FRENCH TASTE: FOOD AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POST-COLONIAL FRANCE

BY

BENJAMIN POOLE

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Tamara Chaplin, Chair
Professor Peter Fritzsche
Associate Professor Kathryn Oberdeck
Professor Jean-Philippe Mathy

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines representations of "French" and "foreign" food—in cookbooks and newspapers, TV cooking demonstrations and talk shows, state policies and political debates—and how these helped to redefine French national identity in the last third of the twentieth century. Focusing on how the global context shapes national identities, it tracks France's transformation from an imperial exporter of modern civilization to a nation seemingly besieged by transnational cultural invasions. It argues that as France navigated this transition, the classic image of French cuisine as the "universal" standard for modern culinary arts gave way to a more relevant gastronomic identity rooted in local traditions and terroirs. Chapters 1 and 2 trace the distancing of Frenchness from universalism, rationalism, and modernization in the dramatic rise and fall of "nouvelle cuisine" in the 1970s and the debates about "American" fast food in the 1980s and 1990s. Chapters 3 and 4 chart the growth of French localism and traditionalism through the celebrity career of the "peasant" woman turned TV chef, Maïté, and in French trade, agriculture, and tourism policies that took advantage of France's artisanal traditions and "authentic" specialties. However, this rising cultural essentialism remained unsettled and was challenged by France's imperial past, large immigrant communities, and republican political legacy. Chapter 5 explores these tensions by examining the symbolic ambiguity of couscous as both a popular French "national dish" and an exotic "foreign" delicacy associated with North Africa. Ultimately, this dissertation suggests that the transnational interconnections and global pressures that seem to threaten national identities are also what make them meaningful and valuable. This work demonstrates that distinctive French gastronomic traditions and local food products found new resonance and viability in the age of globalization.

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INTRODUCTION:

"La Mac Donald-couscous-steak-frites-society"

How can you govern a country with 246 types of cheese?
- Charles de Gaulle, President of France, 1959-1969[1]

Agriculture gave our country its soul […and it's] gastronomic diversity. We have the greatest gastronomy in the world… and we want that to be recognized as a world heritage.
- Nicolas Sarkozy, President of France, 2007-2012[2]

More than once, Charles de Gaulle took it upon himself to rescue his country from bitter internal divisions.[3] Restoring his "certain idea of France" demanded commitment to the universalist mission of the Republic and the modernization of French society.[4] Half a century later, however, modernization and universalism had come to appear as the twin faces of globalization menacing France from the outside. Despite his reputation as "Président Bling-Bling," Nicolas Sarkozy banked political capital by relentlessly "daring" to defend French "national identity" and cultural heritage against a world supposedly determined to stamp them

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[1] Ernest Mignon, *Les mots du Général* (Paris: Fayard, 1962), 57. When de Gaulle actually uttered this quip is unclear, however at least since 1962, this well known quote has been attributed to him. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[2] Nicolas Sarkozy, "Inauguration du 45e Salon international de l'agriculture," February 23, 2008, accessed March 16, 2014, http://www.veronis.fr/discours/transcript/2008-02-23/Sarkozy. See also: "Sarkozy veut voir la gastronomie française inscrite au patrimoine mondial," *Nouvel Observateur*, March 2, 2008, accessed March 16, 2014, http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/culture/20080223.OBS1934/sarkozy-veut-voir-la-gastronomie-francaise-inscrite-au-patrimoine-mondial.html

[3] De Gaulle not only led the Free French Forces during World War II, becoming the President of the Provisional Government of the reestablished French Republic, but when the Fourth Republic collapsed under the weight of the Algerian War in 1958, he returned to found the Fifth Republic and serve as its first President. In 2005, a popular poll named him the "greatest Frenchman of all time." "De Gaulle plus grand Français de tous les temps," *Nouvelobs.com*, April 6, 2005, accessed July 28, 2014, http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/culture/20050405.OBS3037/de-gaulle-plus-grand-francais-de-tous-les-temps.html?xtmc=&xtc

[4] Charles De Gaulle, *War Memoirs Volume One: The Call to Honor*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 9.

out.[5] Both presidents recognized the significance of food as a marker of Frenchness. But while de Gaulle's famous quip about France's 246 types of cheese suggested that the intractable diversity of French cultural traditions, however quaint, was a hindrance to national unity and international "grandeur," Sarkozy boasted that "gastronomic diversity" constituted the "soul" of France and its claims to global recognition. What changed?

This dissertation examines the role of representations of food in the evolving construction of French national identity over the last third of the twentieth century. It argues that as France's global role changed from an imperial exporter of modern civilization to a reluctant importer of immigrants and globalized culture, the once dominant discourses of French universalism and modernization receded as local particularisms and ethnocultural traditions proved more relevant, useful, and profitable in defining Frenchness. As the quintessential example of cultural heritage literally rooted in French soil, local and traditional food took center stage in defining what it meant to be French in the post-colonial world.

Indeed, according to a recent poll, over 95% of French people believe that "gastronomy is part of French heritage and identity," and more than 98% feel "French gastronomic traditions should be preserved, valorized, and transmitted to future generations."[6] Of course, food has played an important role in French identity for centuries. As historian Pascal Ory put it in his essay on "Gastronomy" in the *Lieux de Mémoire* collection (translated as *Realms of Memory*), "France is not a country with an ordinary relation to food. In the national vulgate food is one of

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[5] "Président Bling-Bling," *Libération,* December 19, 2007. Historian Gerard Noiriel points out that it was Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front which popularized the term "national identity" in the 1980s, but, the topic has never been taboo, despite Sarkozy's frequent claims to the contrary. Gérard Noiriel, *A quoi sert "l'identité nationale"?* (Marseille: Agone, 2007). See also: Vincent Martigny, "Le débat autour de l'identité nationale dans la campagne présidentielle 2007 : quelle rupture?," *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 27, no. 1 (2009): 23-42; "Nicolas Sarkozy et François Bayrou," s'oppose sur l'"identité nationale," *Le Monde,* March 14, 2007.

[6] Francis Chevrier, *Notre Gastronomie est une culture: Le repas gastronomique des Français au patrimoine de l'humanité* (Paris: François Bourin Editeur, 2011), 18.

the distinctive ingredients, if not *the* distinctive ingredient, of French identity."[7] Among the most oft-quoted aphorisms of the great nineteenth-century philosopher of gastronomy, Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, are: "The destiny of nations depends on how they nourish themselves;" and "Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are."[8] Taken together—indeed, Brillat-Savarin placed them side by side as Aphorisms III and IV in his *Physiology of Taste*—these fundamental links between food, the nation, and identity, have remained a vital thread in constructing (and continuously reconstructing) "Frenchness" ever since.

Food has a unique capacity to harbor personal memories and family traditions and to become a marker of identity that can be both exported globally and quite literally internalized by individuals. This affective power that both inspires and eludes representation gave rise to the French tradition of gastronomic literature. From Brillat-Savarin's "meditations on transcendental gastronomy" to chef Auguste Escoffier's scientific manual of modern cuisine, the dominant notions of "French cuisine" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries corresponded to the French ideals of universalism, progress, and modernization. In the post-colonial period, French gastronomic discourse moved beyond gastronomic literature, niche magazines, and culinary manuals and into the mass media where new audiovisual representations of food tantalized ever larger national and international audiences. Intriguingly, the era's ongoing globalization, mediatization, and industrialization correlated to a resurgence of rustic traditionalism and localism in French gastronomic discourse. These tensions between representation and practice and between tradition and modernity made popular representations of "French" and "foreign" food fertile and contested terrain and, in turn, a source base ripe for historical interpretation.

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[7] Pascal Ory, "Gastronomy," in *Realms of Memory*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 444.

[8] Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste: or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy,* trans. M. F. K. Fischer (New York: Vintage Classics, 2011), 15.

Print culture exploded with news articles, books, and magazines dedicated to food. In his long-running column in *Le Monde*, Robert Courtine, espoused his traditionalistic views on gastronomy with wit and erudition. Meanwhile, the younger, more modern Henri Gault and Christian Millau launched their own glossy food magazine that had more than a million readers by 1973, *Le Nouveau Guide Gault-Millau* (referred to hereafter as *Gault-Millau*). There, they celebrated the 1970s culinary "revolution" known as "nouvelle cuisine."[9] Restaurant guides published by Michelin and Gault-Millau dominated the bestseller list and made celebrities of top-rated chefs like Raymond Oliver, Paul Bocuse, Michel Guérard, and Joël Robuchon who all published popular cookbooks and hosted TV cooking shows.[10] These experts often led the way in defining trends in French cuisine appearing in high-profile arenas like the intellectual television talk show, *Apostrophes,* and were even consulted by government officials on food-related policies.

Television and cinema used the sights and sounds of cooking and eating to spectacular effect. Films like Marco Ferreri's scandalous *La Grande Bouffe* and Claude Zidi's slapstick *L'Aile ou la Cuisse* lampooned pretentious gastronomic culture as representative of modern French society more broadly. As early as the 1950s, French television featured cooking shows that transported worldly chefs like Raymond Oliver into French homes.[11] But in the 1980s and 1990s, France's most beloved cook on TV was not a three-star chef but the Gascon "peasant"

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[9] Citing a 1973 poll by the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP), *Le Nouveau Guide Gault-Millau* claimed a readership of 1,200,000 even before merging with (and acquiring readers of) the travel magazine, *Connaissance des Voyages,* in October 1973; *Gault-Millau* no. 54, Oct. 1973, 3. The full title of the magazine varied over the years, but in this dissertation it will be referred to simply as *Gault-Millau*.

