of food. For instance, Laura A. Lindenfeld contends that Buñuel "consistently postpones the meal to the point where food never actually appears" (7). While untrue, this statement causes the attentive viewer to look more closely at the food which does make its way to the table. At one dinner party, she serves a *pâté de foie gras* which the

guests pass around the table. During the film's last dining sequence, Madame Sénéchal chooses to serve a quintessentially bourgeois meal – *un gigot d'agneau aux flageolets*. The leg of slow-roasted leg of lamb with beans "est un monument de la cuisine classique. La scène est codifiée, ritualisée » (Lucas 90). Serving this dish necessitates a ceremonial entrance of the meat which comes to the table and creates a moment of spectacle. The show continues through the carving of the *gigot d'agneau* as the male host must stand to carve the meat in front of the guests.[68] Additionally, the size of the dish makes it "un plat d'opulence discrete" (Lucas 91). It belies the ability to purchase a large cut of meat and the luxury of time necessary to patiently roast the leg.

Rather than function as a positive symbol of social distinction, the food in both *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and *La grande bouffe* devolves into a sign of the proximity of the bourgeoisie and the lower classes. In the twentieth-century, "the custom of eating heartily and ostentatiously, meanwhile, traditionally ascribed to the upper classes, became redefined downward to become a 'popular' practice of the middle and lower bourgeoisie, and ultimately also for the urban proletariat and rural peasantry" (Montanari 120). The significance of abundant dining turned on itself, a fact never more visible than in these two films. Pierre Bourdieu suggests that attempts at social distinction through culinary modes and over-consumption can become so laden with arrogance and that they degenerate into the "vulgaire" (207). This vulgarization, in turn, comes to reflect French gastronomy itself. Gastronomy is no longer a symbol of cultural superiority and refinement but rather of self-absorption and decadence. Self-

[68] I specifically denote "male host" in this sentence because tradition and custom associate the carving of meat with men because of the symbolic violence of the act.

fashioning through food would then be extremely problematic at the national level. This way of eating will only lead to death – the fate of the men in *La grande bouffe* and the nightmare of Buñuel's dinner guests.

Binging and Purging

If France has an eating disorder, as I have suggested, it may be appropriate to turn to the phrase "binging and purging" to understand the French relationship to gastronomy during the *Trente Glorieuses*. This period was a time of national binging. Indeed, gastronomic metaphors of overconsumption best describe the first twenty years after the war:

> [… T]he hungry, deprived France of the Occupation could now be sated; France was hungry and now it could eat its fill; the starving organism, lacking all nourishment, could gorge on newfound abundance and prosperity. In this quasi-ubiquitous narrative of wartime deprivation, France appears as a natural organism, a ravenous animal. (Ross 71-72)

French society binged itself on all that it could consume, literally and figuratively. Though, in particular, French consumer society tended to define itself in relationship to culinary things.

The *Trente Glorieuses* was a period of strong economic growth, industrialization, and modernization that changed the shape of French gastronomy as much as it did the rest of society. Kitchen appliances became the passion of the population and were a sign of upward social mobility. Eventually, however, these gastronomic things would become an obsession and would replace the exchange of human emotion.

Boris Vian's 1955 song, *La complainte du progrès*, laments the new conception of love in modernizing France.

> Autrefois pour faire sa cour
> On parlait d'amour
> Pour mieux prouver son ardeur
> On offrait son cœur
> Maintenant c'est plus pareil (187)

No longer are simple expressions of emotion enough to show one's love for another. At least among certain classes, kitchen gadgets stand in for and replace affection. In exchange for a kiss, the singer must now provide "un frigidaire," "une cuisinière avec un four en verre," "des tas de couverts et des pelles à gateaux," and "une tourniquette pour faire la vinaigrette" (187). And with these things, the modern bourgeois couple will be "heureux" (187). In the event of a fight, the singer threatens to take back:

> *Mon* frigidaire
> *Mon* armoire à cuillères
> *Mon* évier en ferre
> Et *mon* poêle à mazout (187, emphasis mine)

The exchange of kitchen gadgets is a substitute for the sharing of love. When the relationship is over, the man takes back *his* objects so that he may give them to the next woman who comes around (187-188). At the end of his song, the sense of lamentation is clear. Vian sings:

> Au frigidaire
> A l'efface-poussière
> A la cuisinière
> Au lit qu'est toujours fait
> Au chauffe-savates
> Au canon à patates
> A l'éventre-tomates
> A l'écorche-poulet (188)

He uses the preposition *à* and the definite article at the beginning of each line of verse to create the effect of repetitive moaning or sighing. The objects are no longer shared or his, they are simply loathsome, mechanized signs of daily life. The emphasis on kitchen gadgets rather than the people with whom they are associated directs the singers derision to the object itself. This focus on the culinary object thus directs the critique towards the gastronomic enterprise in which people are caught up rather than towards the people themselves. French society is a victim of its own culinary ambitions.

The fact that Vian presents his ideas in a song suggests that the attitude towards the shift in bourgeois priorities was lighthearted, though popular. Vian was a prolific writer. He penned numerous novels and plays in addition to the hundreds of songs for which he wrote lyrics. This suggests that his choice to convey these ideas through song is not arbitrary. Vian is able to voice his distaste as a melodious complaint. Given his popularity, however, the reach of his ideas would be significant and was perhaps a better way of widely disseminating his thoughts on the increasing effects of capitalism on French society than in a novel which, arguably, fewer people would come across. As the *Trente Glorieuses* progressed, Vian's complaint would develop into a wide-spread caustic indictment of modernization and society's preoccupation with all things culinary.

A similar view of kitchen technology reappears three years later in Jacques Tati's film, *Mon oncle* (1958). Madame Arpel, the contemporary bourgeois housewife, is obsessed with her modern kitchen in which "everything communicates." Kristen Ross comments on the sad irony of Madame Arpel noting, "The joke, of course, is that communication is exactly what is lacking in this sterile, precise, fenced-in suburban

home where parents relate to their sullen, silent child in a series of compulsive directives about hygiene […]" (105). The pristine white surfaces are devoid of character and personality. The space seems almost entirely impossible to cook in with its modernized appliances hidden underneath transforming countertops and cupboards. Madame Arpel seldom, if ever, takes the time to show her love by preparing a home-cooked meal for her family because she is too concerned with the keeping up her modernized home. Communicating kitchen appliances replace actual human relations. Technological innovation replaces verbal interaction. What makes a meaningful life is no longer relationships, but things – culinary things. These narratives draw out the danger of binging; it replaces emotions with things and creates a false sense of security and happiness.

Given its recourse to *la cuisine bourgeoise* and the rather gluttonous passion for eating that mark the *Trente Glorieuses*, it is no wonder that the nation would be on the verge of needing to purge. In response to a society that has gorged itself on kitchen appliances and overly-codified meals of archaic and decadent foods, Buñuel and Ferreri call for a culinary tabula rasa through images of purging. To purge, from the Latin *purgare*, is to purify, cleanse, and protect the body and the self.

The most obvious way of purging the body is through vomiting, an act which Ferreri emphasizes in *La grande bouffe*. Vomiting is the visceral manifestion of rejection that occurs deep within the body and is part of the disgust reponse.[69] While bodies of

[69] Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues argue that disgust is a preternatural human reaction serving as a system of rejection (Haidt et al, *Body* 124). For more information on disgust as both a gustatory and aesthetic judgment, see Aurel Kolnai's foundational work on the subject of disgust, *On Disgust*. See also:

Ugo, Philippe, Michel, and Marcello grow and balloon, the prostitutes they have invited to the mansion resist and reject physically and verbally the way in which the men eat. Unable to withstand life at the mansion, Gita leaves after the first night saying that she "[a] vomi tout la nuit." Danielle quickly follows suit, vomiting later in the day. This time, however, the camera bears witness to the act. Unlike their male dinner companions and Andréa, Gita and Danielle cannot withstand the continued eating and find themselves disgusted with the men's behavior. The women's bodily exclamations of disgust signal their rejection of the men's way of life, of their moral and physical bodies. Because disgust is a system of rejection, it causes "feelings of revulsion and nausea, and in extreme cases It can lead to vomiting" (Haidt, *Body* 111). Vomiting also reverses the process of incorporation. Food transforms the consumer from the inside out because along with incorporating the nutritional components of foods, the consumer also incorporates and appropriates the symbolic attributes of a given product (Fischler, *L'Homnivore* 66). But, the consumer must digest the foods in order for them to have an effect on his body. "La digestion est de toutes les opérations corporelles celle qui influe le plus sur l'état moral de l'individu » (Brillat-Savarin 189). Vomiting occurs before digestion. Therefore, rejection of the incorporated substance is a means of avoiding the moral implications associated with consuming the representative values of foods.

Danielle compounds her expressions of repugnance employing the direct language of disgust which Anne later echoes. While she vomits, Danielle says, "Vous

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Colin McGinn's *The Meaning of Disgust* and William Ian Miller's book, *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Carolyn Korsmeyer prfocuses on aesthetic disgust with a particular eye towards the visual and plastic arts in her book, *Savouring Disgust: The Foul and The Fair in Aesthetics*.

êtes grotesques. Grotesques et dégoûtants." This speech act serves as a moral judgment of the men's gluttonous consumption. Her use of the inclusive "vous" sets up a dichotomy between the men and the women. *You* are grotesque and disgusting and *we* are not. In a following scene, Anne calls the men "mentally deficient cretins." Like Danielle's "vous", Anne's use of "ils" creates a distinction between the men and the three women who do not have the same dependent relationship with the food they eat. Representative of the lower classes, these women physically and verbally reject the food they eat and the bourgeois preoccupation with dining. The prostitutes, albeit ironically, become the symbol of virtue and restraint to which society should aspire.

A similar scene occurs in Marguerite Duras' class conscious novel, *Moderato cantabile* (1958). The novel takes as its central focus a bourgeois housewife, Anne Desbaresdes, who seeks an outlet from the meaninglessness of her life at the local café. Inside the blue collar café, Anne drinks glass after glass of red wine and develops a relationship with a man named Chauvin. As the novel comes to a climax, Anne returns to her home at the edge of town, showing up late to a dinner party that she is supposed to be hosting. Not only is Anne late, but even worse she is drunk. Becoming more and more sick as the dinner drags on, Anne eventually vomits in front of her guests. Lloyd Bishop, in his analysis of this scene, asserts that Anne's regurgitation of the meal is an immediate rejection of the artificiality of the social moment (230-234).

Another way of purging the body is through the expulsion of excrement. The proximity between food and bodily waste is one aspect that renders gastronomy extremely problematic. The production of waste, however, is an inescapable fact of

human existence. The food that the body does not need to sustain itself is released from the body in the form of excrement or waste. Among waste products, feces tend to stand out as exceptionally offensive (Kolnai 54, McGinn 18-19) because of their symbolic value. Inside the body, food transforms into feces, a filthy object capable of contaminating those who come into contact with it. Excrement is the symbol of internal filth, immorality, and malevolence. Feces are a product of the bottom of things, a product of the lowest point of exit.[70] Consequently, the removal of excrement from the body is a means of purification.

Ferreri employs scatology throughout his film to both critique French gastronomy and call for a purification of society.[71] At first, the director aligns the edible and excrement, directly referencing that the latter is an unquestionable product of the former. For instance, when Gita, one of the invited prostitutes arrives at the house, Ugo caresses and kisses her behind and calls it "un meringue au chocolat." In another scene, as Ugo prepares his elaborately decorated *pâté* sculpture, he squints his eyes, hardens his face, and grimaces as he squeezes a brown cream from a pastry bag. Philippe looks at the creation and calls it "un poème de merde." The luxurious *pâté* quickly devolves into the most base of substances which Ugo then precedes to eat. Perhaps unsurprisingly given its suggestion of coprophagia along with the general unhealthiness of the high-fat dish, this is what kills Ugo.

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[70] Dominique Laporte has written *Histoire de la merde* which attempts to trace the evolution and history of the subject.

[71] The relationship between scatology and social critique dates back to the Renaissance, but Ferreri's use of the scatalogic was not unique in the twentieth century. During World War II, scatology was used both as a form of protest and to critique consumer society in two different plays, *Par-dessous bord* by Michel Vinaver and *Le désir attrapé la queue* by Pablo Picasso. I would like to thank Alexandra Natoli for these references.

In yet another scene, Ferreri emphasizes *boudin*, a dish that resembles human waste in form and content. To draw attention to this particular food, Michel repeatedly yells "boudin" asking his friends, "Tu veux de mon boudin?" In a subsequent shot, the camera shows an entire *boudin à la ronde* in one frame. Its form is reminiscent of both the phallus and excrement which Ferreri accentuates as the camera captures Michel's profile as he eats the sausage. In content, *boudin* is typically composed of blood, entrails, and products which would most commonly be characterized as waste in the butchering of an animal.[72] By aligning food with feces, Ferreri renders it inedible and completely debases it.

The most graphic representation of excrement in *La grande bouffe* occurs when Marcello needs to use the restroom and the toilet explodes. As the viewer witnesses the occurrence, Marcello cries out, "C'est une inondation" and runs out of the bathroom. Meanwhile, Michel runs in, fascinated by the scene. He stoops over the toilet, wading in the flood of waste while screaming a series of lamentations: "C'est horrible." "C'est épouvantable." "C'est l'horreur." Yet, he cannot seem to tear himself away from the scene. He is drawn to it. Later, as the men lie in bed in the room next to the now unusable bathroom, Ugo notes, "L'odeur de la merde, il ne nous quittera jamais." The odor of their own waste and filth will never leave the men. It is a permanent mark of their food-fueled obsession.

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[72] Today, this view of innards and entrails is changing in the culinary world. Chefs such as Fergus Henderson are working to popularize "nose to tail" eating in which no part of the butchered animal goes to waste. Henderson has written a book entitled *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating,* a book which has become the "manifesto" of this type of cuisine.