[10] Restaurant guides, regularly sold in the hundreds of thousands, with Michelin's "red guide" selling as many as 720,000 copies in 1989; *Livres-Hebdo*, Jan. 1990, 87. Oliver, Bocuse, Guérard, and Robuchon (among others) all owned three-star restaurants (Michelin's top rating), published many books in multiple languages, and hosted TV cooking shows.

[11] On television cooking shows, see: Odile Bächler, "Les émissions culinaires à la télévision française," in *Penser la télévision: Actes du colloque de Cerisy*, eds. Jérôme Bourdon and François Jost (Paris: Nathan/INA, 1998), 121-132.

woman, Maïté. Her liberal application of foie gras and Armagnac and on-screen slaughtering of live fish and fowl, took the spectacle of cooking on TV to a whole new level. Meanwhile, representations of fast food and couscous, from television commercials to political debates, displayed ambivalence toward these foods that became hugely popular among French consumers but also represented perceived "foreign" incursions on French cultural traditions and independence. Thus, not only was popular culture inundated with food in the post-colonial period, but these images and discussions were continually infused with questions about French national identity and related political debates about immigration, globalization, regionalism, and American hegemony.

French National Identity in the Global Age

The object of study in this dissertation is not simply cooking or eating practices, but rather how food is written and talked about in popular culture and the mass media. In this way, it is fundamentally a work of cultural history.[12] Incorporating methodological and theoretical perspectives from cultural studies and transnational history, it is focused primarily on close analysis of specific texts and images that implicate food in the historical construction of French national identity within a global web of social relations.[13]

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[12] Pascal Ory has succinctly defined cultural history as "the social history of representations." *L'entre-deux-Mai: Histoire culturelle de la France, Mai 1968 –Mai 1981* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 7; See also: Pascal Ory, *L'histoire comme aventure: Treize exercises d'histoire culturelle* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 2008), 9-49.

[13] In addition to the titles discussed below, see: Françoise Hache-Bissette and Denis Saillard, eds., *Gastronomie et identité culturelle française: Discours et représentations (XIXe –XXIe siècles)* (Paris: Nouveau Monde éditions, 2009); Mireille Piarotas and Pierre Carreton, eds., *Le Populaire à table: Le Boire et le Manger aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2005); Bob Ashley, et. al., *Food and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Lawrence R. Schehr and Allen S. Weiss, eds., *French Food: On the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture,* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Raymond Grew, ed., *Food in Global History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Carol Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds., *Food and Culture: A Reader,* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008); Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed., *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* (New York: Berg, 2005). On cookbooks see: Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine:

I approach national identity as a fluid, contingent, and contested discursive construct that, paradoxically, purports to be eternal, essential, and unambiguous.[14] In order to overcome this conceptual contradiction, following Rogers Brubaker, I dispense with the expectation that national identity reflect the French nation as an actual group, instead recognizing that identity resides, first of all, in discursive acts of identification.[15] Generally, the impetus for identifying something is a desire to resolve some uncertainty about what it is and where it belongs.[16] Thus, I suggest that national identity is not directly precipitated by the perception of a common national culture—either as an "imagined community" or an "invented tradition"—but by transcultural fluidity and ambiguity that must be brought to order.[17] In this way, I argue that national identities

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Cookbooks in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (January 1988): 3-24; Carol Helstosky, "Recipe for the Nation: Reading Italian History Through *La scienza in cucina* and *La cucina futurista,*" *Food and Foodways* 11 (2003): 113-140. On film see: Dana Strand, "Film, Food, and 'La Francité,': From *le pain quotidien* to McDo," in *French Food: On the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture,* eds. Lawrence R. Schehr and Allen S. Weiss (New York: Routledge, 2001); Vincent Chenille, *Le plaisir gastronomique au cinéma* (Paris: Jean-Paul Rocher, 2004). On magazines see: Faustine Régnier, *L'exotisme culinaire: Essai sur les saveurs de l'Autre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004). On television see: Toby Miller, *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism and Television in a Neoliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 112-143.

[14] Craig Calhoun writes, "Nationalism is, among other things, what Michel Foucault […] called a 'discursive formation': a way of speaking that shapes our consciousness, but also is problematic enough that it keeps generating more issues and questions, keeps propelling us into further talk, keeps producing debates over how to think about it. […] *Nations are constituted largely by [nationalist] claims themselves*, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices." Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 3-5. See also: Craig Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History, and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[15] Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1-63. See also: Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[16] Stuart Hall has argued that it is the very instability, hybridity, and constant change in cultural practices and social relations that motivate us to seek seemingly stable and essential identities in order to organize and make sense of the world. Stuart Hall, "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference" in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 339-349.

[17] The familiarity of the expressions, "imagined communities" and "invention of tradition," is a testament to how much these classic theories on nationalism from the early 1980s continue to dominate the discussion of nations and nationalism today. For example, the only theorists of nationalism cited in the introduction of a 2012 edited collection called *National Identities in France* were those who dominated the debate in the 1980s: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983); Ernest

are not diminished, but actually nourished by increasing global and transnational interconnections, since these present more and more opportunities for identification. My interest is not primarily whether an assertion of national identity reflects the "real" national community, but *how* and *why* certain differences are mobilized as essential, in a specific historical context in order to differentiate "French" from "foreign" in a way that was not already self-evident. In gastronomic terms, a food is "French" not simply because French people eat it, but because in a specific context and for specific reasons people claim that it is.

Therefore, this study looks to the margins of the nation for the specific points of transnational conflict, interference, and ambiguity where Frenchness is defined through negotiations over who and what to include and exclude. As Catherine Hall has argued, "We can understand the nation only by defining what is not part of it, for identity depends on the outside, on the marking of both its positive presence and content and of its negative and excluded parts."[18] French/foreign distinctions are themselves the effect more than the cause of identification. For example, French and British national identities took shape in the eighteenth century amidst bitter economic, military and imperial competition in order to reify differences and encourage patriotic enmity between two nations that shared much common history and

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Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993 [1960]) and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations* (London: Routledge, 1998). *National Identities in France*, ed. Brian Sudlow (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 9.

[18] Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9.

culture.[19] The mocking epithets they used for one another based on emblematic foods—the French "frog" and British "rosbif"—betray an intimate knowledge of each other's customs.[20]

Representations of national identity are not always motivated by militant political "nationalism." National identity is "flagged" constantly throughout popular culture and the mass media, in what Michael Billig has called "banal nationalism."[21] The sheer regularity of representations of food in the national media establishes its significance to national identity.[22] On the one hand, mass media reflects the power of the state as well as political and business elites to shape a hegemonic, "national-popular" culture.[23] State-run French television provides a clear example.[24] On the other hand, hegemonic discourses are always, implicitly or explicitly, negotiated in an (uneven) dialogue across media and among a variety of dominant and resistant voices. Thus resistant views become implicated in the dominant discourse, while dominant notions of Frenchness proliferate even as television and other media became more diversified

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[19] On the origins of French and British nationalism in eighteenth-century warfare, see: David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[20] "Why do the French call the British the 'the roast beefs'?," *BBC News*, 3 April 2003, accessed 24 June 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2913151.stm; Bee Wilson, "Bones of contention," *The New Statesman,* 15 November 1999: 50-51; Peter Thorold, *The British in France*: *Visitors and Residents since the Revolution* (London: Continuum, 2008), 106-107.

[21] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

[22] The Institut nationale de l'audiovisuel (INA) television archives' catalogue contains nearly 30,000 entries (most representing a different TV episode or segment) mentioning food-related terms, while nearly 80,000 articles have appeared in *Le Monde* or lemonde.com since 1944 mentioning either "cuisine," "gastronomie," or "alimentation," according to a search of lemonde.com.

[23] Diana Holmes and David Looseley, eds., *Imagining the Popular in Contemporary French Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). In this volume, see especially: David Looseley, "Politics and pleasure: inventing popular culture in contemporary France," 16-46, and Lucy Mazdon, "French Television: negotiating the national popular," 162-193. See also: Raymond Kuhn, "Pushing Back and Reaching Out: French Television in the Global Age," in *France on the World Stage,* ed. Mairi Maclean and Joseph Szarka (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 199-212.

[24] As Tamara Chaplin argues, "[…] the state project of visualizing 'Frenchness' reified for popular consumption an image of national superiority at a time when France's international stature was declining." Tamara Chaplin, *Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2.

and globalized.[25] However, the internationalization of popular culture in the twentieth century has meant that the people and institutions from around the world also work in cooperation to construct images of France and Frenchness.[26]

This dissertation amasses a wide range of sources including cookbooks, magazines, news articles, memoirs, television cooking shows, talk shows, and commercials. It examines how each source contributed arguments to the negotiation, definition, and continual redefinition of French cultural identity against (but always in conversation with) "others." I focus on a set of specific debates—about the "newness" of nouvelle cuisine, for instance, or the political significance of couscous—that illuminate different aspects of larger conversations about French national identity. While I have included as many voices as possible, I have also sought to pinpoint the key moments in these conversations, whether in television talk shows, cookbooks, or debates in the National Assembly. [27] While France remains the location where these debates and stories (mostly) took place, this dissertation is not a comprehensive survey of the attitudes of the population of France but rather an examination of French national identity as a construct produced in the dialogue between a diverse, transnational cast of characters.