This scene is not only graphic and grotesque, it is also blasphemous and evokes religious purification. Marcello calls the event an "inondation." Later, Michel describes what happened as "le déluge universel," an expression which Ugo finishes by adding "… de merde." The words "inondation" and "déluge universel" suggest the flood myth prevalent in many cultures and religions. The flood myth proscribes that great flooding waters sweep the earth to cleanse and purify humanity in advance of rebirth. However, in this instance, Ferreri turns this image on its head, creating a negative association. The "déluge universel…de merde" implies that rather than purify French society, the flood waters sweeping over France are poisonous. In lieu of rebirth and rejuvenation of society, this flood of putrefaction that originates in food will only cause death and disease, and such is the fate of the four men in *La grande bouffe*.

Though scatology is not present in *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, Buñuel epitomizes the glorification of excrement and filthiness of French gastronomy in his 1974 film, *Le fantôme de la liberté*. In this film, the values that society traditionally attaches to food and excrement are inverted; food is a dirty word and eating must take place in private while using the restroom takes place around what was the dining table. In what is perhaps the film's most iconic scene, two bourgeois guests arrive for a supposed dinner party and they take their seats on toilets around a table. At the table, the six convivialists flip through magazines, smoke cigarettes, and chat as they wait to finish their deeds. As the male dinner guest discusses his recent trip to Madrid, he describes how he and his wife had to leave earlier than expected because the city was filled with "une odeur absoluement écoeurante de – excusez-moi – de nourriture.

Vraiment impudique." After hesitating and excusing himself for using the dirty word "food," the man engages in a conversation about the inevitable increase in production of human waste that will accompany global population growth. Later in this scene, when a young child says that she is hungry, her mother says, "Sophie, on ne dit pas ce mot à table. C'est très mal élévé." Food is foul, almost unmentionable around the excretory table. Good manners necessitate conversation about the bowels while consumption is relegated to a room down the hall.

Ferreri and Buñuel's use of the scatological is critical precisely because the repulsiveness of waste, human excrement in particular, is product of a larger effort to purify and order society that occurred during the *Trente Glorieuses*. With the development of an increasingly upwardly mobile population came the ordering and purification of society through the designation of what is clean, civil, and suitable for public presentation versus what is filthy, shameful, and private (Cohen xiv).[73] The control of the sights, sounds, and smells of human excrement receives special attention in campaigns for cleanliness, though, as Stephen Greenlblatt notes, this emphasis has little to do with hygiene and more to do with aristocratic self-fashioning (*Filthy Rites* 3). As socioeconomic mobility rises, the threshold for disgust becomes much lower and people try to define themselves via their ability to more strictly regulate hygiene and waste.

[73] Neil Blackadder relates the rise of the nineteenth-century bourgeois social class in France to an increasing disgust associated with excrement in all its forms including its verbal mention and the pejorative term "merde" in his article, "*Merdre!* Performing Filth in the Bourgeois Public Sphere."

Wiping the Table Clean

As the years of the Trente Glorieuses went by, purification of society became an increasingly important preoccupation. Kristen Ross asserts that particularly in France, modernization became a means of social differentiation and was grounded in a discourse on hygiene that began in the 1950s (11).[74] The relationship between modernization and sterility is reflected back in Madame Arpel's kitchen and Vian's *Complainte du progrès*. Modern kitchen appliances have helped to simplify and sterilize life so much that it becomes completely devoid of human touch and emotion.

Similarly, British anthropologist Mary Douglas, looking back in her revised preface to the 2002 edition of *Purity and Danger*, suggests that society grasped on to purity in the 1970s as a means of attacking perceived evils, especially regarding increasingly industrialized foods (*Purity* xviii). The concern with prepackaged, mass-produced food is the subject of Luis de Funès' 1976 film, *L'aile ou la cuisse*. Funès draws comic attention to the potential dangers of processed foods. Monsieur Duchemin, director of the *Guide Duchemin* which is a satirical stand-in for the *Guide Michelin*, battles Monsieur Tricatel, the owner of a large, industrial food conglomerate attempting to take over French cuisine. Duchemin breaks in to the Tricatel factory and unveils the production methods that use more synthetic than natural ingredients to fabricate rubber-like lettuce and chicken. A metaphor for the dangers of industrialized foods, while in hot pursuit of culinary truth in Tricatel's factory, Duchemin cannot find anything

[74] For a more in-depth discussion of the purity movement in France during this period, see Chapter 2 ("Hygiene and Modernization") in Kristen Ross's book, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*.

that is actually edible and hurts himself. Duchemin reveals the fraudulent cuisine on national television and Tricatel and his industrialized foods become the object of shame.

While the real enemy to French gastronomy in this film is clearly industrialized food, Funès' critique does not end there. *L'aile ou la cuisse* also critiques traditional French gastronomy and the Michelin enterprise. For instance, Monsieur Duchemin's son, an oafish character of little intellect, steps in to review restaurants when other reviewers are unavailable. When restaurants recognize the reviewers they are given intentionally superior service and food to the detriment of every other patron seated in the restaurant. The *Guide Michelin* has long been the arbiter of gastronomic excellence in France and around the world, a position which has become increasingly questionable over time because it seems to intentionally favor restaurants and chefs that adhere to tradition more than innovation and because of rumors of corruption. In *L'aile ou la cuisee*, Funès mocks Michelin's endeavor to promote seemingly overwrought rules of fine dining, traditional French *haute cuisine*. The *Guide Michelin* is a bastion of *la cuisine classique*: "Sorte de conservatoire des arts culinaires, le *Guide* vante les mérites de la bonne vieille tradition hors laquelle il n'est pas toujours bien vu de travailler. Le trois étoiles, c'est l'aristocratie, le deux étoiles, la grande bourgeoisie et l'étoile, la petite bourgeoisie et les notables" (*Livre noir* 202).[75] Industrialized food may be bad, but traditional representations of French gastronomy may not be much better.

[75] François Simon, the famed French restaurant critic, presents an even more critical view of the *Guide Michelin*. Not only is the *Guide* dated in its approach to what constitutes good cuisine, it is almost entirely unnecessary in the culinary world. Simon reduces the *Guide* back to its original purpose, a travel guide. It is helpful only to " trouver des bonnes petites tables le long des routes, localiser in hôtel sur un plan de ville, connaître l'altitude d'un village et son nombre d'habitants" (69).

L'aile ou la cuisse, *La grande bouffe*, and *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* prompt me to suggest that we can extend Douglas' contention relating a movement and industrialized foods to the whole of French gastronomy. Yes, industrialized foods are potentially harmful to national health and self-image, but other aspects of French food and dining are as well. The gastronomic model that France adapted after World War II was archaic, divisive and dangerous. *La cuisine bourgeoise* was not only potentially physically unhealthy for the nation, it was a vestige of the past. It encouraged binging in a very modern sense of the term. Supping on *la cuisine bourgeoise* meant eating to the point of gorging oneself on only the richest and most decadent of dishes. Moreover, strictly codified dining norms became more useful as tools of repression, distinction, and dissimulation than they did define and elevate the gastronomic experience.

In shedding light upon the precarious foundations of French gastronomy, from food to gesture, Buñuel and Ferreri suggest the need for a culinary tabula rasa and anticipate the discourse of *la nouvelle cuisine*.[76] Just six months after the release Ferreri's *La grand bouffe* a fundamental change took hold of French gastronomy. In October 1973, after eating a meal from Paul Bocuse, Henri Gault and Christian Millau defined this culinary movement as *nouvelle cuisine* and officially inaugurated a new way of French cooking.[77] Gault and Millau's mission was, and still is, "à faire table rase de l'image ultra-bourgeoise et anachronique de la gastronomie française." They wanted to

[76] The terminology of *la nouvelle cuisine* was not entirely new. In fact, the original *nouvelle cuisine* movement took place in 1740 and was due in large part to the effort of François Menon, a French chef who wanted to streamline cooking procedures and lighten dishes for dietary reasons (Pinkard 156-157). The twentieth-century movement thus engages in a similar discourse of simplicity and hygiene as applied to food preparation.

[77] For a list of the *10 commandements de la nouvelle cuisine* see "Gault & Millau, découvreur de talents depuis 40 ans."

completely wipe the table clean of a cuisine in which “tout était trop cuit, les plats étaient servis en sauce, avec de la crème et du beurre” (Mantoux and Rubin 230). The culinary discourse of nouvelle cuisine was one of reprobation, speaking against the gastronomic past shaped and informed by the traditions and chefs of the French Court and aristocracy and which the growing bourgeoisie used to fashion itself.

Gault and Millau defined *nouvelle cuisine* through a series of ten commandments that were to serve as guiding principles of the culinary movement. In a direct attack of *la cuisine bourgeoise*, the commandments state that chefs must avoid “marinades, faisandages, fermentations, etc” and eliminate “les sauces riches” (Gault & Millau). *Nouvelle cuisine* was supposed to be beautiful, inventive, and health-conscious. The emphasis on simplicity and health points to a purification of French cuisine that mimicked a growing desire to purify French society at large. A group of young chefs including the Troisgros brothers Pierre and Jean, Michel Guérard, Alain Chapel, and Paul Bocuse, began opening restaurants which served meals guided by principles of minimalism and simplicity and honoring the natural flavors of ingredients. Local and seasonal products were the base for meals. Cooking times were reduced. Presentation was just as important as taste. Today, these are the principles that continue to define French gastronomy.

La nouvelle cuisine also marked a change in dining culture in France. In a recent assessment of the state of French gastronomie, *Le livre noir de la gastronomie française*, Aymeric Mantoux and Emmanuel Rubin explain that this new approach to cuisine was complete in its scope: “C’est une nouvelle pratique du restaurant, une nouvelle

sociologie de la table et des manières de table que Gault et Millau imposent [… Gault et Millau] ont exploré les habitudes de notre culture alimentaire, nos modes de vie et de consommation" (231). It was a total gastronomic phenomenon. Throughout French society people began to change not only what they ate, but how they ate. This change in behaviors would reorient the French people and redefine their national identity as they fashioned it through food.

In Search of Lost France: Culinary Nostalgia in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*

Undeniably, the relationship between food and nostalgia is inescapable in a post-Proustian world. Marcel Proust famously evoked this relationship in the episode of the *madeleine* in *A La Recherche du temps perdu* in 1913. The narrator's sensorial experience of eating the small tea cake dipped in tea provides a direct entryway into memories of his childhood at Combray. Only through tasting the tea-soaked *madeleine* is he able to access his memory: "La vue de la petite madeleine ne m'avait rien rappelé avant que je n'y eusse goûté […]" (46). The narrator must eat the tea cake, taking it into his own body, to experience its effect. In fact, he tastes the *madeleine* a second and third time in order to recapture the fleeting sensation of the first bite. After several attempts, "le souvenir [s]'est apparu" (46) and his childhood at Combray unfolds before him.

In his 2001 film *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*), Jean-Pierre Jeunet captures the Proustian spirit and waxes nostalgic for the bygone days of France. Unlike Proust, however, Jeunet extends the possibilities of food-fueled memory. For the director, nostalgia is a product not only of food, but also of culinary space. Despite the prevalence of gastronomy in the film, scholars have yet to examine its importance as structural and symbolic device. I will demonstrate that, through his use of distinctive and highly charged French foods and culinary spaces – the café, the *marché*, the rue Mouffetard, the rue Lamarck, and culinary boutiques such as the *épicerie* – Jeunet frames and makes possible his nostalgic rendering of Paris. In doing so, he exploits the

ties that bind the nation's future and its nostalgic memory of the past to sculpt a culinary image of France at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Jeunet's film, *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, is a whimsical tale of a young woman who lives in the Montmartre area of Paris and who, in order to combat her own sense of solitude, sets off to perform good deeds for others. Amélie moves to Paris after having grown up with eccentric parents not far from the French capital. She takes a job as a waitress in a small, local café and immerses herself in the goings-on of her neighborhood but she remains quiet and detached. One morning, Amélie finds a small box of toys hidden behind the tiles in her bathroom. Intrigued by the contents of her discovery, she sets off on a path to return the toy box to its former owner, Dominique Bretodeau. After watching Bretodeau's reaction to finding a relic of his childhood, Amélie decides to perform other good deeds for the people amongst whom she lives. She helps her building concierge, Madeleine, reconcile herself with the death of her long-lost husband. She ignites a love connection between two café regulars. She helps her father overcome his own solitude, and she secretly bullies the bully in a defense of the picked-on assistant at the corner grocer. In her quest to help others, Amélie falls in love with Nino Quincompoix, an enigmatic sex-shop and carnival employee who collects discarded photos from underneath photo booths around Paris. After revealing to Nino the identity of a mysterious man who appears in dozens of the photos he has collected, Amélie must find the courage to reveal her own identity to Nino so that she, too, can experience love.

Romanticizing The Past

Jeunet is clear in his intentions and deliberate desire to present movie-goers with a fantastical view of the French capital. Prior to filming *Amélie*, he left France, spending several years in Hollywood to film *Alien: Resurrection*. During his time in California, Jeunet began working on the script for *Amélie* out of a desire to satiate a sense of homesickness. He says of the experience: "Being away from France made me *hunger* for a fairy-tale Paris, the Paris of my youth [… *Amélie*] is pure nostalgia, and I see nothing wrong with that […]. It was my own private fantasy come to life" (in Zalewski, emphasis mine). The director admits that the film blurs the lines between a French reality and the nation's mythical past. He creates a film that is grounded in the everyday – the Paris of his youth – yet is fantastical nonetheless.

Today, nostalgia is a way of remembering which romanticizes and idealizes the past and fosters feelings of homesickness and longing. At its origin, however, nostalgia was a medical condition. In 1688, the young Swiss doctor Johaness Hofer coined the term in his dissertation to describe an affliction of the imagination which caused young soldiers to become so homesick from exposure to different customs and manners of living that they fell ill with grief (Hofer 381-385). The only cure for this illness was a swift return to the homeland, hence the term nostalgia from the Greek *nosos* meaning "a return to the native land" and *algos* meaning "suffering or grief" (Hofer 381).