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[25] One must be wary, therefore, of how minority voices are represented. For example, Alec Hargreaves has described television programming ostensibly produced by and for North African immigrants, where "beneath a superficially multicultural production lay an entirely contrary purpose: far from making a space for minority cultures within French society, the aim was to prepare for their removal." Alec G. Hargreaves, "Gate Keepers and Gateways: Post-colonial minorities and French television," in *Post-colonial Cultures in France,* ed. Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (New York: Routledge, 1997), 86.

[26] On images of Frenchness in the transnational production of films, see: Vanessa Schwartz, *It's So French!: Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[27] Certain practical considerations also influenced the selection of sources. Radio sources were largely excluded in favor of television, which, while unlikely to differ significantly from radio in terms of the range of views, allows for a richer analysis of image, sound, and text. The newspaper, *Le Monde,* was utilized more than other newspapers, not only because of its international reputation as a newspaper of record, but also because it is accessible and searchable online in its entirety from 1944 onward, enabling research that would not otherwise be feasible.

In order to understand the specific characteristics ascribed to Frenchness and how they change, it is necessary to look at France's changing interests and challenges in a global context. The use of the term "post-colonial" in its title is primarily meant to characterize a period in French history (roughly the last third of the twentieth century) when the loss of the Colonial Empire fundamentally altered France's role (and identity) in the world. My work, therefore, joins a growing body of scholarship that seeks to overcome the divide between domestic and (post-) colonial history—what Kristen Ross has called "keeping the two stories separate."[28]

For most of the modern era, the dominant definitions of the French nation have generally fallen under the heading of "republican universalism"—the idea that:

> the French Republic that was born of the Revolution of 1789 perceived itself as the enactment of [the] universal principles [of the Enlightenment], as reflected, for example, in the Revolutionary motto *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* […] a "universal republic."[29]

Republicanism contends that there is room in French civilization for everyone and everything, and in its imperialist guise, that France should extend its *rayonnement* (radiance)—and its rule—everywhere.[30] During the Revolution, Robespierre declared, "It is not for a people that we fight, but for the universe, not for men living today, but for all who will ever exist!"[31] Yet even this extreme statement of universalism implied the existence of different "peoples," including

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[28] Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 9; See also: Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Den Abbeele eds., *French Civilization and its Discontents: nationalism, colonialism, race* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2003); Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); Hargreaves and McKinney, *Post-colonial Cultures in France*.

[29] Roger Celestin and Eliane DalMolin, *France from 1851 to the Present: Universalism in Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3.

[30] The term *rayonnement* means both "radiance"—the universal influence of French thought and civilization—and "radiation." On the intersection of both meanings of the term, see: Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009).

[31] It is notable that this quote was included as an epigraph to a political essay by a Beur activist: Nacer Kettane, *Droit de réponse à la democratie française* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1986), 8.

whomever this fight was being waged against. Difference, hierarchy, and exclusivity cannot be dismissed as un-republican anomalies, because republican universalism cannot exist without them. Thus, as a number of scholars have argued, "republicanism," "multiculturalism" and "ethnic essentialism" should be seen not as mutually exclusive, self-contained worldviews, representing French, Anglo-American, and German models, but as interdependent, competing arguments within a transnational political culture.[32]

I treat "republican universalism" not as a comprehensive national ideology but as a loose constellation of French democratic values and principles organized around a set of constructed oppositions: the civic/political (not ethnic) nation, individual (not group) rights, *laïcité*/secularism (not religious institutions), progress (not tradition), rationalism (not empiricism), civilization (not barbarism), state centralization (not local or private autonomy). Contradictions abound, but my focus is not whether these republican ideals fit together to form a coherent basis for French identity—although this may matter a great deal to the historical actors I study. What counts is the rhetorical purchase of these principles in a particular context. As the anti-colonial theorist, Albert Memmi, has written, "The most remarkable thing about cultural identity is not its reality, but its efficacy."[33]

Consequently, it is necessary to look at what interests republican arguments served and what they opposed in any given context. Initially, republican universalism was instrumental to left-wing arguments against the counter-revolutionary forces of the Monarchy and the Church. But once a stable Republic was established in the 1870s, politicians like Jules Ferry appropriated

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[32] Paul Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation;* Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (New York: Verso, 1991).

[33] Albert Memmi, "Les fluctuations de l'identité culturelle," dossier "La fièvre identitaire," *Esprit* (January 1997), 94-106. Quoted in Hache-Bissette and Saillard, 18.

the supposed universality of French civilization to provide republican justifications for "modernizing" provincial France and "civilizing" and the colonies. In both places, this often amounted to imposing Parisian, bourgeois culture on peasants and colonial subjects who largely did not speak French (and had likely never eaten a soufflé).[34] Consequently, in order to discredit local cultures and customs, these supposedly universalist arguments were bolstered by ethnic and racial hierarchies developed by colonial ethnographers.[35]

Meanwhile, reacting against universalistic modernization, metropolitan France saw the revival of ethnic identities and provincial folk traditionalism during the interwar years and peaking under Vichy.[36] But after the war, with ethnic nationalism discredited and decolonization righting the error of imperialism, France went forth into the world, led by de Gaulle, once again united in its republican resolve. However, without a clear mission or antithesis, the French Republic exploded in May 1968 with a revolution that was as contemptuous of universalism as it was directionless. It is in this moment of national uncertainty, where the present story begins.

Some scholars have characterized post-colonial France as an era of political rapprochement around a republican or and/or liberal consensus, while others have noted a growing fragmentation and crisis of national identity.[37] Both interpretations are actually

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[34] Ferry is primarily remember for his advocacy of massive colonial expansion in Africa and Asia and the secularization and standardized mandatory public education. On the ideological and institutional commonalities between "modernization" and "colonization," see: Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 485-496; Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

[35] Silverstein, 35-76.

[36] Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[37] François Furet, Jacques Julliard, and Pierre Rosanvallon, *La République du centre: La fin de l'exception française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1988); Emile Chabal, "*La République postcoloniale*? Making the Nation in Late Twentieth-Century France," in *France's Lost Empires: Fragmentation, Nostalgia, and* La France Coloniale, ed. Kate Marsh and Nicola Frith (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011): 137-152; Pierre Birnbaum, *The Idea of France*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), Jack Hayward, *Fragmented France: Two Centuries of Disputed*

complimentary, since, as Eric Fassin has argued, republican consensus on one level meant that, on another level, universalism became the terrain for politics rather than a position to be held within it.[38] Republican ideals saw real gains such as citizenship laws becoming more open and inclusive.[39] But republican principles could also serve discrimination, such as when *laïcité* and women's rights have been marshaled against Muslim girls wearing headscarves.[40]

As republican universalism faltered, my work traces a resurgence of ethnocultural particularism that proved more relevant and dynamic in relation to the global and transnational challenges that France faced in the post-colonial period. Todd Shepard has shown that, after decolonization, rationalizing defeat and erasing former colonial subjects' rights to French citizenship depended on allowing "questions of 'race' and 'ethnicity' [...] to define the boundaries of the nation."[41] Soon, some French nationalists brazenly began appropriating the anti-colonial rhetoric of cultural sovereignty in their resistance to America's "irresistible empire."[42] Citing the infamous 1999 dismantling of a French McDonald's at the hands of sheep farmers who produce

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Identity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Celestin and DalMolin, *France from 1851 to the Present.* On "the French exception," see also: Emmanuel Godin and Tony Chafer, eds. *The French Exception* (New York: Bergham Books, 2005); Tony Chafer and Emmanuel Godin, *The End of the French Exception?: Decline and Revival of the 'French Model'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[38] Eric Fassin, "The Politics of PaCS in a Transatlantic Mirror: Same-Sex Unions and Sexual Difference in France Today," in *Beyond French Feminisms: Debates on Women, Politics and Culture in France, 1981-2001,* ed. Roger Célestin, Eliane Dalmolin and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[39] Patrick Weil, *How to be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

[40] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[41] Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 268.

[42] For example, Jean Cau, *Pourquoi la France?* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1975); Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

milk for Roquefort cheese, Herman Lebovics has demonstrated the fruitful links that developed between nostalgia for a national *patrimoine* (heritage) and the anti-globalization movement.[43]

In the face of global threats, as this dissertation shows, local and traditional food became both a refuge and a vehicle for asserting French national identity and independence. This pastoral image hardly corresponded to sociocultural reality of modern France, more accurately characterized by Nacer Kettane's provocative bilingual phrase, "La Mac Donald-couscous-steak frites-society [*sic*]."[44] But just as the universalistic and modernistic image of imperial France masked a harsher reality, identifying Frenchness with local particularisms and traditions was powerful precisely because it represented an ideal that denied certain undesirable elements of post-colonial French society.

History and Historiography of French Gastronomy

There is a growing interdisciplinary body of scholarship on the history of French food and its relationship to French national identity, which counts among its leading voices prominent scholars such as the American sociologist, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson and the French historian, Pascal Ory.[45] This growing interest in French cuisine bears witness not only to the power of food as a marker of identity, but also to the special place of gastronomy in French history. Most histories of French cuisine present a narrative of the linear development of a unitary "national cuisine" that envelopes the whole gamut from professional haute cuisine to the quotidian diet of

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[43] Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), xiii-6.

[44] Kettane, 19; Kettane is also quoted in: Silverstein, 240; Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 62-64.

[45] Both have published relevant works within the past year: Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Word of Mouth: What We Talk About When We Talk About Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) and Pascal Ory, *L'identité passe à table* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013).

average French people, subordinating social and regional differences as sub-categories. And while most scholars acknowledge that gastronomic identity is constructed discursively, this rarely precludes the expectation that it still reflect a singular national culture and population.[46] As outlined above, I approach identity as a more fluid, dynamic, and contingent construct. Still, these works collectively provide a richly detailed and carefully argued history of the development of French cuisine and gastronomy from their early-modern origins to the present day. Here, I discuss this body of scholarship in the course of a brief history of French cuisine, while highlighting my own focus gastronomic discourse and the global context.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the "French cuisine" served at Versailles was a key representation of French culture as the epitome of European style and civilization. French cuisine was already tied to an emerging French universalism, providing a standard of culinary excellence for aristocrats from St. Petersburg to London.[47] Even though this international aristocratic cuisine bore little resemblance to the food of French commoners, certain distinctly modern culinary principles such "natural taste" and "delicate cooking" came to be recognized as "French."[48] Even before the Revolution, as Susan Pinkard argues, the vanguard of culinary taste was shifting away from Versailles to a refined Parisian elite who frequented

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[46] For instance, Jean-Pierre Poulain writes, "the 'culinary system' […] of a society connects the natural to the cultural […] and founds the identity of a group in the originality of its 'bio-anthropological' connection." Jean-Pierre Poulain, "Goût du terroir et tourisme vert à l'heure de l'Europe," *Ethnologie Française* 27, no. 1 (January-March 1997): 20.

[47] Ory, "Gastronomy," 450.

[48] Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 120-126; Jennifer J. Davis, *Defining Culinary Authority: The Transformation of Cooking in France, 1650-1830* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Patrick Rambourg, *Histoire de la cuisine et de la gastronomie françaises: Du Moyen Age au XXe siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2010), 109-156. On the influence of science and the Enlightenment of French culinary discourse, see: E. C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris 1670-1760* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

"dinner parties" and, as Rebecca Spang has shown, the world's first restaurants.[49] Nevertheless, many scholars argue that the key turning point in consolidating French cuisine's national character and international hegemony came only after the Revolution. The ensuing political, social, cultural, and economic modernization enabled not only the modern idea of a "nation" but also the circulation of cookbooks and proliferation of restaurants necessary for the nationwide diffusion of a professional haute cuisine and a domestic "bourgeois cuisine."[50]

Key to establishing the link between French cuisine and national identity was the emergence after the Revolution of what Ory calls "French gastronomic discourse" and what Ferguson calls "the gastronomic field"—in other words, a sustained and sophisticated national and international gastronomic discussion *about* French cuisine.[51] Ferguson emphasizes the particular influence of three figures in shaping this discourse: the aristocratic Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière who was the first "food journalist"; the more modern and liberal Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, whose quasi-philosophical *Physiology of Taste* founded the genre of gastronomic literature; and the world-famous chef, Antonin Carême, whose cooking manuals first codified modern French cuisine.[52] As Denis Saillard and Françoise Hache-

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[49] Pinkard, 87; Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 12-87.

[50] Ory, "Gastronomy," 452; Alain Drouard, *Le mythe gastronomique français* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2010). 6.

[51] Pascal Ory, *Le Discours gastronomique français* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, "A Cultural Field in the Making: Gastronomy in Nineteenth-Century France," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 3 (1998): 597-641.

[52] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 30-33, 49-82, 92-100. On Grimod de la Reynière see: Michael Garval, "Grimod de la Reynière's *Almanach des gourmands*," in *French Food: On the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture,* 51-70. On Brillat-Savarin see: Pascal Ory, "Brillat-Savarin dans l'histoire culturelle de son temps," in *Gastronomie et Identité Culturelle Française,* 39-50. On Carême see Philip Hyman, "*Culina Mutata:* Carême and *l'ancienne cuisine,*" in *French Food: On the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture,* 71-83.

Bissette concur, "Whoever doubts the 'reality' of national cuisines, underestimates the normative force of the gastronomic discourse in the works of Carême, Grimod, and Brillat."[53]

Importantly, Hache-Bissette and Saillard also note the *international* renown of figures like Brillat-Savarin, which exported the mythology of French cuisine abroad. This fed, in turn, French recognition of the "foreign gaze" and self-comparisons with "other" cuisines.[54] For example, Spang argues that, beginning with the Peace of Amiens in 1802, British and American tourists flocking to Paris were crucial in constructing the essential "Frenchness" of the restaurant at a time when the phenomenon was basically limited to the "heavily-touristed center of Paris."[55] In other words, a reciprocating transnational dialogue was central to constructing the meaning of French cuisine. Even at the very moment that European statesmen were deciding France's fate after defeating its most zealous universalist, Napoleon, they could not resist the charms of French cuisine. For it was the Talleyrand's feasts prepared by Carême at the Congress of Vienna that reportedly won over foreign delegations to France's cause. "Sire, I need saucepans more than instructions," had been Talleyrand's response to Louis XVIII's advice on negotiations.[56]

The universalism and modernism of haute cuisine reached its apex during the Belle Epoque, under a generation of professional French chefs led by the great Auguste Escoffier—who achieved fame in London at the Savoy Hotel.[57] Escoffier was dedicated to culinary modernization and progress, jettisoning the lingering aristocratic flamboyance of Carême's era in favor of modern refinement while further codifying the techniques, recipes, language, and

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[53] Hache-Bissette and Saillard, 17.

[54] Hache-Bissette and Saillard, 13, 17-20.

[55] Spang, 170-206.

[56] Ory, "Gastronomy," 455; Jean-Robert Pitte, *French Gastronomy: The History and Geography of a Passion*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 105.

[57] On the relationship between French and English cuisines, see: Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

division of labor of professional cuisine almost into a science. His *Guide Culinaire* (*Culinary Guide*) would become the "bible" of chefs around the world for much of the twentieth century. Escoffier and his contemporaries assimilated regional and foreign influences into haute cuisine—although often reducing them to superficial terminology such as "à la provençale" meaning "with tomatoes"—yet they maintained their own imperialistic authority to critique and "improve" these other cuisines.[58] Likewise, in a (paternalistic) spirit of democratization, these chefs also published cookbooks and magazines that diffused simplified modern techniques and recipes as "bourgeois cuisine" for housewives and their servants.[59] In this way, French cuisine was defined by its purported universal principles, modern techniques, scientific codification, and cosmopolitan tastes rather than by any specific dishes, flavors, styles, or ingredients.

Amy Trubek has shown how extensive the internationalization of "French" cuisine was in the nineteenth century.[60] As French chefs, techniques, dishes, and language came to dominate the best restaurants across the Western world, "France" became a global symbol of fine food untethered from its own territory.[61] It was precisely this international reach that fueled greater innovation and expansion while also reflecting well on France itself. Escoffier understood the diplomatic value of French culinary supremacy just as Talleyrand had a century earlier (or Sarkozy a century later), when he said, "I have 'sown' two thousand chefs all around the world. Think of them as so many seeds planted in virgin soil. France is today reaping the fruits."[62] This

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[58] Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste,* 121-129.

[59] Amy Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 12.

[60] Trubek, *Haute Cuisine.*

[61] Trubek, *Haute Cuisine*, 8-9.

[62] Ory, "Gastronomy," 444.

expansive, cosmopolitan Frenchness was tied to the imperialism that dominated French national identity by the late nineteenth century. Jean-Robert Pitte notes how, in 1884:

> [Escoffier's colleague] Philéas Gilbert constructed the great imperialist dream of creating a school devoted to universal gastronomic synthesis, where "[...] alimentary riches from the entire world would flow to the school, which, in turn would distribute them, marked by the stamp of genius our culinary luminaries know how to impress upon whatever leaves their hands, to the great good fortune of our modern gourmets."[63]

It is no coincidence that this statement came just as the Third Republic's "modernization" of the provinces and "civilization" of the colonies were getting into high gear. As Ory argues, the cuisine of the colonizer must "aggressively manifest its 'openness,' to the outside."[64]

However, by the early twentieth century, such imperialist and "Jacobin" attitudes elicited mounting fears about modernization, urbanization, and the centralized state imposing a "universal" French culture. A counter-discourse emerged that celebrated the specialties of France's traditional regional cuisines. With the advent of automobile tourism, urban gourmets penetrated the provincial countryside in search of mythic "peasant" dishes. Their urgency and enthusiasm for documenting and preserving allegedly disappearing culinary traditions often amounted to inventing regional cuisines in the process. However, despite its potential separatist and anti-republican implications, the trend mainly concerned political moderates who simply sought a more regionally diverse and traditional conception of the national cuisine.[65]

Vichy's embrace of parochial traditionalism, however, cast a dark shadow, and postwar France threw itself once again into modernization—apart from a few notable exceptions such as

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[63] Pitte, 2.

[64] Ory, *L'identité passe à table,* 106.

[65] Julia Csergo, "Du discours gastronomique comme 'propagande nationale,'" in *Gastronomie et Identité Culturelle Française,* 177-202. Julia Csergo,"The Emergence of Regional Cuisines," in *Food: A Culinary History*, ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, ed. Albert Sonnenfeld [English edition] (New York: Penguin, 1999), 500-515; Rambourg, 276; Pitte, 25-30; Ory, *L'identité passe à table*, 32.

Le Monde's food columnist, the self-proclaimed reactionary, Robert Courtine.[66] The preceding decades had proven that the Republic, economic prosperity, and national unity were not to be taken for granted. Moreover, with the outbreak of dissent and war in the colonies, France redoubled its universalist justifications for imperial rule. No one since Escoffier embodied the worldliness and modernity of French cuisine better than Raymond Oliver, owner of Paris' world-famous Grand Véfour restaurant, and France's first TV chef in the 1950s. With millions of French families joining the urban middle class, Oliver, along with cookbook writers like Ginette Mathiot, played an important role in modernizing and disseminating a more accessible bourgeois cuisine for postwar France's consumer society. This postwar wave of modernization and rebuilding culminated in the "nouvelle cuisine" of the 1970s that rededicated French restaurant cuisine to artistic modernism and world-conquering universalism once more.