Over the past three centuries, nostalgia has become divorced from its classification as a medical ailment, but recent studies in psychology have shown nostalgia improves psychological health. These recent studies suggest that Hofer may

not have been far off in conceiving of nostalgia as a medical condition, though scientists and doctors are better able today to understand the medical effects of this way of remembering. For example, Clay Routledge and his colleagues have determined that nostalgic memory helps people make sense of life events and to think positively about both the past and the future. [78] Nostalgia makes use of the past to harness feelings of "beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love, and the like, in sum, any or several of the positive affects of being." (Davis 14). Sentimental longing for the past may indeed help people hold on to the idea that their lives are meaningful, particularly in a world constantly in flux.

Rather than focus on a certain place or situation in the past, the nostalgic longs for time gone by, a Golden Age, an imaginary past. To experience this type of reminiscence requires temporal distance long enough to gain perspective and comprehend the absence of what no longer exists. Svetlana Boym, contends that nostalgic memory is "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed;" it is "a romance with one's own fantasy" of what the past, often childhood, was or could have been (Boym, *Nostalgia* xiii, xv). It takes as its object "an enchanted world" (Boym, *Nostalgia* 8). Nostalgic thought does not recall the past as it was, but fictionalizes lived experiences. Nostalgia thus exists somewhere in the murky haze between fiction and reality.

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[78] Since 2008, Routledge and his colleagues have published a series of articles detailing the psychological implications of nostalgia. See, for instance, "A Blast from the Past: The Terror Management Function of Nostalgia" and "The Power of the Past: Nostalgia as a Meaning-Making Resource."

In order to mediate the fantastical and mystical qualities of nostalgia, those who embrace this type of memory often ground nostalgic memory in recognizable images and places, frequently resorting to kitsch.[79] As Clement Greenberg noted in his seminal essay on the subject, "Kitsch, using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, […] is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations" (40). Kitsch objects are cheap imitations of high art that often signify inauthenticity and are readily accessible to the masses. Throughout *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, Jeunet makes use of kitsch objects such as the garden gnome, a stuffed dog in Madeleine's apartment, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Le déjeuner des canotiers*, Bretodeau's toy box, and various objects in Amélie's apartment such as animal-shaped lamps. However, Jeunet circumvents the ersatz qualities of these objects in his film. He manipulates them in a way which bestows them the power to protect against the loss of identity and reveal their owners as authentic denizens of Paris (Westbrook 427, 430). Each kitsch object identifies character traits of the object's owner. For instance, the animal-themed lamps and paintings in Amélie's apartment reveal her child-like nature and belief in the fantastical. Monsieur Dufayel's ("l'homme de verre") many copies of *Le déjeuner des canotiers* demonstrate both the man's fascination with the outside world and his solitude. In his painting, Renoir captured images of his friends and acquaintances enjoying each other's company over

[79] Pierre Nora argues that memory, whether personal or collective, embeds itself in objects, gests, images, and spaces; because memory is abstract and uncertain, it needs something concrete and stable in which to ground itself (25).

food and drink.[80] To stand in front of the painting, or to engage oneself in its repainting is to take part in the delightful afternoon. Perhaps for Dufayel, these painted characters represent the friends he cannot have and the outings he will never go on because he is trapped within the walls of his apartment due to his brittle bone condition.[81] Moreover, this painting is a direct reference to kitsch as it is familiar the world over, having been reproduced on refrigerator magnets and postcards to be bought in gift shops or from street vendors and give the impression of having seen the painting without ever truly having the pleasure of standing in front of it. Dufayel's paintings are but imitations of an original.

Some scholars have attempted to examine how Jeunet crafts scenes that provoke nostalgia, focusing on the filmmaker's numerous references to classic French cinema. Dudley Andrew has argued that *Amélie* is a nostalgic film because of Jeunet's "selective use of a national cinematic heritage" (45) noting in particular Jeunet's use of the film *Jules et Jim* when Amélie goes to the movie theater, and his references to the Nouvelle Vague. Martin Barnier points to the similarities between *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* and René Clair's 1930 film, *Sous les toits de Paris*. Barnier argues that Jeunet exploits Clair's techniques of making Paris seem realistic, yet artificial. Both filmmakers "[font] croire au monde entier que la vie d'un quartier parisien n'est qu'humour, farces, bonne humeur et amitié, malgré quelques grincheux" (Barnier 163).

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[80] Charles S. Moffett details the painting through each of the character's identifications in "An Icon of Modern Art and Life: Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*" in *Impressionists on the Seine: A Celebration of Renoir's* Luncheon of the Boating Party.

[81] Pierre-Auguste Renoir was the father of legendary French filmmaker Jean Renoir. As such, Jeunet's choice of this painting as Dufayel's obsession may be a nod to the director in line with his other references to French films.

Borrowing images, techniques, and characters from iconic films is one way in which Jeunet transposes the past onto the present.

While Jeunet is unapologetic regarding *Amélie*, his nostalgic presentation of Paris was the source of some derision. Critics declared the film "nostalgia infused" (O'Sullivan 41) and "reeking of familiarity and nostalgia" (Rich 45). "Reek" expresses a high level of disgust with the film and Jeunet's use of referential imagery throughout the film. The most profoundly negative critique of the film, however, came in Serge Kaganski's article in *Les Inrockutibles*. Kaganski criticized Jeunet's manipulation of the camera and of the Paris streets, calling the film "artificiel" and Jeunet "un maniaque de l'ordre."[82]

Negative critiques of *Amélie*'s nostalgia also point to the fact that, like all forms of memory, it is inherently faulty. "La mémoire ne s'accommode que des détails qui la confortent; elle se nourrit de souvenirs flous, télescopants, globaux ou flottants, particuliers ou symboliques, sensible à tous les transferts, écrans, censure ou projections" (Nora 25). Memory is subjective, and often, personal. In attempting to see the past as positive, sad and painful moments may be left by the wayside in a deliberate attempt to forget, which makes nostalgia potentially divisive. Nostalgia, then, can carry a negative connotation, functioning as "an affectionate insult at best" (Boym, *Nostalgia* xiv). This brand of memory, however, does not corner the market on forgetfulness; around all pockets of memory exist vast fields of what is forgotten either intentionally or unintentionally.

[82] See Serge Kaganski's article, "Pourquoi je n'aime pas *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*" for a full explanation of Kaganski's grievances with the film and the director's aesthetic approach to film making.

An Ideal Pairing

Jeunet's choice to use food and culinary space as a framework for nostalgia is a natural one.[83] From its very origins in the late seventeenth century, gastronomic yearnings were a means of diagnosing and identifying the nostalgic (Hofer 386). Gastronomy is a common catalyst for this type of memory because "the nostalgic ha[s] an amazing capacity for remembering sensations, tastes, sounds, [and] smells" (Boym 4). Accordingly, David Sutton argues that food's power to construct memory is intrinsically tied to its sensuality, or connection to the senses. Eating and or smelling food and drink has a direct bodily connection which other memory triggers (pictures, sounds, words, etc.) do not (84-102). Consequently, these sensory experiences constitute a privileged home of nostalgia and resist the effects of time, a fact of which Proust was keenly aware.

> Mais, quand d'un passé ancien rien ne subsiste, après la mort des êtres, après la destruction des choses, seules, plus frêles mais plus vivaces, plus immatérielles, plus persistantes, plus fidèles, l'odeur et la saveur restent encore longtemps, comme des âmes, à se rappeler, à attendre, à espérer, sur la ruine de tout le reste, à porter sans fléchir, sur leur gouttelette presque impalpable, l'édifice immense du souvenir. (46)

Food and meals are the most efficacious way of accessing the past because their smells and tastes come alive, sear our inner beings, and touch generation after generation.

Proust's narrative epitomizes the effects of culinary nostalgia by which I mean longing for an ideal past ignited by or found in food, cooking, and eating. Here, the

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[83] *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* is not Jeunet's first endeavor to use gastronomy as a structuring device. In his post-apocalyptic film *Delicatessen*, a community relies on humans for their meat supply when food is scarce. In this case, however, Jeunet's use of food is much less innocent than in *Amélie*. *Delicatessen* raises the issues of cannibalism, food shortages, and the black market food supply.

taste of the *madeleine* soaked in tea is capable of igniting a nearly endless chain of memories. As Roger Scruton observes, "tastes can detach themselves from their causes […] and lead to an emotional life of their own. Since they are associated with, rather than inherent in, their objects, they have a facility to launch trains of association, linking object to object, and place to place, in a continuous narrative" (134).[84] For Proust, taste's associative function is so powerful that it serves as the origin of the multi-tome narrative stretching over thousands of pages.

Unlike Proust's text, however, in the novel *La seiche* (1998), individual sensations are associated with specific, idiosyncratic memories which build upon one another to recreate a whole. Author Maryline Desbiolles describes how different foods provoke different memories. *La seiche* tells the story of a woman who is cooking a dinner of cuttlefish for friends. As she cooks, the narrator accesses her past through the steps of the cuttlefish recipe, with each chapter's subtitle corresponding to a distinct step in the recipe. Each step further corresponds to a specific memory from the narrator's past. For example, the oil that she needs in step eight, titled "et ajoutez les seiches farcies qui auront doré dans une poêle avec le restant d'huile d'olive," reminds her of a "nuit grasse, poisseuse" (81). The characteristics of the oil recall a moment which she describes in similar terms. At the end of this chapter the woman says :

> Je suis entièrement dans la cuisine que je fais, c'est elle qui me donne les mots de ma mémoire, de mes rêveries, c'est par elle que je me remémore et que je divague. Un autre plat m'eût donné le goût d'autres

[84] Mikhail Bakhtin makes a similar argument as Scruton in *Rabelais and His World*. Bakhtin argues that eating is the essential way in which man interacts with the world, bringing the outside into his inner being: "Man's awakening consciousness could not but concentrate on this moment, could not help borrowing from it a number of substantial images determining its interrelation with the world" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 281).

> mots. Un autre plat m'eût fait renouer avec d'autres histoires. Un autre plat m'eût donné une autre histoire. (90)

For Desbiolles' narrator, the past comes surging into the present only as she cooks. Smells, tastes, sights, and the actions of preparing the meal transport the cook back in time to specific memories associated with each.

Gastronomy and nostalgia are an ideal pairing because they are both given to tastes and smells and are both vehicles of happiness. By definition, nostalgia is a memory for a time in the past that we believe to have been somehow better than the present. Janelle Wilson suggests that nostalgia can only be joyful because no one longs to return to unpleasant times (27). Likewise, in France, food elicits happy memories and links the past to the present. Vincent Martigny goes as far as to suggest that, for the French, "gastronomie est quant à elle *toujours* rattachée à une mémoire heureuse" (Martigny 45; emphasis mine). Proust's *madeleine* demonstrates how food memories cause one to see the past through rose-colored glasses. Upon tasting the tea cake, the narrator asks himself, "D'où avait pu me venir cette puissante joie" (44)? The memory of his Aunt Léonie and her Sunday gift of a taste of the *madeleine* "[lui] rendait si heureux" (47). Food and nostalgia feed off of each other to impart joy and happy memories of days gone by. When coupled together, their power may be immeasurable.

Jeunet, like Proust, is in search of lost time – both time gone by and a hopelessly unattainable time – and is able to recapture the essence of this moment, the *Paris of his*

youth, through gastronomy.[85] For both men, gastronomy is the "édifice immense" which constructs nostalgic memory and creates a path for the future.

Beyond the madeleine

Amélie is a twenty-first century, filmic version of the *madeleine*; culinary space and traditional French foods open the doors to the idealized past which Jeunet seeks to portray, and without which would be impossible. Indeed, the filmmaker has his own Madeleine – Amélie's building concierege who lives her life with a constant attachment to a past love. Jeunet's Madeleine makes reference to the many great Madeleines of history omitting the Proustian tea cake. Perhaps Jeunet does not allow his character to make this reference as it is already and always obvious. Now, a century of meals after Proust, the term *madeleine*, and the woman's name by extension, is loaded with nostalgic meaning. As Marie Rouanet notes, there is only one reason to serve *madeleines*: "Et si l'on sert des madeleines, c'est pour qu'exulte la mémoire" (117). In fact, it is to Madeleine that Amélie turns in an attempt to reconstruct the past. Attempting to find the owner of the box of toys she finds hidden in her apartment, Amélie asks Madeleine about the building's history and sets off of a chain of events that will drive the film's plot in a manner akin to how the Proustian narrator's *madeleine* will launch the textual narrative.

[85] Childhood food experiences, in fact, serve as the basis for nostalgia in numerous gastronomic narratives such as Muriel Barbery's *Une* gourmandise and Philippe Claudel's *Le Café de l'Excelsior*. Philippe Delerm avails himself of food memories in most of his novels. For instance, in *Un été pour mémoire*, the narrator accesses his past through culinary moments and in the kitchen where he spent much of his childhood. Delerm's work, is thus, reminiscent of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

Jeunet winks again in Proust's direction when Amélie crafts the letter that will reveal a version, albeit fictional, of Madeleine's long-lost love. Madeleine believes that her husband left her for another woman and has lived in despair ever since she stopped receiving letters from him nearly forty years ago. Having read a newspaper article about a bag of mail lost in the mountains at about the same time as Madeleine lost contact with her husband, Amélie takes advantage of this phenomenal discovery. She cuts and pastes pieces of old mail correspondence to create a fictional letter for Madeleine and pairs it with a fake letter from the postal service explaining its unusually late delay in delivery. In order to render the letter authentic in color and texture so that it appears to have actually been written forty years earlier and, in fact, left victim to the elements on the top of a mountain, Amélie methodically soaks the letter in a bowl of tea. Here, Jeunet uses a close up shot to emphasize the importance of this action. He blatantly exaggerates the number of tea bags strewn across the table and around the bowl – at least five tea bags continue to steep inside the bowl, another five tea bags are on the table, and the box of untouched tea sits close by. Jeunet does not want the viewers to overlook the fact that Madeleine's past will surge out of a tea-soaked letter. For both Madeleine and the Proustian narrator, the soaking of an object in tea is the necessary step to finding the past; "[…] tout cela qui prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé" (Proust 47). Without this extra addition of color and flavor and the alteration of the cake's texture, the *madeleine* would be just like all the other *madeleines* Proust's narrator has seen in the days since Combray but which do not

evoke memory. Likewise, the authenticity of Madeleine's letter comes out of the tea, without which, the letter would be recognizably fraudulent.[86]

Amélie is also a departure from the Proustian tradition. In Proust, remembrance "depend du hasard" (44). Contrarily, Jeunet attempts to remove all random chance from the experience, forcing nostalgia upon the viewer through evocation of the sights, sounds, smells, and textures of culinary spaces and distinctly French foods. Jeunet depends on the inherent harmony between sight and memory that is absent in Proust's narrative. Taking advantage of his medium and his ability to manipulate the image and sound of the culinary object or space, Jeunet repeatedly employs the powerful close-up shot to emphasize gastronomic moments and spaces. These shots are integral to Jeunet's rendering because they direct the eye of the viewer and give force and immediacy to the frame. Likewise, he exaggerates sounds in the café and at the market, accentuating the call of street vendors, the whistle of the steamer on the espresso machine, and the sound of the cracking crust of a *crème brûlée*. Exaggerated visual and auditory moments are paramount to Jeunet's film because the more powerful one sensation, the more likely it will be to set off a domino-effect of sensations, much like the dominoes that fall during the opening credits of the film. "[… U]ne sensation,

[86] Dayna Oscherwitz has examined Amélie's constructed letter arguing against its nostalgic value and extends her argument to the film as a whole by taking issue with their being fabrications rather than direct reflections of the past. She says, "like the letter Amélie constructs for Madeleine, Amélie is a fiction, a pastiche, made by fusing other fictional images. The film, therefore, cannot be nostalgic, precisely because the Paris it depicts is inscribed as never having existed, at least outside of the cinema" (510). I would argue that Oscherwitz misreads the meaning of nostalgia. The film is indeed like the letter; it presents "a resurgence of the past on the present" that rearranges itself to present a new image (Oscherwitz 509). However, this rearrangement is deliberate on Jeunet's part and necessary if he hopes to fulfill his desire to create a nostalgic film. In nostalgic memory, there is a "freedom to remember, to choose the narratives of the past and remake them" (Boym 354). The truth of the past fades away in nostalgic memory which privileges idealized, perhaps fictionalized, recollections.

pourvu qu'elle fût éprouvée avec force, renfermait beaucoup d'autres sensations, sinon toutes, comme si les sensations étaient imbriquées les unes dans les autres, découlaient les unes des autres et étaient attachées ensemble étroitement […]" (Desbiolles 103). Nostalgic memory is a product of the associative functions of sounds and images. Jeunet composes a film in which one gastronomic image unfolds onto another creating a menu of gastronomic memories, almost all of which are particular to France.

Small Pleasures

The French are known for taking pleasure in their food, even during the simplest culinary moments such as taking a cup of coffee. The importance of French food and culinary pleasures in Jeunet's narrative is clear from the film's beginning. The voice-over narration which commences the film and introduces the characters reveals that traditional French gastronomy defines Amélie and her world. For instance, Poulain is not only Amélie's family name, received from her father, it is also one of the oldest brands of French chocolate, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. Her name thus announces her sweetness and the confection-like nature of both her actions and the film. Amélie's gastronomic heritage comes also from her mother, Amandine Fouet, whose given name is identical to the culinary term *amandine* meaning a garnish of almonds and whose maiden name is French for *whisk*. Furthermore, the opening credits show a montage of images that allow the viewer to begin to know Amélie. Creating a sense of visual nostalgia, Jeunet has manipulated these images so that they appear dated, streaming across the screen as if from a 1960s or 1970s home movie reel that has

been tucked away in a box. In this nostalgic light, the first images of Amélie depict her as a child playing with cherries as earrings, eating raspberries off of her fingertips, and drinking a glass of milk. While these last three acts are not distinctly French, they do announce that from an early age, Amélie has taken pleasure in food.

Beginning in her childhood Amélie "cultive un goût particulier pour les tout petits plaisirs" of which two are culinary.[87] As the viewer watches a close-up shot of Amélie's hand slowly plunging into a sack of le Puy lentils, the narrator describes how she loves to feel the sensation of her hand sinking amongst the grains. Here, the sack of grains is especially French. Considered "un fleuron de la gastronomie française," the le Puy lentil was the first legume to attain the coveted *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* status.[88] A.O.C. status indicates that products come from a specific region and are produced under certain standards and regulations which guarantee quality. Moreover, production standards for A.O.C. products are based in culinary traditions and sometimes date back centuries, thus also serving as reminders of France's culinary heritage.[89]

Foods which evoke a specific *terroir* are integral to Jeunet's construction of nostalgia in the film because they have an important cultural value for the French. They symbolize quality of taste which "découle d'une interaction intelligente entre l'homme et l'environment" (Chevrier 132). These products form an opposition to mass-produced, industrialized foods because they contribute to maintaining and reinforcing "le respect

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[87] While Amélie's third *petit plaisir*, skipping stones at the Canal St. Martin, is not culinary, it evokes filmic nostalgia by referencing Marcel Carné's 1938 film *Hôtel du nord* in which the canal is visible. Additionally, in 1934, Jean Vigo used the canal as a backdrop for much of his film, *L'Atalante*.

[88] See the website "La Lentille vert du Puy."

[89] For more information on the significance and meaning of *terroir*, see Chapter One and my discussion of *terroir* in Marcel Rouff's *La vie et la passion de Dodi-Bouffant, gourmet*.

d'une gestion harmonieuse de l'environnement, de la biodiversité, des paysages" and fortify the social fabric, all of which are important to sustainable development in the twenty-first century (Chevrier 132). Emphasizing A.O.C. products linked to *terroir*, Jeunet evokes the timelessness of the French culinary tradition which stretches back to the very beginnings of the nation and will continue to reach forward into tomorrow.

This particular "petit plaisir" belongs not only to Amélie, but is commonly shared. While cooking a dinner for friends, Maryline Desbiolles' narrator in *La seiche* comments, "J'ai toujours eu grand plaisir à fourrer mes mains dans le riz, à le malaxer" (45). The adjective *toujours* suggests that this is a pleasure stretching back to childhood and that has stayed with her even as an adult. The narrator's use of the past tense suggests she is reminiscing for a beloved pastime. In another example, Marie Rouanet suggests in her culinary memoire, *Mémoires du goût* (2004), that the sensation of sinking a hand into piles of small grains is a common pleasure:

> Qui n'a pas plongé la main dans le blé, dans les haricots en vrac, subrepticement, quand le tiroir était encore ouvert et avant que la vitrine ne vienne faire écran ? Qui ne connaît pas cette sensation d'une masse qui se referme froide et lourde comme le mercure sur les doigts ? (92)

Her use of questions is rhetorical, emphasizing the universality of the desire to feel small grains enclosing around your fingertips. This universality helps create a sense of collectivity and belonging because it provides a common frame of reference for viewers. Individual memories which many people share foster a sense of collective nostalgia and belonging. Viewers can identify with Amélie, who despite her eccentricities, is grounded in the everyday and has the same memories and pleasures as any other person.

Jeunet uses another close-up shot to portray Amélie's second gastronomic *petit plaisir*, the moment when she cracks "la croûte d'une crème brûlée avec le point de la petite cuillère." The *crème brûlée* occupies an entire frame as the camera rests on the image. The only movement in the shot is of the spoon crashing down upon the solid, golden crust. Appealing to another sensory experience besides the visual, Jeunet accentuates the sound of the cracking, burnt sugar crust. This crust, and the rich, creamy custard lying underneath distinctly summon up France, a fact comprehensible in its always untranslated name.[90]

Image 3.1: Cracking the *crème brûlée*'s hard, sugar crust

Jeunet's repeated use of *petits plaisirs* as a means of identifying characters resonates with Philippe Delerm's notion of *plaisirs minuscules*. Published in 1997, just four years before *Amélie* graced the screen, Delerm's *La première gorgée de bière et autres plaisirs minuscules* is a series of *récits* or short narratives recounting the inherent

[90] The origin of crème brûlée is unclear. While the first printed recipe for the dish appears in *Le Cuisinier Royal et Bourgeois* by François Massialot in 1691, similar versions of the dish appeared in England in the fifteenth century (Gershenson). Despite the fact that this may not be a dessert belonging distinctly to French cuisine, most (perhaps nearly all) of its consumers believe it to be. Today, it is a staple on menus across France and in French restaurants the world over.

joys of simple, quotidian acts. John Westbrook characterizes Delerm's collection as a "bucolic and nostalgic bestseller" (425). What is important in Delerm's work and its relation to my argument here is the prevalence that food and culinary spaces play in the narrative. Like Jeunet, Delerm uses essentially French gastronomic moments as the foundation of pleasure such as the early morning journey to buy freshly baked croissants or the selection of *pâtisseries* and carrying them home as if on parade.[91] Not all of Delerm's culinary pleasures are distinctly French, but they do point to the importance of food and eating in the quest for finding joy in the present moment.

Both Jeunet and Delerm use an economy of style and invite the audience into the narrative. In his film, Jeunet relies on the simple, static close-up shot, framing singular objects and actions to focus the viewer's attention upon the food object. Fred Davis has noted that in twentieth-century representational painting, "a photograph-like freezing of movement" and the "tendency to outline objects sharply so that they stand out 'in memory' perhaps even more clearly than they did in 'real life'" are common strategies allowing the artist to communicate nostalgia to the viewer (83). The image of Amélie holding her spoon, ready to crack the crust of the *crème brûlée* is indicative of this technique. The shot is photographic; Amélie looks directly at the camera and cunningly holds up her spoon, smiling at the audience, increasing both her culinary anticipation and the viewers. The next shot, which is of the *crème brûlée* itself, is also a static close-up. Dudley Andrew contends that each of these filmic moments "registers a

[91] Other gastronomic moments upon which Delerm focuses in the collection of *récits* include the first drink of beer from a glass, the smell of apples in the fall, drinking a glass of port, helping to shell peas, and reading the newspaper over breakfast on a Sunday morning.

minute dramatic achievement distinctly heard and felt as a membrane gives way to deliberate pressure" (43). By using this technique in two immediate shots, Jeunet compounds their effect.

While Jeunet relies on cinematographic techniques, Delerm employs a modicum of language and the form of the *récit* to limit and focus his work. Seldom do his passages extend beyond three or four pages of text. He uses short paragraphs and simple sentence structures which also render the narrative highly accessible. Delerm amplifies the collective nature of the pleasures through his use of the ambiguous pronoun *on*. *On* signifies at once the individual (through its third-person singular value) and the collective (through its indefinite collective value) (Cavallero 148-149).

All of the moments which Jeunet and Delerm represent in their narratives point to a certain collectivity because they are commonly shared experiences which, in many cases, have become clichéd. Westbrook suggests that these small pleasures have an inherent ability to cultivate community (429) because they provide the opportunity for "emotional communion in clichés and [of finding] our authenticity in the commonplace" (428). The use of clichés allows Jeunet and Delerm to present viewers and readers with widely-recognizable situations and objects, offering a sense of collective identification with the nostalgia they seek to impart. Even if nostalgia may necessitate a personal connection (Davis 8), clichés, and in this case, culinary clichés, create common points of memory which can unite the French in a collective nostalgia. In *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, Jeunet relies upon French gastronomic clichés to construct his nostalgic vision and compounds them, layering one on top of another as the film

progresses. After all, why wouldn't a French girl delight in *crème brûlée*, have a last name that doubles as a brand of chocolate, and work in a Montmartre café?

Culinary Space

From Amélie's family origins to the idiosyncratic pleasures she attains from food, it is clear that food occupies a central role in the life of Jeunet's heroine. It is unsurprising, therefore, that she takes a job in the café des Deux Moulins upon moving to Paris. It is only natural that Amélie would want to work in the food industry given her love of and close association with food. Furthermore, the café provides Amélie an instant community into which she can insert herself. The café is

> […] un lieu où l'on va pour boire *en compagnie* et où l'on peut instaurer des relations de familiarité fondées sur la mises en suspens des censures, des conventions et des convenances qui sont de mise dans les échanges entre étrangers […] le café populaire est une compagne […] dans laquelle on s'intègre. (Bourdieu 204)

The café space establishes an instant community into which we can freely integrate ourselves in part due to a sense of familiarity that pervades the atmosphere. The viewer has the impression that everyone who enters the Deux Moulins knows each other because of the jokes they share and the informal way in which they speak to each other. Each person in the café knows the current gossip and intimate details about each other's lives.