This is the point where this dissertation's narrative begins. It is also where most histories of French gastronomy tend to reach their denouement with a final chapter or epilogue addressing the present debate about purported "decline" of French cuisine in the face of global "McDonaldization" and the rising international renown of Spanish, British, or American haute cuisine.[67] Having traced the "construction" of "French cuisine" as the linear development of a singular, coherent set of principles and practices, the only remaining question is whether French cuisine will continue its ascent or has begun its disintegration. For instance, Frédéric Duhart has recently defined the concept of "cultural food identity" ("identité culturelle alimentaire") thusly:

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[66] Didier Francfort, "Les chroniques de La Reynière (Robert Courtine) dans *Le Monde*," in *Gastronomie et Identité Culturelle Française*, 257-274.

[67] For example, Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 149-186. Ory, *L'identité passe à table*, 121-129; Rambourg, 301-305; Drouard, 127-144. However, Drouard does include two short chapters on "slow food" and "molecular gastronomy," both of which came after nouvelle cuisine. "McDonaldization" has been used by several scholars to describe somewhat different concepts, any and all of which could apply here: George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1996); Paul Ariès, *Les Fils de McDo: La McDonalisation du Monde* (Paris: L"Harmattan, 1997); Claude Fischler, "The 'McDonaldization' of Culture," in *Food: A Culinary History*, 530-547.

> A cultural mille-feuille characterized by products, culinary techniques, dishes and modes of consumption that those integrated into the culture consider their 'own' and others see as typical, a regional cultural food identity [*identité culturelle alimentaire regionale*] is constructed little by little by a slow and perpetual sedimentation of customs and representations.[68]

My approach recognizes the importance of all this accumulated cultural content, as identities are not "invented" or "imagined" out of thin air. But "identity," in my view, is not simply the sum total of cultural practices of a place or group, since only certain characteristics are proclaimed as definitive while others are quietly ignored or ascribed to a different identity. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the reasons behind these choices.

By approaching identification as a selective, discursive practice, my work avoids the dubious question of whether a reified "French cuisine" is actually in decline. Instead, it asks how narratives of decline and endangerment have elicited and motivated particular discourses of French gastronomic identity. When French nationalists—on the left as well as the right—incessantly bemoan a "loss of identity" in the face of globalization, such statements are themselves important assertions of national identity. After all, one can still identify and defend a particular idea of French cuisine, even in its alleged absence. This dissertation examines these arguments and the specific global and transnational challenges that provoked them.

Globalization, immigration, regionalism, European integration, and other transnational influences were not, despite popular belief, entirely new challenges for France in the postwar era. What was new was France's perceived role and power within those relations, making it seem that France was suddenly besieged by internal and external threats to its gastronomic identity. Even before France had lost its own colonial empire, many felt that France itself was being "Coca-

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[68] Frédéric Duhart, "Le poids des innovations récentes dans la constitution de l'identité culturelle alimentaire actuelle du Sud-Ouest de la France (de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle à la fin du XXe siècle)," in *Histoire des innovations alimentaires: XIXe et XXe siècles*, ed. Alain Drouard and Jean-Pierre Williot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), 243.

colonized" by American products and popular culture.[69] In the aftermath of May 1968's indictment of consumer society and the French state, dissent spread to the countryside, reigniting militant regionalist movements clamoring to escape Paris' linguistic, cultural, and even gastronomic domination.[70] The 1973 oil crisis marked the end of "thirty glorious years" of unprecedented economic growth and ushered in an era of prolonged economic malaise. Still, immigrants, mostly from the former colonies, continued to arrive in droves, and by the 1980s they found themselves increasingly isolated, unemployed, and unwelcome in a country where they became easy scapegoats for France's social and economic problems.[71] The 1990s saw the creation of the European Union and the ratcheting up of global "free trade," both intensifying fears of losing French economic, political, and cultural independence. Each chapter of this dissertation examines one or more transnational points of contention where food became a central terrain for renegotiating the contours of French national identity. Rather than dividing the period chronologically, each chapter traces a specific topic across all or a part of the last three decades of the twentieth century.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One, "'Les Fossoyeurs de la Cuisine Française': Nouvelle Cuisine and the Crisis of French Modernity," traces the dramatic rise and fall of the "nouvelle cuisine" movement of the 1970s. Embracing the post-68 spirit of change, proponents of nouvelle cuisine like chef Paul Bocuse and journalists Henri Gault and Christian Millau sought to revolutionize French haute

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[69] Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[70] Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home,* 13-57.

[71] Françoise Gaspard, *A Small City in France: A Socialist Mayor Confronts Neofascism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

cuisine while rehabilitating its progressive and universalistic core principles. They rejected heavy sauces and byzantine recipes, preferring lighter, healthier dishes, fresher ingredients, and greater creativity. They promoted their ideas in cookbooks, magazines, and television programs, and became global media stars.[72] But by the 1980s, nouvelle cuisine had come to signify tiny portions on huge plates and ill-advised combinations like fish with chocolate sauce. The next generation of chefs retreated from nouvelle cuisine's revolutionary rhetoric and avant-garde experimentation—if not its reverence for natural flavors and fresh ingredients—favoring instead a "return" to traditional provincial home cooking and local ingredients, embracing a style known as *cuisine du terroir*.[73] This chapter argues that nouvelle cuisine's rapid rise and descent reveals the waning appeal of universalism and progress as pillars of Frenchness in an era of post-modern skepticism and the revival of rural traditions.

Chapter Two, "'Non à McMerde!': Fast Food, Americanization, and Globalization," also examines this turn away from modernity, particularly industrialization, focusing on how fast food came to be seen as a foreign invader and an emblem of American imperialism and globalization. In the 1970s, the industrialization of the restaurant was seen as problem but primarily a domestic one. The French industrialist Jacques Borel's cafeterias and rest-stops were heavily criticized for many of the same practices later associated with "American" fast food: counter service, deskilled labor, standardized menus, and, of course, bad food. Yet once hamburger chains like McDonald's and their American-style European competitors swept across France in the 1980s, they became vehicles for recasting the unsavory aspects of industrialized

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[72] Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste,* 158-165.

[73] Technically, *terroir* refers to the soil, environment and climate of a vineyard. However, it has come to be used more broadly to describe unique cultural and physiographical environments that are said to produce distinct local foods and cuisines that are directly tied to the land and the people who live there. See: Amy Trubek, *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2008).

food as effects of American cultural imperialism. Furthermore, fast food became a foil against which an image of local, natural, and traditional French gastronomy could be defined. By the late 1990s, critics like José Bové took on McDonald's as the face of an insidious globalization that was allegedly destroying French cultural diversity and national identity.

Chapter Three, "'Une Sacrée Bonne Femme': The Triumph of Maïté," returns to the valorization of local and traditional cuisine, seen with the *cuisine du terroir.* Moving away from haute cuisine, however, this chapter considers the changing roles of "regional cuisine" and "bourgeois cuisine," and the increasing centrality of the provincial "peasant" woman in constructions of gastronomic Frenchness. One of the great stars of French television in the 1980s and 1990s was Maïté, a woman from Gascony who starred in the first successful cooking show to focus on a regional cuisine. In fact, she made a spectacle of her Southwestern French home-cooking by skinning and butchering wild game and roasting it over a fireplace—sparing none of the gory details. These and other images of the stereotypical "rural housewife" signified authenticity and culinary authority rooted in the rural family traditions of mothers and grandmothers, rather than that of urban male chefs. Celebrating regional cuisine as the foundation of France's culinary excellence not only proved more satisfying than the modernity and universalism of fast food or nouvelle cuisine, it also elevated and reintegrated regionalist sentiments as part of French national culture.

Chapter 4, "'L'Europe des Casseroles': Rebranding French Food in the Global Countryside," moves deeper into provincial France, examining state policies intended to both revitalize rural France and promote French food on the global market. Under international pressure to reform agricultural policies and trade agreements, new government initiatives rebranded France as an exporter of unique food products and a tourist destination where

traditional restaurants and old vineyards figured among its most popular attractions. The chapter begins by looking at efforts to encourage rural tourism like the "Plats du Terroir" program that encouraged restaurants around France to offer tourists local specialties at reduced prices. It then examines debates about French agricultural policies precipitated by international GATT and CAP negotiations that pointed to a shift toward high-quality, traditional food products.[74] This shift facilitated the development of a Europe-wide "Protected Designation of Origin" system for regulating place-based labeling on wines and other comestibles based on France's own *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* system. Finally, this chapter discusses the ambitious project to catalogue all of the traditional food products of each region of France known as the *Inventaire du Patrimoine Culinaire.* Ultimately, I argue that globalization and Europeanization, rather than simply being threats to local French traditions, also provided opportunities for their promotion and exploitation.