In some cases, café regulars become so familiar with one another that they no longer need words to communicate. For instance, in Philippe Claudel's short novel recounting a man's fond recollections of growing up in his grandfather's café, *Le Café de*

l'Excelsior (1999), the café goers develop a bond deeper than friendship and comradery: "C'est comme s'ils voyaient au fond d'eux-mêmes, dans une transparence que les langages, fussent-ils maniés par les plus habiles littérateurs, ne parviennent jamais à surfiler" (26). Transcending language, within the walls of the café, common familiarity becomes intimacy, be it among friends or lovers. Indeed, the owner of les Deux Moulins in *Amélie* says the recipe for love is to take two regulars and let them stew for a while.[92]

Jeunet repeatedly emphasizes the café as a place of safety and intimacy throughout the film. In one instance, gastronomy and nostalgia collide when Dominique Bretodeau ventures out to buy his weekly roast chicken. On the way to make his purchase, he finds his box of childhood treasures, transporting him back in time and causing him to feel an overwhelming sense of nostalgia which he lives out inside of a neighborhood café. In the café, standing next to Amélie at the bar, he is able to express his sentimentality; the café is a safe place for him in which he can voice his most intimate secrets and his fear of not being able to reconnect with his estranged daughter.[93] At another point in the film, after Amélie cunningly arranges for Nino Quincompoix to meet the photo machine repairman, whose identity he seeks, she observes the encounter hidden away inside a café in the train station. Sinking behind

[92] In his study of the Paris café in the nineteenth century, W. Scott Haine shows that cafés may have actually contributed to the increase in the number of weddings throughout the course of the century. Marriage contracts in 1860, 1880, and 1900 reveal that, after family members and friends, café owners were most common witnesses to marriage ceremonies (Haine 45). Cafés were integral to working-class courtship because they provided a space outside of work in which men and women could meet rather freely (Haine 47). These numbers correspond to the rise in the number of cafés in Paris that occurred in the aftermath of *Haussmannisation* around mid-century (see Haine).

[93] At the café, Bretodeau orders two cognacs. This is another distinctly French product with the AOC status which reinforces cognac's ties to terroir and history.

the window of the café, she is safe from discovery. In the contemporary, bustling city, the café is a place of security and belonging.

Amélie and Dominique Bretodeau are not the only figures from contemporary French narratives that find solace within the space of the café. For the regulars who frequent Claudel's Café de l'Excelsior, the café "formait une enclave oubliée contre laquelle les rumeurs du monde, et ses agitations, paraissaient se rompre à la façon des hautes vagues sur l'étrave d'un navire" (9). But, the café provides more than a place of escape; it is "le forum où l'on vient éprouver sa verve, fortifier ses espérances et guérir quelques amertumes" (Lecoq 874). When contemporary anxieties become too much to bear, one need only visit the neighborhood café to restore oneself and one's confidence to face what lies ahead.

In the intimacy and safety of the neighborhood café, the space becomes a second home. This is especially true for Amélie, who, the narrator explains, not only works in the café, but "*vit* parmi ses collègues et les habitués du café" (emphasis mine). For her, the café is a home away from home. It exists in contrast to her apartment, a place of almost extreme solitude, where the kitchen table is always set for one. Jeunet amplifies the solitude of Amélie's kitchen by allowing her to look down on the apartment of Monsieur Dufayel, whose brittle bone condition has forced him to eat every meal by himself. A simple dinner of buttered pasta and salad sits atop both of their dinner tables, marking them as alone and unite them in their solitude.

Les Deux Moulins is full of type characters that one would find in a traditional neighborhood café. There is Suzanne,[94] the owner with an exotic past; Georgette, the cigarette-selling hypochondriac; Gina, a waitress plagued by a jilted lover Joseph, a paranoiac; Philomène, a well-traveled airline stewardess; and Hipolito, the proverbial failed writer who grapples with his forever unfinished and depressing novel recalling Sartre's *La Nausée*. Together, these characters distill Parisian eccentricities. They form a microcosm within which an equally enigmatic Amélie can live.[95] She has a place in this pre-established community because she fulfills a role. She is the do-gooder. As a waitress she serves others, bringing them sustenance and happiness, much like she does in her series of good deeds.

Hipolito is the most iconic of all the café regulars, recalling the relationship between the Parisian café and the author which dates back to the eighteenth century. Hipolito's presence is central to Jeunet's sense of reminiscence because "[…] l'image de l'auteur qui compose dans une salle de café relève, pour une bonne part, de la légende" of the café" (Lecoq 876). Authors and artists have been habitual café denizens since its advent. Voltaire, Charles Baudelaire, André Breton, and Jean-Paul Sartre are just a few of the many writers who have found inspiration at the city's cafés. Sadly, the days of meeting Sartre at les Deux Magots are past. Jeunet's visual rendering of les Deux

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[94] Claire Maurier, the actress who plays Suzanne, was also cast in the role of Antoine Doinel's mother in François Truffaut's iconic film, *Les 400 coups*. Jeunet also pays homage to Truffaut with his direct reference to *Jules et Jim*, a film which Fred Davis and Andrew Dudley suggest is nostalgic itself (Davis 90; Dudley 35). Through this casting choice and film reference, Jeunet nods distinctly in the direction of the French New Wave.

[95] In Alain Gerber's 2012 novel, *Le Central*, the narrator depicts the many citizens of and visitors to a café who create a sort of *comédie humaine* in miniature. The space of the café, according to the narrator, is a space for everyone – friends, lovers, strangers, the sad, the happy, and the nonplused.

Moulins is, however, more akin to les Deux Magots (note the similar structure of the two cafés' names) in the 1920s than it is to the tourist-filled café of today's Montmartre.

The legend of the café contributes to and is a result of the space's categorization as a *lieu de mémoire*, or a site in which French memory, and consequently French history, is born and thrives. In his foundational text, *Les lieux de mémoire*, Pierre Nora connects memory to spaces, emblems, people, moments, and objects, grounding nationalized perceptions of history in both concrete and conceptual ideas, places, and things. In the work, Nora and his colleagues from various academic fields compile entries detailing all of the *lieux* in an attempt to reconnect the French nation with its history and tradition via sites that are significant to collective memory. Among these entries are three gastronomic entities – the café, vineyards and wine, and the whole of gastronomy.[96] To exist as a *lieu de mémoire*, a site of memory, the item at hand must possess three qualities – it must have a material representation, it must have "une aura symbolique," and it must be functional such as being part of a ritual (Nora 37). These sites combine to shape French identity and psyche dating to the Middle Ages and are, indeed, "a synonym of national identity" (Kritzman, *In Remembrance* xiii). Lawrence Kritzman argues that the desire to find a collective memory in these institutions is a symptom of a certain "*fin de siècle* melancholia" that pervaded France as the twentieth century came to a close (*In Remembrance* xiii). Finding France in a series of places, moments, and objects is an imaginative gesture resulting in an idea of the nation that is founded upon the nostalgic gaze into the past. France finds itself mourning time and

[96] I reference Georges Durand's entry on "Le vigne et le vin" in my first chapter and Pascal Ory's entry on "La gastronomie" in the Introduction.

institutions gone by, but eases its sense of loss through nostalgic memory. If the café carries weight in helping to define French identity, as Benoit Lecoq suggests in his essay on the café as a site of memory, then the nostalgia that inhabits and surrounds the café is an essentially French nostalgia. Memories that result from this space contribute to the construction of the past and ideas about personal and national history.

Chantal Thomas plays with the idea of the café as a site of memory in her autobiographical work, *Cafés de la mémoire* (2008). Thomas recalls her childhood, her time at school, and family memories via cafés in different cities, beginning with the Café de Turin in Nice. Each café leads her down a different path and allows her to access different pockets of memory. Thomas suggests that cafés are a privileged site of memory "puisque c'est au café que l'on apprend à vivre" (43). Observing the goings-on of a café provides access to the spectacle of life. The casual café-goer can witness all of life's joys and heartaches over a cup of coffee or a glass of wine.

In his entry "Le Café" in *Les lieux de mémoire*, Benoît Lecoq names famous cafés that have contributed to the café becoming a *lieu de mémoire* for the French people. To this list we may now add les Deux Moulins. Due to the success of *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, les Deux Moulins is now a common tourist attraction, a veritable pilgrimage site for fans of the film. "Before it came out, the owner of the café where Amélie works, the Deux Moulins, was going to sell it. Now, it's so crowded, he'll never sell" (Jeunet in Zalewski). The visitors to les Deux Moulins perhaps hope to take part not only in the magic of a film location, but also of all that the space embodies – a fundamental Frenchness reaching back through the centuries.

Jeunet's visual rendering of the les Deux Moulins contributes to the mythification of the café and its timelessness. From the first image of the establishment, Jeunet crafts a shot in which the café occupies most of the frame and has a central position. The camera stops on the image, allowing it to penetrate the viewer. This lack of camera movement contrasts with the often quick-moving pace of the film, emphasizing the café's presence. Jeunet uses a slight low-angle shot, heightening the café so that the audience must look upwards. This elevated location gives power to the space. Jeunet further contrasts this image from others in the film by using a long shot to create depth of field rather than using a medium close-up or close-up, the types of shots which tend to dominate the film. With depth of field, the café stands out against its background and emphasizes the chilly, dull grayness of the surrounding city. Bruno Delbonnel, the film's cinematographer, has said that the intention with the film's coloring was to give "a very warm, golden look" to focal points, allowing them to stand out against the natural gray of Paris (in Silberg, 20). Les Deux Moulins seduces its viewers and potential patrons. A glowing luminescence comes from inside. The red neon lights and red awnings carry the café's interior warmth to the street outside.[97] Lastly, the café sits on a street corner, refusing absorption into the gray buildings around it. Through his use of color and camera angle, Jeunet visually exalts the café, giving it a seductive and mythical presence.

[97] To create this effect, Jeunet perhaps draws on Zola's depiction of the shops around les Halles in *Le ventre de Paris*. Zola's narrator describes "les boutiques rouges, avec leurs becs de gaz allumés, trouaient les ténèbres, le long des maisons grises" (28). Jeunet, in fact, has said, "Avec le restaurant Chartier, le Jardin des plantes, les Halles… j'ai toujours rêvé de voir le 'ventre' de Paris" (in Rouyer and Vassé 9).

Image 3.2: The Café des Deux Moulins

Another culinary space which is central to the film's nostalgia is the Maison Collignon, the neighborhood *épicerie*. Jeunet first presents the *épicerie* in the same manner that he unveils les Deux Moulins, using the same camera angle, long shot, and lack of movement. The *épicerie's* vivid green and red coloring makes it stand out against the rainy, gray background similar to the contrast of les Deux Moulins and its surrounding grayness. Golden, glowing warmth emanates from the shop on the dismal day and it appears as if the fruits and vegetables are a source of light. Like the café, the *épicerie* occupies a corner space on the street. At the head of an intersection where the road becomes a "Y", pedestrians and viewers must confront the shop and go around it.

The *épicerie's* central location on the street exemplifies its importance to the neighborhood and culinary tradition. Visiting the local *épicerie* and sharing in this gossip is part of the art of everyday living and a means of keeping past food systems and spaces alive (Giard 105-109). Patronizing such small culinary boutiques is a means of satisfying nostalgia because it provides access to traditional foodways and to the history

of the neighborhood. Around the establishment "se déploie le registre de l'*autrefois*, mot qui assume une fonction mythique en insistant sur l'évanouissement d'un passé désormais révolu mais chargé de références symboliques" (Giard 105). One of these symbolic references is familiarity which pervades the atmosphere around the *épicerie* in *Amélie*. A familiarity surrounds the space. The name of the shop, la Maison Collignon, overtly designates a sense of home and belonging through the word *maison*. Additionally, Collignon, the proprietor, knows Amélie's order, "une figue et trois noisettes, comme d'habitude," and has a nickname for her. This sense of familiarity extends through the constant presence of patrons gathered outside ready to share neighborhood gossip.

Image 3.3: La Maison Collignon

Collignon himself serves as a bank of historical knowledge and a sign of permanence. The history of the neighborhood comes alive through him because this is where he has always lived. His parents are able to provide Amélie with Bretodeau's name and his mother knows every individual and family that has lived in Amélie's building for the past half-century. Collignon can offer Amélie both "une botte

d'asperges et les archives du quartier." In the most fundamental of ways, Collignon gives life to his customers. He provides them sustenance *and* keeps his patrons alive by remembering them and their stories.

While most of the film occurs in the Parisian neighborhood of Montmartre, Jeunet changes the setting of the film to situate the life of Dominique Bretodeau, and of all the streets in Paris, Jeunet chooses the intensely historical and culinary space of the rue Mouffetard to do so. Today, as it has always been, the rue Mouffetard is known for its many restaurants, its numerous small specialty shops (*boulangeries*, *boucheries*, *charcuteries*, *pâtisseries*, *fromageries*, etc), and its daily food market. In his memoir depicting his years in Paris, Ernest Hemingway describes the street as "that wonderful narrow crowded market street" (3). As Bretodeau makes his ritual Tuesday walk from his apartment at 27 rue Mouffetard to buy his roast chicken, he passes various food stalls and restaurants. The way in which Jeunet films Bretodeau walking through the street portrays the narrowness Hemingway remembers and creates a sense of intimacy among the various gastronomic points of reference.

The rue Mouffetard recalls a culinary past because it is one of the few spaces in Paris that has not experienced a great amount of change in the past century. Colin Jones describes the nostalgic environment of this street as a place where it is possible to immerse oneself in the idyllic image of a Paris of the past (463). Not only has time stood still on this street, the rue Mouffetard has a deep connection to the very origins of Paris; it follows the path of what was once one of the most important streets in Roman Lutetia

(C. Jones 203). To be on the rue Mouffetard is to directly access the past that Jeunet must elsewhere work to create.[98]

One final culinary space which invades the film returns the viewer to winding cobbled streets of Montmartre – the rue Lamarck which finds itself underneath the shadows of the Sacré Coeur.[99] Jeunet emphasizes the culinary aspect of this street when Amélie gives a blind man a sensory-infused tour of the bustling market day. She starts off in front of a *boucherie* passing both a *pâtisserie* and a *boucherie chevaline*. She then moves behind the fruit and vegetable market. From there, she passes a woman selling ice cream, a *charcuterie*, and a *fromagerie*. The tour ends with the sight and smell of roast chickens turning on spits. Like the *épicerie*, these specialty shops evoke the past, a gastronomic *autrefois*, and resist the present, "toujours coupable d'un *oubli*, ou d'une mise à mort" (Giard 105-106). The market through which Amélie passes is highly symbolic because the local market is a "force vitale alimentant" to French cultural identity (Giard 305). Amélie's pace of speaking and walking contribute to the

[98] Jeunet's visual style is unique and makes his films distinct. Jeunet's own cinematic origins are in animation, a genre that is highly stylized and controlled. When Jeunet made the switch from working with animation to working with live actors, he maintained many of the tics he developed at the start of his career, namely the need to control and construct each shot. In fact, Jeunet lays claim to being a control freak (in Haun 16). Jeunet's stylized composition of each frame is evident in all of his works from Delicatessen and La cité des enfants perdus to his 2013 L'extravagant voyage du jeune et prodigieux T.S. Spivet. This manipulation means that every shot has meaning. Dudley Andrew contends that because of the sheer number of separate shots in the film (Andrew counts over 300 in the 25-minute prologue), each must present a single idea with no extraneous or competing action (41). Thus, the viewer can read each frame as communicating a certain, deliberate ideal. Nothing in Jeunet's films is extraneous. The exaggeration of colors and the use of special effects make Amélie fabulous, as its title suggests.