Chapter 5, "'Couscous Républicain': Food in Post-colonial Identity Politics," considers the place of immigrants and foods associated with them in the conflict between republican universalism and the rising significance of ethnic identities—both "indigenous" and "foreign." By the 1980s, couscous had famously become one of the most popular dishes in France. For some, like the *pied-noir* singer, Enrico Macias, this meant that couscous should be "added to the great menu of French cuisine." For many *pieds-noirs,* couscous was an important part of a distinctly colonial cultural heritage and identity that was both French and North African. But for those among the metropolitan French population who preferred to erase colonialism from the national memory and many North-African immigrants whose cultural identities were invested in delegitimizing colonialism, couscous was part of a timeless and distinct North-African culture

[74] These acronyms refer to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (the precursor to the World Trade Organization), and the Common Agricultural Policy (for Europe).

separate from French civilization. Couscous's ambiguity as both "French" and "foreign," made it a powerful and contested political symbol. Sometimes, the dish could become a symbol of republican unity. For example, in 2002 it was used to rally opposition to the anti-immigrant, ultra nationalist presidential candidate, Jean-Marie Le Pen. More often, however, television advertisements and cookbooks represented couscous as foreign and exotic. This chapter reveals the complex difficulties in the ways immigrant cultures are accepted (or not) into a French nation still struggling to define its own identity.

Finally, the conclusion briefly discusses the 2010 decision by UNESCO to name the "Gastronomic Meal of the French" as part of the "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." This serves as an entry point for a discussion of the present and future of food in a France still struggling with the issues addressed in the preceding chapters of this dissertation. While the UNESCO episode shows that France continues to aspire to universalistic ideals and seek international "grandeur," the balance between republican universalism and ethnocultural particularism has shifted in the post-colonial context. All the world is welcome at France's table to share and appreciate French food, hospitality, and gastronomic philosophy. But no longer is the essence of French cuisine defined by its universality, rather it has become a culturally specific set of traditions rooted in the local terroir passed down from generation to generation among a clearly delineated "people." This dissertation tells the story of that shift, pinpointing key moments where the meaning of "French Taste" was central to reimagining France's place in a changing world.

CHAPTER ONE:

"Les Fossoyeurs de la Cuisine Française": Nouvelle Cuisine and the Crisis of French Modernity

The cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure, or else resigns itself, still unconsciously, to revealing its contradictions.
-Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle"[1]

On the evening of March 26, 1976, the highly influential cultural talk show, *Apostrophes,* was broadcast live from an ornate Belle-Epoque dining room. In his opening remarks, host Bernard Pivot addressed the French television audience:

> Good evening. We've had the new wave, the new novel, the new cinema; now there is the new social contract, the new left, the *Nouvelle Action Française*. There is the *Nouvelle Observateur,* the *Nouvelle Economiste,* the new Créteil, et cetera. Since the end of the RTF, we even talk about the new television. And now, here we have nouvelle cuisine française. But does a new French cuisine really exist? That question brought to you live from the magnificent *Train Bleu* restaurant in Paris's *Gare de Lyon* on this fifty-third episode of *Apostrophes.*[2]

The two guests at the center of the debate that evening were Henri Gault and Christian Millau, two journalists with a burgeoning gastronomic media empire who had first proclaimed the arrival of "la nouvelle cuisine française"—literally "New French Cuisine"—in 1973.[3] The question forming the episode's title—"Does nouvelle cuisine exist?"—was provocative considering nouvelle cuisine's already massive renown in France and throughout the world. As Pivot mentioned, a "nouveau chef" on the program, Paul Bocuse, had recently appeared on the cover

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[1] Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle," trans. Peter Brooks, *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 43.

[2] "Existe-t-il une nouvelle cuisine française?" March 26, 1976 episode of *Apostrophes* (Antenne 2). Historian Tamara Chaplin has called *Apostrophes* "the most renowned cultural program in the history of French television;" Tamara Chaplin, *Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 132. All television programs, unless otherwise noted, were accessed at the Inathèque de France of the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA). Many are also available at www.ina.fr.

[3] Henri Gault and Christian Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," *Gault-Millau* no. 54, Oct. 1973, 66-69.

of *Newsweek*, and all of the show's guests welcomed the trend toward reduced cooking times, fresher ingredients, lighter, simpler dishes, and more inventive recipes.[4]

The real meaning of Pivot's question was whether any of this was really *new*. Christian Millau insisted that nouvelle cuisine was an "insurgence" against the rigid codification and aristocratic "pompous style" inherent in French haute cuisine (high cuisine), also called *grande cuisine* (great cuisine).[5] But another guest, the chef Denis, himself credited by Gault and Millau as an innovator of nouvelle cuisine, was skeptical of the term:

> I don't really understand what this "nouvelle cuisine" is. […] They talk to me about light sauces: those have always existed. They talk to me about minimally cooked vegetables: always existed. They talk to me about serving raw fish. […] All of this has always existed. […] As for using the same sauce to dress different dishes by adding a few extra ingredients, that was never *grande cuisine.*

Similarly, *Le Monde's* conservative food critic, Robert Courtine, called nouvelle cuisine a "publicity gimmick" without even an original name. To prove his point, Courtine offered a two hundred year old quote from Voltaire complaining about the indigestibility of "this nouvelle cuisine."[6] In nouvelle cuisine's defense, Christian Millau admitted, "Of course we haven't invented anything! […Nouvelle cuisine] is a return to the sources that were completely forgotten." However, he asserted that it was disingenuous to dismiss the real changes underway in French restaurants in the 1970s.

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[4] Jerrold K. Footlick, "Food: The New Wave," *Newsweek*, August 11, 1975, 50-57. The mere fact that nouvelle cuisine was the topic of an episode of *Apostrophes* is also evidence of its mainstream success.

[5] "Haute cuisine" (sometimes called "grande cuisine") will be used here as a general term for the professional cooking in fine restaurants of which "nouvelle cuisine" is considered one style that is generally opposed to the older style called "cuisine classique" or "classic cuisine."

[6] The entry for "nouvelle cuisine" in the 1984 edition of *Larousse gastronomique,* which Courtine edited, was more positive regarding nouvelle cuisine's significance but did include the Voltaire quotation as well. Robert Courtine, ed., *Larousse gastronomique* (Paris: Larousse, 1984), 672.

Much was at stake in this debate. As one television presenter put it in 1971: "Cuisine is our most prestigious ambassador. It is perhaps, let's admit it, our last remaining supremacy."[7] Haute cuisine, or *grande cuisine*, had long been the standard in fine restaurants and banquets throughout the world.[8] However, French cuisine's success was all the more significant because it embodied the values of modern French civilization, particularly progress and universalism. *Haute cuisine* was fundamentally dedicated to progress, with its emphasis on rigorous codification and technological advancement. As a "universal" cuisine it assimilated ingredients and ideas from anywhere and exported recipes and techniques everywhere.[9]

But these ideals of French modernity came under attack in the sixties and seventies in what has been termed the "crisis" of modernity. French modernity had been built on a set of oppositions between culture and nature, progress and tradition, universalism and difference, generally favoring the former (but depending on the latter). A certain awareness of the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in this French modernity had already driven avant-garde critiques since the nineteenth century. But Maxim Silverman has argued, following Zygmunt Bauman, that in the contemporary (post-colonial) period awareness of these contradictions reached the level of "crisis" in "everyday reality" where "uncertainty, indeterminacy, ambivalence and moral relativism are no longer confined to the margins but have become our general rule."[10] To put it another way, critiques of modernity had finally achieved a critical mass and a coherence that could no longer be marginalized or reabsorbed by the "grand narratives" of French progress and

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[7] "La cuisine française," April 25, 1971 episode of *L'invité du dimanche* (Antenne 2).

[8] Amy Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia: University of Pensylvania Press, 2000).

[9] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[10] Maxim Silverman, *Facing Postmodernity: French Thought on Culture and Society* (London: Routledge, 1999), 5.

universalism. More specifically, by the 1960s radical cultural critics had set their sights on supermarkets and restaurants filled with a standardized supply of bland foods that perfectly illustrated the alienation and conformity of a universal "société de consommation" (consumer society) or even "société du spectacle" (society of the spectacle) driven by industrial progress.[11] Meanwhile, anti-colonialists and regionalists rallied around indigenous and rural cuisines in order to denounce French universalism's legacy of oppressing colonial and regional cultures.[12]

French cuisine thus faced a dilemma at the beginning of the 1970s. On the one hand many looked to it as the last hope for the French model of modernity. On the other hand it was attacked for its adherence to the very ideals of progress and universalism that were so central to that model. Nouvelle cuisine emerged as a response to this socio-cultural crisis: it attempted to correct and update French cuisine and bring it in line with contemporary values such as the democratization of culture and the return to nature, while at the same time revitalizing its core principles. Indeed, this chapter argues that nouvelle cuisine's acclaim derived from its promise to reconcile these conflicting imperatives. However, nouvelle cuisine ultimately failed because its quintessentially *modern* attempt to appropriate and reabsorb local, traditional, and natural critiques under the headings of modernization and universalism—as a number of previous "nouvelle cuisines" had successfully done before—was no longer tenable in the postmodern, postcolonial era. By the 1980s, "nouvelle cuisine" was, for some, becoming reducible to

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[11] Jean Baudrillard, *La Société de la consommation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970); Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1967).

[12] Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

ridiculous culinary farces like "sardines with strawberries" that only reconfirmed the decadence of modern bourgeois culture.[13]

Scholars have generally interpreted nouvelle cuisine as a product of the post-1968 ideals from health and nature to individualism and a popular will for change.[14] They also emphasize socio-economic changes like the expansion of the restaurant-going, affluent class and the increasing number of chef-owned restaurants.[15] Echoing the popular debates of the seventies and eighties, most tend to evaluate nouvelle cuisine's significance in terms of its influence and innovations. Some accept nouvelle cuisine's own narrative of a radical rupture, while others dismiss the hype and argue for continuity, but most find some validity to both interpretations.[16] This chapter, by contrast, asks *why* nouvelle cuisine attracted so much controversy and examines how the problem of "newness" reflected deeper anxieties about French modernity. Nouvelle cuisine did introduce important lasting culinary trends, especially the veneration of fresh, natural ingredients. But in terms of the debate about France's culinary identity, nouvelle cuisine was *neither* the radical reinvention of French cuisine *nor* the successful rehabilitation of core French culinary principles, but rather the last gasp of a model of French civilization that no longer corresponded to France's place in the world.