[99] In François Loyer's chapter "Le Sacré cœur de Montmartre" in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, he draws our attention to the color of the Sacré Cœur which "contraste violemment avec les teintes grises ou ocrées du paysage parisien par la blancheur immaculée de sa robe - expression à la fois symbolique et plastique d'une formidable intensité d'expression. Montmartre, en effet, n'est pas en pierre de Paris (dont la couleur est beige, tirant vers jaune), mais dans une pierre blanche au grain extrêmement fin" (453). In its natural state the Sacré cœur is visually what Jeunet wished to show of Paris. Like Jeunet's vividly colored and photograph-like images of Paris, the Sacré Coeur and Montmartre, the setting of the film, exist apart from the surrounding whole of Paris.

bustling nature of the street which Jeunet amplifies through his use of quick-tempoed music. Jeunet further compounds the energy in the market by crafting shots in which the image of Amélie and the blind man are cut off or obscured by the various vendors and stalls. The street is so busy that a clear picture is impossible to establish. Consequently, the shots which Jeunet frames here are in contrast to every other scene in the film because elsewhere Jeunet focuses the camera on the subject of each frame and doesn't allow any obstruction to a clear shot. Moreover, the tour of the rue Lamarck is one of the few times that the camera portrays the daily movement of Parisians in the film.

All of these individual culinary spaces find their home within the larger setting of Paris, itself a marker of history and tradition. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson describes the French capital as "the exemplary culinary space" (*Taste*, 44) because it is here where all of France's culinary wonders unite. With a reputation that dates back to at least the sixteenth century and the French royal courts, Paris is a central figure in French gastronomy and culinary history. A walk on the Left Bank can lead a curious gastronome past le Procope and la Tour d'Argent, two of the oldest restaurants in the French capital as well as past the famous literary and artistic hubs including the Deux Magots, the Brasserie Lipp, and the Café de Flore. These culinary outposts preserve the past and are a sign of permanence in an increasingly changing world where restaurants are a dime a dozen.

Jeunet's portrayal of Paris is indicative of an artistic trend at the turn of the twenty-first century which makes use of the city as a vehicle for nostalgia. Tamar Katz

contends that “culture at the turn of the twenty-first century wishes to retrieve a lost city. We do not, it appears, want ‘facts’; rather we need to witness any past to make it ours” (848). Katz suggests that there is a contemporary desire to witness an ideal rather than acknowledge past truths in a cityscape. Though she writes about literary representations of New York, Katz’s argument is applicable to Paris, as well. Visitors and tourists would like to believe that walking the city streets will provide access to a certain past. In Paris, the past that so many seek is the one mythologized in photography, cinema, and literature. Woody Allen experimented with the possibility of return in his 2011 film *Midnight in Paris* in which a young writer, wandering empty Doisneau-esque streets in the Paris night, is invited to spend the evening with Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway and the Fitzgerald’s, Luis Buñuel and Salvidore Dalì. Dream becomes reality for Allen’s protagonist. Both *Midnight in Paris* and *Amélie* support Rosemary Wakeman’s contention that “the master narrative about Paris, the meaningful metaphors and emotionally laden visual imagery point to a deep yearning to recapture French virtues in the capital’s traditional landscape and architectural forms” (116). Buildings and monuments are vestiges of the past and stand as signs of resistance to the changes of contemporary modernity. For instance, in the Marais neighborhood buildings date to the Middle Ages. In the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century, the city becomes a treasure box. And as Jeunet’s camera eye offers an expansive view over Paris from the hills of Montmartre, the narrator proclaims, “Le temps n’a rien changé,” a statement almost believable as the wide-angle camera looms over Paris.

Horsemeat, Oysters, and Champagne

If culinary spaces create the backdrop for much of *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, traditionally French foods permeate the film and appear repeatedly contributing to Jeunet's use of nostalgic imagery. All of the foods captured within the camera's frame have a symbolic value which makes reference to France's idealized gastronomic past. The le Puy lentil and the *crème brûlée* which I have discussed above are two of these products. According to Olivier Assouly, products such as these are *nourritures nostalgiques*; they belong to a group of "produits et des spécialités issus des traditions locales ou régionales" which are capable of evoking history and tradition (*Nourritures* 12). Foods in general, and *nourritures nostalgiques* in particular, help make sense of the world because they form connections between fiction and reality, myth and history (Assouly, *Nourritures* 13). Jeunet makes use of this duality. He films food in quotidian circumstances but does so using techniques which emphasize its symbolic value.

One of the techniques that Jeunet uses to emphasize particular foods in his film is repetition either by way of images or verbal mention of a particular dish or product such as horsemeat or the roast chicken. References to the first, horsemeat, occur several times throughout the duration of the *Amélie*, one of which the casual viewer may never notice. As Amélie gives the blind man a tour of the market on the rue Lamarck, she quickly and briefly mentions the golden horse head missing an ear above the *boucherie chevaline* which the camera fleetingly captures. A *boucherie chevaline* is a shop that specializes in horsemeat. Beginning with the first *boucherie chevaline* which opened in Paris in 1866, law required these shops to have the symbolic horse head

above the entrance (Weil 47, Gade 3). Deliberate in all of his choices, Jeunet's glimpse of the golden bust is of prime importance in his attempt to evoke a culinary past because of the rarity of this sight. Today, stumbling upon a *boucherie chevaline* is highly uncommon, though as late as 1962 there were at least 559 of these shops in Paris alone (Tessier 41). In 1866 the French government legalized consumption of horsemeat or hippophagy out of a fear that the French, at least in comparison to the English, were not consuming enough meat (Otter 80, see also Farb and Armelagos 170).[100] Horsemeat provided a cheap and healthy alternative to beef and the government thus marketed it to the lower-middle classes (Otter 84-85). Because of the success in making horsemeat marketable and the French ability to overcome the taboo of hippophagy over a century ago, Kari Weil argues that consuming horsemeat has become, over time, representative of French national identity (47). In fact, in Western Europe, this acceptance and practice of eating horsemeat has been the greatest in both France and Belgium (Gade 2). So, in the second reference to hippophagy in *Amélie* when Madame Suzanne voices her aversion to the meat, her culinary preference appears as strange because it marks her as an exception to the others who presumably have no difficulty eating horsemeat and remain silent regarding the practice.

The accepting French attitude toward hippophagy was clear during the 2013 *affaire de la viande de cheval*. While citizens and governments from other Western European nations voiced their horror at having unknowingly consumed horses in frozen

[100] Farb and Armelagos argue that the dramatic rise in hippophagy during the German siege of Paris in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1871 significantly contributed to the French ability to overcome aversions to consuming horsemeat (170). During this time, the French consumed over 70,000 horses (Farb and Armelagos 170) and many other exotic animals from the Jardin des Plantes to stave off extreme famine (see Spang, *"And They Ate the Zoo"*).

meals marked as “pure beef,” the French were more horrified by the dishonesty of producers and the knowledge gaps in the food production chain. British consumers felt disgusted but French consumers felt betrayed. In response to the gastronomic scandal, the French press called for more government oversight, better package labeling, increased consumer action, and a return to traditional methods of food procurement and preparation. Rather than buy cheap, pre-packaged lasagna or hamburger patties, the products in which horsemeat was the most prevalent, why not cook dinner from scratch with ingredients bought at the grocery store or from local shops? Jean-Yves Nau ended his journalistic account of the scandal urging a revolt against an increasingly industrialized food system: “Reste aussi la possibilité de cuisine soi-même ses aliments. Et même de confectionner soi-même et ses lasagnes et sa sauce bolognaise. L’agroalimentaire et la grande distribution ne sont pas toujours une fatalité. Et la révolte pourrait bientôt se manifester” (533). Likewise, François Collart Dutilleul asked his readers in *Le Monde* to imagine a market which privileges the consumer and the product through total transparency. These views of cooking and the food supply appear almost utopic in today’s pre-packaged world, and are inherently nostalgic; they incite the reader to recall a time when people cooked meals from scratch with products they bought from vendors and farmers they knew on a first-name basis.

Another of the quotidian French foods that Jeunet depicts and which reoccurs throughout the film is the *poulet rôti*, the roast chicken, a dish which, in France, has attained a somewhat mythic status. Though he makes no formal reference to the semiotician, Rémy Lucas works from the Barthesian conception of *mythologies* – objects

or practices that function as signs upon which bourgeois society layers significance in an effort to shape the world and define their identity – to define a menu of dishes that the French have codified and ritualized throughout their culinary history. Lucas argues that the roast chicken is one of these "mythologies gourmandes" (6). Its status as a mythical dish anoints the roast chicken with the power to "expliquer notre monde, une histoire qui nous donne une certaine connaissance du réel, une narration qui joue avec la forme et le sens, le signifiant et le signifié, et qui peut nous révéler une part de nous-même" (Lucas 7). Eating the roast chicken "ravive la mémoire collective et stimule l'imaginaire" (Lucas 13). The roast chicken, along with other mythically French dishes which Lucas describes (including the *gigot d'agneau aux flagelots* I discuss in Chapter Two), is a repository of French history and self-knowledge. Barthes would argue that the equalizing power of roast chicken – that all members of French society eat it regardless of socio-economic status or regional heritage – concretizes the dish's status as a cultural myth. Furthermore, the dish has multiple significations which contribute to its mythology. It has withstood the tests of time, defying the industrialized food system. Most importantly for the study at hand, the roast chicken is a symbol of community and family.

Jeunet embraces the mythical symbolism of the roast chicken and amplifies its importance through the character of Dominique Bretodeau. Along with seeing numerous roast chickens on the rue Mouffetard and the rue Lamarck, the narrator explains that Bretodeau gets from this dish "son plus grand plaisir" which is to "décortiquer la carcasse encore brulante avec les doigts en commençant par les sots-l'y-

laisse." The *sots-l'y-laisse* are the oysters – small, succulent pieces of dark meat found along the bird's backbone and often overlooked by the unskilled carver. The very name for the oysters in French exemplifies their prize-value. In French, *sots-l'y-laisse* means something only a fool would leave behind. The *sots-l'y-laisse* are for the sage, the experienced, the real connoisseurs of the *poulet rôti* and exemplify that even the most quotidian meal contains a prize within it.

An essential aspect of the roast chicken's mythical status in France is its association with ritual consumption. Bretodeau's joy in finding the *sots-l'y-laisse* begins long before actually eating them. Buying a roast chicken every Tuesday morning is a ritual practice for Bretodeau which extends to the carving of the bird. In filming Bretodeau's act, Jeunet emphasizes the sounds of the hustle and bustle of the market street and the sight of the golden chicken carcasses rotating on the rotisserie spit. In a fast-paced film that jumps from shot to shot, it is significant that the narrator takes the time to describe how Bretodeau carves the bird, during which Jeunet provides a close-up shot of the act. Bretodeau's pleasure from this meal is all-encompassing as it begins with the journey to purchase the bird and ends with the picking apart of the carcass to find the highly coveted oysters. The ritual also elicits a total pleasure because it necessitates each of the senses.[101] Eschewing the fork, Bretodeau caresses the bird, picking it apart with his fingertips while simultaneously smelling it. Finally, he slips the

[101] That rituals are an integral part of cooking and dining goes without saying, but a recent study suggests that ritual behaviors that surround food, cooking, and eating actually contribute to and enhance the consumption, heightening sensations and increasing enjoyment and, perhaps, other emotions (see Vohs et al.).

steaming pieces of meat into his mouth as the juices from the bird run over and through his fingers.

Later in the film, reunited with his family, Bretodeau shares the pleasures of the roast chicken with his grandson and the chicken earns its place as a symbol of community and family. Roast chicken is meant to be shared amongst diners, cut into sections to be distributed around the table. Partaking of the same whole bird, the diners unite in communion. Here, united with his family, Bretodeau no longer needs to eat an entire chicken by himself, but can share the dish as it was meant to be shared. In this scene, the camera frames Bretodeau demonstrating the carving process to his grandson who watches the chicken with glee and anticipation. Bretodeau passes on culinary knowledge by showing how to carve the bird and where to find the *sots-l'y-laisse*. In doing so, he creates a culinary memory with his grandson, and perhaps initiates the beginnings of future nostalgia for a new generation. In the background of the shot are the little boy's parents, Bretodeau's daughter and son-in-law, which the viewer sees only by looking past the chicken. Jeunet thus constructs a shot which concretizes the link between the meal and the family.

Jeunet's most emphatic use of food in *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* toys with the idea of a magic trick which adds to the fantastical atmosphere of Amélie's world. Making a delivery to Monsieur Dufayel, Lucien, the assistant *épicier*, unveils culinary luxuries from underneath everyday items. First, from the heart of an artichoke comes a truffle, a legendary culinary splendor. The truffle is a symbol of French *haute cuisine* and *terroir*, capable of growing only in specific climates. "For the French and for

chefs cooking in the French tradition, the finest truffle is the Périgord black truffle" (Renowden 47).[102] Truffles are known for their extreme rarity, exemplary taste, and exorbitant cost. Over time, because of these traits, and because the French believe the truffle to be an indicator of their exceptional *terroir*, truffles have achieved mythic status. They signify luxury, excellence, and distinction. They also exist in the collective memory. Jon D. Holtzman suggests that even foods which seldom find their way to the table are sometimes the foods which most powerfully evoke collective memory because of their symbolic value and because they exist in the imagination.[103] Thus, even if truffles are out of economic or geographic reach for some consumers, they may still elicit certain culinary dreams because of their symbolic value as a luxury product. Consequently, truffles awaken "souvenirs gourmands" in everyone (Brillat-Savarin 100). As Brillat-Savarin asks, "Qui n'a pas senti sa bouche se mouiller en entendant parler de *truffes à la provençale*" (Brillat-Savarin 101)?