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[13] Edmond Neirinck and Jean-Pierre Poulain, *Histoire de la Cuisine et des Cuisiniers: Techniques Culinaires et Pratiques de Table, en France, du Moyen-Age à nos Jours* (Malakoff, France: Editions Jacques Lanore, 1992), 114.

[14] Pascal Ory, "Gastronomy" in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Volume II: Traditions*, dir. Pierre Nora, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 460-467; Jean-Robert Pitte, *French Gastronomy The History and Geography of a Passion*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 143-158.

[15] Alain Drouard, *Le mythe gastronomique français* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2010), 104-115; Claude Fischler, *L'homnivore: Le goût, la cuisine et le corps* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2001), 245-274.

[16] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 163-165; Patrick Rambourg, *Histoire de la cuisine et de la gastronomie françaises: Du Moyen Age au XXe siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2010), 283-299; Hayagreeva Rao, Philippe Monin and Rodolphe Durand, "Institutional Change in Toque Ville: Nouvelle Cuisine as an Identity Movement in French Gastronomy," *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (2003): 795-843.

This chapter begins by outlining nouvelle cuisine's proposed remedies to the decadence and tiredness of mainstream *haute cuisine* in postwar France, focusing on three main culinary principles: natural simplicity, dietary health, and invention. It then examines how in the context of a general post-1968 willingness for progressive change, nouvelle cuisine appropriated the language of revolution in order to reform French cuisine and rehabilitate its core values of universalism and progress. However, as the third section shows, nouvelle cuisine soon began to collapse under the weight of the contradictions between its adherence to modernistic and imperialistic values and its radical posture in a post-modern, post-colonial France. The final section of the chapter examines how a new culinary movement, *cuisine de terroir,* emerged in the 1980s that helped construct a more stable and relevant notion of Frenchness no longer tied to progress and universalism but to tradition and local particularities. Ultimately, it was not the success of nouvelle cuisine's culinary revolution, but its failure that ushered in a new understanding of "French cuisine."

The Culinary Principles of Nouvelle Cuisine

Gault and Millau insisted that they had not invented nouvelle cuisine but merely discovered a trend already in progress among a group of innovative professional chefs. Their famous discovery took place in the mid-sixties while researching restaurants around France for the magazine *Candide.* One evening, at Paul Bocuse's restaurant in Collonges-au-Mont-d'Or near Lyon, they requested a light supper, having already feasted there for lunch:

> The crisp green beans had the odor of the garden. [This green bean salad] was grandiose in its extreme simplicity. Next came red mullets, cooked to perfection, meaning cooked very little. [They were] firm with all the flavors of the sea. Nouvelle cuisine already existed and we had just been introduced.[17]

[17] Henri Gault and Christian Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table* (Paris: Éditions j'ai lu, 1977 [1976 Editions Stock]), 112-113.

On Bocuse's recommendation, they next visited Jean and Pierre Troisgros' restaurant in Roanne. "We were dazzled for a second time. That day, in our minds, nouvelle cuisine française became a reality."[18]

Nevertheless, it was only after the pair had launched their own *Gault-Millau* restaurant guide and magazine, that they introduced the term "nouvelle cuisine." In an October 1973 article entitled "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française" in *Le Nouveau Guide Gault-Millau – Connaissance des Voyages* (referred to hereafter as *Gault-Millau* magazine), they presented nouvelle cuisine's defining manifesto as "Ten Commandments." But in keeping with their claim to discovery rather than invention, their "commandments" were not phrased as directives, but more like commendations of new culinary behaviors worthy of emulation. To paraphrase, nouvelle cuisine was characterized by:

1. "Chinese-style" reduced cooking times for most seafood, meat, vegetables and pasta
2. New ways of using ingredients that highlight their freshness and seasonal availability
3. Fewer choices on the menu so that every dish can be made fresh to order
4. Sparing use of modern technologies like refrigeration that may damage food
5. Embracing avant-garde techniques and equipment when they are truly beneficial
6. An end to the excessive aging of game that ruined its fresh, natural taste
7. Fresh *jus* and *fumets* replacing heavy brown and white sauces
8. Attention to dietary health with dishes that are as delectable as they are digestible
9. An aesthetic of simplicity that eschews the danger of showy presentations
10. A spirit of invention and openness to obscure and exotic inspirations[19]

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[18] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table*, 113.

[19] The original "Ten Commandments" are much more detailed and take up two full magazine pages. Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 67-69.

These "commandments" comprised not only a program for nouvelle cuisine, but also a critique of classic French cuisine's failure to adapt to contemporary conditions. Chief among these failings was the over-reliance on technological modernization and "progress"—from industrial agriculture to complicated recipes—to overcome nature—from the seasonal freshness of ingredients to human digestion. Similarly, the chauvinistic adherence to a "universal" French repertoire of recipes had stifled creativity and left cuisine outdated. In response to these culinary problems, nouvelle cuisine proposed a set of principles that can be organized according to three themes: natural simplicity, dietary health, and invention.

Natural Simplicity

Gault and Millau loathed the extensive repertoire of standard dishes on restaurant menus that required large stocks of refrigerated, frozen, and imported ingredients. "Our age of overproduction and technology has bastardized, poisoned, [and] even eliminated numerous foods. Gastronomically speaking, there is practically no more chicken, fruit, potatoes, beef, game, trout, cheese, etc."[20] Classic French cuisine had relied upon elaborate cooking techniques and rich sauces to cover deficiencies in quality or freshness of ingredients from around the world kept at the ready year-round—as if to show modern French culture's mastery of the (entire) natural world. Rejecting such "systematically modernist" methods, several of Gault and Millau's commandments focused on showcasing the "natural" flavor of fresh, high-quality ingredients.

Gault and Millau admitted that modern trade and industry had "not yet ruined" certain foods and even rendered a few more accessible, such as oysters and Israeli *foie gras*, but a cook needed to know how to be selective. In his 1976 cookbook, *La Cuisine du marché* (*Cooking*

[20] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 67-68.

From the Market) Paul Bocuse argued that produce was actually better than ever before, thanks to modern transportation, but the real problem was the blind reliance on modern technology to overcome nature. He wrote, "The annoying thing is that my contemporaries seem to have lost, little by little, their sense of the seasons […They] want to have asparagus at Christmas, strawberries on New Year's Day, and wild game on Easter!"[21] Bocuse argued that, for home cooks as well as 3-star chefs, cooking ought to begin not in the kitchen but at the market:

> It is the market that decides. This, I believe, is what makes good cooking. […] Therefore, a homemaker should not open my book and choose to make this or that dish. Rather, I would advise her to do her shopping first. There, she will see what is available and then she can look in the book for a recipe to accommodate it. Otherwise, if she leaves home with the idea of buying let's say sole, and doesn't let go of it even when her keen eye spots some nice brilliant whiting on display, or beautiful porgies, and still comes home with inferior quality sole, then […] the success of her meal is in serious risk of being compromised.[22]

Once the fresh, high-quality ingredients had been selected, then the next step was cooking them carefully in order to retain their natural flavors. As Bocuse put it, "Leave things with their own taste: it is a matter of valorizing the original flavor of the food."[23] Gault and Millau criticized Madame Saint-Ange's classic prewar cookbook, *La Bonne Cuisine*, saying "The cooking times [for fish] indicated in this book, as in others, are such that, fresh or not, the fish would be transformed into papier-mâché."[24] By contrast, one of nouvelle cuisine's most iconic recipes was Jean and Pierre Troisgros' *escalopes de saumon à l'oseille Troisgros*—salmon filets with sorrel (and cream sauce). In their cookbook, *Cuisiniers à Roanne*, they indicate cooking the thin salmon filets in a skillet for just twenty-five seconds on one side and

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[21] Paul Bocuse, *La cuisine du marché* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980 [1976]), 5.

[22] Bocuse, 5-6.

[23] Bocuse, 6.

[24] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 67.

fifteen seconds on the other.[25] However, the 1976 cookbook, *La Cuisine de Denis*, explained that cooking food gently and minimally was not only a matter of time but also temperature:

> Ragouts and braised dishes must simmer very slowly, at a minimum temperature below which they would not cook (about 70 degrees Celsius). […] Only very slow cooking permits the juices and aromas to penetrate the meat and render the sauce unctuous and savory. […] Contrary to ragouts […] other preparations for fish, meats or vegetables should have strictly limited cooking times. Herein lies the difficulty: any less and the food is not cooked, any more and they lose all flavor.[26]

The final step to highlighting the ingredients' natural flavors was choosing sauces and seasonings. Nouvelle cuisine banished the classic heavy French sauces like *béchamel* and *bordelaise* that epitomized the codified culinary system developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Far from being fresh or "natural," the *raison d'être* of those classic sauces was a kind of alchemical synthesis that rendered basic raw ingredients—wine, stock, butter, flour, etc.—unrecognizable through long processes of browning, boiling, blending, reducing and simmering. At its best, this alchemy could produce deliciously complex and powerful flavors that could become the star of the dish. But for that reason, as Gault and Millau alleged, these sauces were too often relied upon to mask the taste of bland or less-than-fresh meat or vegetables. By the same token, they could just as easily overpower the delicate natural flavors of fresh ones.