In his last two acts of mouth-watering gastronomic magic, Lucien reveals equally French specialties. First, he lifts up the top of a can of tuna to reveal *foie gras de canard*. To underscore the particular Frenchness of this item, the words "produit de France" are emblazoned across the top and side of the can. This deliberate notation of origin intertwines the value of *foie gras* with a recognized culinary tradition coming from the Périgord region, like the truffles.

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[102] Because they only grow in specific climates and soils, truffles are a distinct regional specialty found in the depths of French soil. As if to insist upon the truffle's origin and its distinctive *terroir*, some vendors sell them uncleaned, with the earth still clinging to their bumpy skin (Renowden 48).

[103] See Holtzman's 2006 article "Food and Memory" in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*.

Lastly, a hollow bottle of detergent, a quotidian necessity, "magically transforms" into a bottle of champagne, a celebratory luxury item indicative of France. Champagne has symbolized France since before the Revolution. In 1736, Voltaire described a magnificent repast in his poem "Le Mondain" and said of the beverage, "De ce vin frais l'écume pétillante / De nos Français est l'image brillante." The effervescence of the wine imitates the liveliness of the French.

Kolleen Guy has argued that champagne is distinctly linked to French national identity and tradition because it "is 'rooted' in soil and history, connected with place, transcending time, and offering a genuine experience of France. Consumption of champagne provides natural access to an authentic, organic France through the intermediary of French *terroir*" (Guy 2).[104] The taste of *terroir* gives to the champagne, and to wines generally, its distinct flavors. The producer encourages the consumer to taste the various flavors the soil imparts to the grapes using descriptions and tasting notes on bottle labels. By doing so, he also prompts the consumer to think about the ground, soil, and history of the land. In the case of *le champagne* (the beverage) the consumer may conjure up memories and images of *la Champagne* (the region), the site of wars and discord since Roman times. While there is little, if anything, about war which renders nostalgia, the celebratory and festive function of champagne helps to recall the glories of French victory and survival and the celebratory rebirth of the nation after overcoming each obstacle.

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[104] For further reading on champagne see *La Féerie du Champagne: Rites et Symboles* by Michel Rachline and Don and Petie Kladstrup's work, *Champagne: How the World's Most Glamorous Wine Trimphed Over War and Hard Times*. Similar to Kolleen Guy's work, Pierre Boisard has written about the connection between Camembert and French national cultural identity in *Camembert: A National Myth*.

All three of these products have a direct link to *terroir* and, in contemporary society, to nostalgia. *Terroir* is founded upon historical and geographical themes, that over time, fall further from view.[105] Whereas Marcel Rouff's Dodin Bouffant was a part of the nation's pastoral heritage, living in the rolling French countryside, Amélie lives in the industrialized, post-modern French capital. Rouff's reliance on local products in *La vie et la passion de Dodin Bouffant, gourmet* is thus immediate while Jeunet's use of *terroir* attempts to recapture an idealized past. Jean-Claude Ribaut, a food critic for *Le Monde*, describes *terroir* as "a sort of lost paradise" (in Erlanger) evoking the idealistic employment of the term in the twenty-first century. In fact, nostalgic memory is often tied to the desire to resurrect a pre-industrialized, pre-globalized world which typically manifests itself in pastoral images (Katz 813). *Terroir* enables food producers to do just this. Laying claims to a local *terroir* implies not only a geographical association, but also insinuates traditional fabrication that comes from an otherwise unattainable combination of history and family savoir-faire.

Returning to Assouly's idea of *nourritures nostalgiques*, it becomes clear that Jeunet employs these symbol-laden foods as a means of national self-fashioning. Assouly claims that, "les nourritures nostalgiques traduisent fondamentalement nos espérances" (*Nourritures* 13). Jeunet takes care to not simply highlight food in his film; he clearly chooses iconic products and dishes of France that are part of France's collective memory and identity. Certain foods, such as these fundamentally French products, have a symbolic meaning so significant that they are emblematic of France as

[105] For a larger discussion of terroir, see Chapter 1.

a whole (Barthes, *Mythologies* 69-74) and of its cultural past. A food system is "the repository of traditions and of collective identity" (Montanari 133) and thus, individual foods and dishes evoke the nation as a whole. "Souvenirs qui jalonnent notre vie, les plats structurent notre goût, façonnent notre connaissance et nous renvoient à des légendes personnelles et partagées" (Lucas 4). Roast chicken, champagne, and *foie gras* are not just special to Jeunet's characters, they touch upon a larger gastronomic heritage in France of which all can take part and be proud, and in this sense, personal experience becomes part of the collective, national culinary heritage. Throughout the film, there is an absence of foreign products which grounds the foods Jeunet does capture in France and a particular *francité*. Choosing to highlight foods which evoke France and its culinary tradition, Jeunet, like Marcel Rouff did eight decades earlier, suggests that food is the ideal vehicle for calling upon the past as a means of shaping the future of the nation.

Past, Present, and Future

Jean-Pierre Jeunet's use of food and culinary space in *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* is highly emblematic of a trend uniting gastronomy and nostalgia within the narrative framework that arises at the turn of the twenty-first century. Between 1997 and 2008 there were at least seven gastronomic narratives in which nostalgia is an integral theme and upon which I have drawn throughout my analysis (*La première gorgée de bière et autres plaisirs minuscules* by Philippe Delerm, 1997; *La seiche* by Maryline Desbiolles, 1998; *Le Café de l'Excelsior* by Philippe Claudel, 1999; *Une*

gourmandise by Muriel Barbery, 2000; *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001; *Mémoires du goût* by Marie Rouanet, 2004; and *Cafés de la mémoire* by Chantal Thomas, 2008). The reason for this proliferation of similar narratives is twofold. It draws upon the ability of both gastronomy and nostalgia to connect past, present, and future, and it is a symptom of an époque's pervasive nostalgia.

Wide-spread idealization of the past arises out of the increasing homogenization of culture due to rapid globalization that took hold at the end of the twentieth century. The nineties in France mark a period in which identity was uncertain, and thus, so was a nation's future (Duruz 241). At the turn of the twenty-first century, France was finally beginning to come to terms with its diminishing importance and distinction on the political and cultural global stage. Feeling that its cultural identity was under threat, France had a nostalgic reflex. The French were no longer impelled by the nation's historic past, but by its remembered past (Revel, *Histoire* 8). They sought to build upon their history to reassert themselves via those cultural traits which had previously set them apart, namely gastronomy. On the dawn of a new century, nostalgic memories of what had been lost came to dominate French thought.[106]

Nostalgia helps people adapt to and confront rapid social changes such as those brought on by globalization and the consequent cultural dilution that nations believe to experience. Leo Spitzer suggests that it is, in fact, the only way to come to terms with a precarious present and an uncertain future: "When despair and uncertainty about the

[106] Boym and Wilson both argue that nostalgia is now more prevalent than ever before precisely because of globalization and perceived threats to identity (Boym xiv, Wilson 8).

future cast their shadow on the present, only a selective, debris-free, past remained as a potential anchor for personal and group stability and identity" (101). Works such as *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* and *La première gorgée de bière et autres plaisirs minuscules* have a particularly strong resonance with the French population of the early twenty-first century because it marks a period of "a nostalgic yearning for values that escape the complexities of globalized modernity" (Westbrook 433). Kitsch objects and culinary spaces, as I have shown above, provide access to a fixed moment in time. They give the impression that not everything does or will change, thus signifying an ideal permanence amidst a society in flux. Indeed, nostalgia is particularly common in the face of real and perceived threats to identity, agency, or community because it provides a way of rebelling "against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress" (Tannock 454, Boym, *Nostalgia* xv) which is increasingly fleeting.

The ephemerality of the modern world and a weariness towards progressive change inspired Charles Baudelaire to coin the word "modernity." In *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, Baudelaire defined the term as "le transitoire, le fugitive, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable" (1244). The modern world is ephemeral, existing only in the fleeting moment that Baudelaire captured so vividly in his poem "A une passante." Baudelaire wrote *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in the face of great change in the French capital. *Haussmannisation* was under way and the Parisian landscape was changing rapidly – entire swaths of the ancient city were

flattened and cleared away to cleanse Paris and make way for the *grands boulevards*.[107] Baudelaire lamented the drastic physical changes that the city suffered and preferred the Paris of his past.

In *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, Baudelaire suggests that nostalgia is a consequence of modernity. Reminiscence for perceivably happier days mediates the turmoil of change and loss.[108] In artistic forms modernity is manifest in childlike visions of the past and present:

> Et les choses renaissent sur le papier, naturelles et plus que naturelles, belles et plus que belles, singulières et douées d'une vie enthousiaste comme l'âme de l'auteur. La fantasmagorie a été extraite de la nature Tous les matériaux dont la mémoire s'est encombrée se classent, se rangent, s'harmonisent et subissent cette idéalisation forcée qui est le résultat d'une perception enfantine, c'est-à-dire d'une perception aiguë, magique à force d'ingénuité ! (Baudelaire 1243-1244)

The vocabulary of this passage is the vocabulary of nostalgia. What the artist portrays is born in memory. It is also heightened. The artistic image is more than beautiful, more natural than nature, and phantasmagoric. In a word, it is the perfect ideal of a reality born in childhood memory. Thus, to be able to understand modernity, one must be nostalgic.

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[107] Writing about urban planning and renewal in the twentieth century, Rosemary Wakeman also juxtaposes nostalgia and modernity. She describes changes to Paris as indicative of *nostalgic modernism*. She argues that, while shaping the French capital in the twentieth century, planners looked to the past as much as they considered the city's future (117). "Nostalgic modernism kept alive the idea of a necessary continuity in history. The past could be reused, reabsorbed, and redeemed within the context of progressive reform [… I]t offered a variant of modernization that was less brutal, more compromising with the city's heritage" (143). This argument is a testament to how nostalgia works to sharpen the rough edges of modernization by embracing vestiges of the past.

[108] For an example of how Baudelaire conveys the connection between nostalgia and modernity in his poetry, see "Le Cygne."

Mikhail Bakhtin calls the projection of an ideal future onto the past *historical inversion*. Bakhtin argues that historical inversion marks a narrative time shift in which *"*a thing that could and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the *future* is here portrayed as something out of the *past*" (*Forms of Time* 147). This "mythological and artistic thinking locates such categories as purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious condition of man and society and the like in the *past*" (*Forms of Time* 147). Bakhtin emphasizes that this narrative technique is particularly given to myths about a Golden Age. In this sense, though Bakhtin does not use the word himself, his conception of historical inversion is akin to nostalgia. The shifting of desires and ideals for the future into the past is integral to the construction of the future because this temporal shift makes everything "weightier, more authentic and persuasive" (*Forms of Time* 147). The displacement of desires into an imagined past renders the ideal more legitimate because it then passes as a lived experience that has already occurred. In carving a path for the future, the past, even in romanticized and quasi-fictional form, becomes a necessary touchstone exemplifying that the ideal is attainable.

Nations have long made use of nostalgia as a tool for building and institutionalizing national identity, and thus, nostalgia is a necessary tool in the process of national self-fashioning. Nostalgic ideals and myths appeal to broad spectrums of the population and thus are rallying forces that help that unite individuals and enable the formation of collective bodies such as the nation. "National identities are formed by the nostalgic freezing of a particular idealized moment which the enthusiast takes as a model to orient and anticipate the nation's future" (Steinwand 11). Because nostalgic

memory is highly selective and functions as an idealizing force, it results in a reconstruction and manipulation of the identity in which a person or group molds itself.

Considering France's precarious position atop the global culinary ladder, the turn towards culinary nostalgia goes beyond the artistic narrative, permeating society and politics.[109] One area in which France feels particularly threatened is in agriculture, an industry bound to the nation's sense of self. In the French psyche, the peasant farmer and his work have "long stood for the soul of the nation, evoking the deep-rooted cultural traditions and implantation in the national territory which define France, and the equilibrium which guarantees the health of society" (Rogers 62). Threats to French farmers and their well-being are akin to threats to the well-being of the nation-at-large. Because of the importance of agriculture to the French nation, it functions as a "crucial guarantor of social health in various historically-specific forms, even as its economic significance has shifted across time" (Rogers 61). As a testament to the social importance of agriculture to the overall health of the nation, the French government was rather obstinate during World Trade Organization negotiations over agricultural policies in 2005. French reticence to cement a deal arose out of "a climate in which globalization engenders fear more than hope" (Fuller).[110] With the enlargement of the

[109] Current thought is that French gastronomy is in crisis and its place atop the international culinary ladder is in jeopardy, if not already completely lost. For a discussion of France's gastronomic crisis, see François Simon's *Pique Assiette: La fin d'une gastronomie française* or Michael Steinberger's *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France*. Aymeric Mantoux and Emmanuel Rubin attack contemporary French gastronomy and its commercialization in their book, *Le Livre noir de la gastronomie française*. Mantoux and Rubin with Marco Paulo attempt a humorous and satirical critique of Michelin and the great chefs of French haute cuisine in the comic book *La Guerre des Etoilés*.

[110] Thomas Fuller's 2005 article in the *New York Times* entitled "In France, the power of 'terroir'," points out the precarious agricultural position of France in the European Union and the importance of agriculture to the nation.

European Union in 2004, France lost its privileged position of having the top decision-maker in the European Commission's agriculture directorate, who was prior to this time, traditionally French (Fuller). These political actions demonstrate that farming, *terroir*, and foods – particularly heritage foods – are on the frontlines in the effort to establish a national identity on the global stage.

Related to the fight to support French agriculture is the increasing importance of *terroir* since the 1990s. Movements such as Le Fooding, SlowFood, and that led by José Bové which Westbrook terms *Bovéism*, have agricultural tradition and *terroir* at their heart; they feed upon an idealized view of France's agricultural heritage and the myth of French *terroir* in an effort to shape the gastronomic future of a nation.[111] At his restaurant Terroir Parisien, Michelin-starred chef Yannick Alléno seeks to make use of as many products from the Ile-de-France region as possible in an effort to preserve and reinvigorate the *terroir* surrounding the nation's capital. He says of his mission, "Parisian chefs proved that eating local is the basis of great gastronomy centuries ago." "This is why I wanted to bring this chapter of French culinary history back to life again. You have to be able to taste the past to cook for the future."[112]

Gastronomic efforts grounded in *terroir* offer a "*retour aux sources*" (Trubek et al, 140), however figurative the return may be. *Terroir* references the nation's history and culture as much as its gastronomic *savoir faire*. Citizens and the government both hold on to *terroir* as a means of staying in touch with a certain emotional identity that is

[111] Westbrook says that the term *bovéism* is a "diagnosis for a symptomatic nostalgia on a variety of cultural fronts" (425).
[112] Journalist Alexander Lobrano quotes Alléno from an interview in his *New York Times Magazine* blog entry, "Terroir Parisien."

built upon ideas of honesty, trust, and community – concepts which are particularly important to a nation which fears losing its identity as national culture becomes increasingly less fixed because of globalization. Developments in technology, increased industrialization of the food industry, the increasing availability of fast food, and the globalization of culture have profoundly impacted how people feed themselves and their families.[113] These changes in the gastronomic chain cause some foods to be a more powerful vehicle for nostalgia than they otherwise might be. In contrast to mass-produced, industrialized products, foods with a direct link to *terroir* implicate the traditions and heritage of previous generations.

UNESCO affirmed and concretized the mythical and legendary status of French gastronomy when it inscribed the French gastronomic meal, and the whole of French gastronomy by extension, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010. This classification affirmed the link between French gastronomy and the greater heritage and tradition of the nation and is also an example of how the French government seeks to intervene and regulate any service or practice which it perceives to be both integral to society's well-being and under threat.[114] The effort to gain a place on UNESCO's list was spearheaded by French academics and culinarians, but was supported by the Ministry of Culture and received a nod from the notoriously un-gourmet President at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy. In Chapter One, I demonstrate that feelings of insecurity in the aftermath of the Great War may have helped lead to the

[113] Carol Counihan discusses the effects of these forces in Italian families in her book *Around the Tuscan Table: Food, Family, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Florence.*

[114] Susan Carol Rogers notes that agriculture is a prime example of the French government's desire to protect that which it sees as integral to France's well-being and self-worth. She notes that agriculture demonstrates how the government increases its policy intervention as a solution to perceived crises (64).

government establishment of the A.O.C. system and the creation of the INAO in the 1930s. These two moments in history support my overarching claim that when France feels insecure, she seeks to mold herself through gastronomic ideals and claims be it through government intervention or cinema for the masses.

One of the goals of Francis Chevrier, the director of the movement to inscribe French gastronomy on the UNESCO list, was to affect how the French people will feed themselves in the future. The UNESCO bid promised a nation-wide commitment to transmitting gastronomic knowledge to future generations, starting with children and education programs that would address issues from healthy eating to table manners to the nation's food history (Chevrier 139). To further disseminate the French gastronomic tradition, France will create a *Cité du goût et de la gastronomie*. Tours, a small city on the Loire River, will be the location of this home to culinary arts and cultures of France and will offer ateliers, expositions, festivals, and conferences addressing the myriad elements of gastronomy (Chevrier 142-143). These conditions were integral to France's success in front of the UNESCO committee; to gain recognition of its gastronomic traditions, France has to carry them forward.

As I have shown here and in Chapter One, food and eating are cultural constants that provide a means of accessing the past to shape the future. Over time, French cuisine has remained relatively stable. Incremental changes keep the cuisine from becoming outdated, but its foundations date back to at least the eighteenth century. As even Barthes has noted, "French food is never supposed to be innovative, except when it rediscovers long-forgotten secrets" (*Psychosociology* 170). The le Puy lentils into

which Amélie plunges her hand, Bretodeau's humble roast chicken, and the Delerm's warm croissant and fresh pastries are all hallmarks of French cuisine and the beauty of its simplicity and constancy. Gastronomy becomes a fixed reference.

Gastronomy is an integral part of French nostalgia and cultural identity. It is also the setting for Jeunet's nostalgic Paris. The almost unchanging rue Mouffetard stands as a direct entryway to a gastronomic Paris of the past, and is suggestive of *le ventre de Paris* which Jeunet dreamed of witnessing. Using cinematographic techniques and coloring, Jeunet emphasizes the fantastical nature of the café and the épicerie to draw out his own and the viewer's nostalgia. Jeunet also uses traditionally French aliments to remind us of France's culinary splendor. The magical trio of foie gras, truffles and champagne suggest a mythically fabulous meal of which we all dream of consuming, while the recurring roast chicken indicates a quotidian culinary pleasure available to all. Amélie delights in the idiosyncratic wonders of French cuisine and lives in and amongst quintessentially French culinary spaces. Jeunet invites viewers to do the same. These culinary sensations and images are catalysts of memory. *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* presents a nostalgic Paris that is both romanticized and mythical, much like French gastronomy itself. As such, gastronomy creates the spatial framework in which Amélie acts and through which the film's nostalgia functions. Amélie's world is fabulous and fantastical because nostalgia and French gastronomy are as well.

Conclusion

"Nous allons commencer avec une brouillade de cèpes au cerfeuil suivi d'un chou farci au saumon d'Ecosse […] et carottes au val de la Loire. J'aime bien quand les choses viennent de quelque part."

This is the first meal that Hortense Laborie cooks for Monsieur le Président de la République in the 2012 film *Les saveurs du palais*. Upon special request of the Président himself, Hortense leaves her quiet home hidden amongst the rolling hills and lush green vineyards of the Périgord and arrives at the Palais de l'Elysée to serve as the private chef for the head of the French state. When the Président asks for "le meilleur de la France," Hortense responds with "une cuisine simple." She cooks the food of French mothers and grandmothers, steeped in tradition, history, and *terroir*. She culls recipes from memory and from cookbooks hundreds of years old. Each of her ingredients has its own identity. Carrots come from the Loire valley, an agricultural treasure land and the early-modern playground of the French court. Twice, she chooses the Saint Honoré pastry as the meal's culmination as a playful nod to the Presidential address, 55 rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré – first to inaugurate her presence at the Palais de l'Elysée and again as an homage to this period in her life. Over time, Hortense and the President develop a friendship through their love and respect for the French culinary tradition, talking for hours about ancient cookbooks and sharing late-night snacks of buttered toast with truffles and a bottle of wine. Every dish that Hortense prepares reflects the land from which it comes and carries with it a story. What makes her cuisine resplendent is not only its taste, but its origin – its identity. And its identity is French.

Les saveurs du palais is the fictionalized account of Danièle Mazet-Delpeuch, who, for two years, was the personal chef to President François Mitterrand (Giuliani). Mitterrand was a gourmet, perhaps best known in this capacity for one of the most infamous "Last Suppers" in recent history. Shortly before dying of prostate cancer in January 1996, Mitterrand gathered friends and family to his home in the southwest of France for a feast of local oysters, *foie gras*, *capons* (castrated roosters), and ortolan (Paterniti). The ortolan, a culinary delicacy, is a small songbird native to France that, when traditionally prepared, is drowned in Armagnac, deplumed, roasted, and then nearly swallowed whole (Steinberger, *Au Revoir* 47). As diners eat the birds, they do so underneath a cloth napkin placed over their heads and faces like a shroud or veil to hide the act (Paterniti). As the story goes, after consuming this decadent yet forbidden meal, he never ate another bite (Steinberger, *Au Revoir* 48). His last meal could not have been any more French. The meal was not only delectable and extravagant, it was also a tribute to the best that France has to offer.

Gastronomy brings people together through common dishes, recipes, and practices, and communicates the values, fears, and triumphs of the nation. Roland Barthes elaborates this idea in "Le vin et le lait," from *Les Mythologies*, privileging the French relationship to cuisine. Barthes boldly proclaims, "Le vin fait ici partie de la raison d'Etat" (71), specifically linking wine to the French nation in particular through his use of the short but important word *ici*. Barthes situates his argument and this special relationship between wine and people within a specific location – the French nation. Wine is "national" (Barthes, *Mythologies* 72) because it is woven into the daily lives of

all Frenchmen. It is a ceremonial ornament touching every table in France from the "menus de la vie quotidienne française, du casse-croûte (le gros rouge, le camembert) au festin, de la conversation de bistrot au discours de banquet" (Barthes, *Mythologies* 71). Wine is such an integral part of the fabric of the meal and of conviviality and communion that its absence "choque comme un exotisme" (Barthes, *Mythologies* 71). Because wine is a truly national drink, a cornerstone in French life, "savoir boire est une technique nationale qui sert à qualifier le Français, à prouver à la fois son pouvoir de performance, son contrôle et sa sociabilité. Le vin fonde ainsi une morale collective, à l'intérieur de quoi tout est racheté" (Barthes, Mythologies 71). According to Barthes, consuming wine takes on a moral value touching on the spiritual, which he suggests through his use of the term *racheté* meaning "redeemed." Both in terms of drawing people together and of its omnipresence, wine is France's "boisson-totem" (Barthes, *Mythologies* 69).[115] Wine represents the French people and nation, communicating values of conviviality, collectivity, restraint, and pleasure and conveys the image of France's bounty.

[115] Barthes uses a similar discourse to connect le bifteck to France in his passage "Le bifteck et les frites." Like wine, le bifteck is "une morale," an "aliment de rachat" (Barthes, Mythologies 73). Barthes' repeated emphasis on the concept of redemption echoes Rouff's insistence on a religious motif which surfaces throughout *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet*. Both men imbue France with an elemental spirituality suggesting that its land and people occupy a privileged position among others. Furthermore, the presence of steak, similar to wine, "dans tous les décors de la vie alimentaire" renders it "nationalisé" (Barthes, Mythologies 73). A symbol of strength and power, traits attributable to red meat in general because of the presence of red blood flowing throughout and from the meat, le bifteck "suit la cote des valeurs patriotiques" (Barthes, Mythologies 74). Like steak, red wine also conjures up the image of blood (Barthes, Mythologies 72-73, 69-70), suggestive of life and vigor. Together, le vin and le bifteck communicate the whole of the French nation. While wine symbolizes French culture and the many pleasures of the country, steak provides the counterbalance, representing the power and vitality of the French nation.

The true magic of wine, however, is that it is adaptable to any and every situation. Depending on context – who is drinking where, with whom, and for what reasons – its meaning as a sign changes and evolves. This is also true of gastronomy more generally. It is a field in constant evolution. Old layers of signification never disappear; they are always present and ready to be called upon should the need arise. Despite the effort to reinvent French gastronomy through *nouvelle cuisine* in 1973, dishes and dining norms that date to before the Revolution, such as the *pot-au-feu*, are alive and well. Authors and filmmakers can thus manipulate foods, spaces, cooking techniques, and dining practices to signify and communicate both positive and negative attributes of France. Negative assessments of French gastronomic identity such as those in the films of Buñuel and Ferreri provoke a critical self-assessment. When threats to identity come from within the nation as during the *Trente Glorieuses*, gastronomic self-fashioning becomes questionable. Just as there is a very thin line between the gourmand and the glutton,[116] the distinction between gastronomic love and obsession becomes faint. To turn the tables, when threats to the nation are international in scope, literature and film make use of gastronomy as a unifying force capable of sustaining the nation. Whether ideological anxieties are caused by the horrors of war or the uncertainties of globalization, French culinary heritage serves as a cultural constant to which the French can, and do, continually turn in the effort to orient and mold what it means to be French.

[116] M.F.K. Fisher notes the absence of any clear distinction between the two labels suggesting that "gourmandism ends and gluttony begins" (613).

What remains to be seen is how French literature and film will use gastronomy in the twenty-first century. France, like all nations, is a nation in flux. Its population is diverse and varied, yet the meals, foods, and culinary spaces that have provided the framework for this study are unmistakably *French*. Barthes has said that "French food is never supposed to be innovative" (*Psychosociology* 170). The hyper-nostalgic gastronomic narratives from the turn of the twenty-first century that I have examined seem to reflect this thought, but as time passes, we must question whether or not this is a sustainable model for France. Arguably, French gastronomy, like all forms of French culture, must adapt itself if it is to remain a significant cultural force. Luc Dubanchet, the founder of the French publication *Omnivore*, has suggested that, "The food scene is the strongest cultural movement in France right now," and it is the younger generations of French restaurant-goers that are driving culinary changes (in Steinberger, *French Food*). These young, culinary trend-setters are undoubtedly as diverse as the current French population. How will they make an imprint on a cultural field so steeped in tradition? How will gastronomy open itself to reflect the changing face of the French population? Will it open itself? How will French authors and filmmakers react to and engage with these changes to gastronomy? How might literature and film take part in shaping a new and inclusive gastronomic identity for twenty-first-century France?

In *Les saveurs du palais*, Hortense refers to the cook as an "auteur." Just as cuisine arises out of the careful manipulation and combination of essential ingredients and cooking methods, an author tells a tale through vocabulary and syntax. Foods function as symbolic lexical elements, which like words, communicate ideas and

emotions. And, sometimes, when words fail us, moments in the kitchen or around the table are the best forms of expression.

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