Nouvelle cuisine favored sauces that were lighter and customized to—or better yet made from—the dish's primary ingredients. If anything, saucing became more exacting even as it became less intense. The first three general rules in Denis' book all concerned sauces:

> * Use wines and liquors only sparingly and know that they must be cooked a very long time. It is with well-chosen natural aromatics, juices and *fumets* made from

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[25] Jean and Pierre Troisgros, *Cuisiniers à Roanne* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1977), 104.

[26] Denis, *La Cuisine de Denis* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1976), 17.

> the main ingredients being prepared that one obtains the best result both from the point of view of taste and digestibility.
>
> *Banish all omnibus sauces; too many practitioners unfortunately keep one or two sauces on the corner of their stove for days or weeks to be used for all their dishes. Besides being unhygienic, this method gives deplorable results. All the sauces end up tasting the same and are perfectly indigestible.
>
> *Choose stocks and *fumets* with a relation to the ingredients being prepared. A *fumet* made from woodcock doesn't go with partridge nor does one made from sole go with salmon. With a few exceptions, brown stocks do not go with white meats nor do white stocks go with dark meats.[27]

Highlighting natural flavors was closely aligned with aesthetic simplicity and earnestness. Gault and Millau and others accused classic French cuisine of overindulging in culinary spectacles and illusions that detracted attention from tasting the food. Their Ninth Commandment blamed the "formidable [Antonin] Carême" for "launching the vogue for showy presentations, 150 years ago." Nouvelle cuisine chefs, on the other hand:

> Still like some ornamentation and embellishment, but know their limits, and understand the aesthetic of simplicity[…] A langouste *à la Parisienne* fileted and covered in jelly and surrounded by tartlets and hard-boiled eggs is not as good as [a langouste] with just a little vinaigrette—well, maybe with a few truffles too[…].[28]

The sociologist, Claude Fischler, has argued that Nouvelle Cuisine's emphasis on natural simplicity was intended as an attempt to restore balance to the "nature/culture dilemma."[29] Culture, conceived broadly to include science, technology and economy, had grown overconfident in its ability to conquer the natural limitations of food production and consumption. Refrigeration had mitigated rot, transportation had overcome environmental diversity, and trade had conquered even the seasons. Moreover, *haute cuisine's* complex pastries

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[27] Denis, 17.

[28] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 69.

[29] Claude Fischler, "Food habits, social change and the nature/culture dilemma," *Social Science Information* 19 (1980): 937-953.

and sauces transformed the humblest ingredients into works of art far greater than the sum of their parts. Yet, paradoxically, all of these advances distanced eaters from nature and created anxiety about understanding and identifying food. Furthermore, modernization brought on its own problems, from bland industrial carrots to poisonous chemical pesticides.

Nouvelle cuisine appeared as a corrective to an overzealous modernism that had managed to simultaneously get ahead of itself and become stalled. Still, fundamentally, it was neither anti-modern nor post-modern in spirit. Nouvelle cuisine remained confident in the possibility of progress and relied on a long-standing, if sometimes neglected, Enlightenment tradition of appreciating and seeking greater harmony with nature. But nouvelle cuisine remained firmly on the side of modern science, technology, and culture as the dominant, active force in achieving this harmony. Chief among these modern tools was the growing understanding of dietary health.

Dietary Health

Restoring the connection between cuisine and nature corresponded to a more nuanced understanding of the body's nutritional needs and the dangers of exceeding them. In the modern era, dietary recommendations had long emphasized maximizing nutrients, including calories. Calorie-rich foods and ample figures had been signs of opulence. As discussed more below, Gault and Millau delighted in mocking the image of the old, fat "bon vivant," pathetic in his lewd indulgence and pomposity. By the 1970s, new ideals of fitness and thinness coincided with a growing realization of the ill effects of sugar, fat, salt, and alcohol on one's health. Nouvelle cuisine replaced the heavy sauces and rich deserts of classic haute cuisine with lighter, more natural dishes that reflected these contemporary ideals.

The most famous example of a luxurious, healthy, even low-calorie cuisine was Michel Guérard's "*cuisine minceur*" ("slimming cuisine"). After running the trendy Paris restaurant, *Le Pot-au-feu*, Guérard moved operations to a remote health spa located in Eugénie-les-Bains. As the spa's hot springs were said to promote weight loss, much of Guérard's clientele sought a complementary diet during their stay. Soon, his *cuisine minceur* was drawing both diners and *curistes* (spa-goers) from all over France and the world.[30] The critic Claude Lebey wrote, "Michel Guérard, as even his peers recognize, is certainly the most gifted cook of his generation."[31] While expressing reservations about the claims of novelty suggested by the term "nouvelle cuisine," Lebey continued, "It is no exaggeration to affirm that [with *cuisine minceur*, Guérard] has invented a new cuisine [*nouvelle cuisine*], a unique feat in a field that usually evolves slowly."[32]

Illustrating Guérard's innovations, his 1976 cookbook, *La Grand Cuisine Minceur*, contained both classic and *cuisine-minceur* recipes for beurre blanc and mayonnaise.[33] While the classic beurre blanc contained 250 grams of butter for more than 50 grams of fat per serving, the *minceur* version contained only 60 grams of butter supplemented with a tablespoon of crème fraîche and 200 grams of fat-free *fromage blanc,* or roughly 15 grams of fat per serving.[34]

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[30] Rudolph Chelminski, *The Perfectionist: Life and Death in Haute Cuisine* (New York: Gotham, 2005),137-9.

[31] Claude Lebey, preface to *La Grande cuisine minceur,* by Michel Guérard (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1976), 7. Admittedly, these comments appeared in a preface to Guérard's own cookbook, but Lebey knew he would be held accountable for this claim, since Guérard's was only the first volume in a series Nouvelle Cuisine cookbooks overseen by Lebey that would feature many of these "peers."

[32] Lebey,7-8.

[33] Guérard, *La grande cuisine minceur*, 79-86, 127, 144-145.

[34] These are very common dairy products in France that do not really have American equivalents or precise English translations. "Crème fraîche" is akin to a very rich sour cream and is becoming available in U.S. supermarkets under the French name. *Fromage blanc,* meaning "white cheese," is related to quark or cottage cheese, but has a texture similar to yogurt. "Beurre blanc," which literally means "white butter" is not a dairy product, but a classic cooked sauce made primarily from butter and white wine.

Guérard's adaptation of mayonnaise was even more astonishing. In place of 200 ml of vegetable oil in the classic recipe, the *minceur* version used only 15 ml of olive oil supplemented with 30 ml of fat-free *fromage blanc* and 60 ml of mineral oil! Mineral oil, a petroleum product, cannot be digested making it effectively fat-free (as well as a common laxative). In fact, almost all of his recipes for cold sauces included varying amounts of mineral oil—up to a half cup as in his *sauce vierge.* For "those adverse to using mineral oil," many of the recipes did include footnotes with alternatives—often complex concoctions containing vegetable oil, somewhat defeating the purpose. Eventually, as Rudolph Chelminski has noted, Guérard found this mineral oil trick and its effects on digestion unappealing and later "invented a nearly fat-free oil substitute made of vegetable *bouillon* lightly gelatinized with chicken bones and finished off with just a touch of olive oil for taste."[35]

Cuisine minceur skyrocketed Guérard to international fame and fortune, particularly in the United States where interest in weight-loss and miracle diets was growing as fast as it was in France. Already in 1976, after learning about Guérard's cooking from a profile in *The New Yorker,* an American amateur cook, Armand Aulicino, published his own cookbook, *The New French Cooking: Minceur Cuisine Extraordinaire*. Aulicino defined his "*Minceur Cuisine*" as "the technique that calls for eliminating or minimizing the use of such high-calorie and high-fat ingredients as oil, butter, cream, wheat flour, and sugar (other than natural sugars found in fruits and vegetables)."[36] Remarkably, Aulicino's book actually provided much more detailed explanations of his "*minceur*" techniques that Guérard himself who had included 80-pages of classic culinary principles and techniques but almost no general explanation of *cuisine minceur*

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[35] Chelminski, 138.

[36] Armand Aulicino, *The New French Cooking: Minceur Cuisine Extraordinaire* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1976), v.

besides what could be gleaned from the recipes themselves. When Guérard's book appeared in English translation the same year, a sticker on the cover read (likely in reference to Aulicino's book): "DON'T BE FOOLED BY IMITATIONS! Only if you're cooking with **Michel Guérard** are you cooking **authentic minceur.**" [Bold and capitals in original][37]

While Gault and Millau were dismissive of "the caprices of men in a hurry and women *curistes*" and their "macrobiotic brews," their Eighth Commandment welcomed the emphasis on dietary health, especially digestion: "One no longer peels tomatoes only for the sake of taste or teeth, but also for the stomach."[38] This preoccupation with (in)digestion often figured more prominently than concerns about calories and fat. Regarding sauces, Gault and Millau wrote, "[Nouvelle cuisine] chefs still use fumets, cream, butter, pure juices, eggs, truffles, lemon, fresh herbs, fine peppers and honor sauces that are light, sauces that marry well, that enhance, that sing, and leave the mind clear and the belly light."[39]

With the exception of Guérard's *cuisine minceur*, the characteristic "lightness" of many nouvelle cuisine dishes referred not to fewer calories but a milder taste and thinner consistency, often accomplished by using more cream or butter. Each serving of the Troisgros brothers' iconic salmon dish, for example, called for about 100 ml of double cream (about 50% fat). As Jean-Robert Pitte has commented,

> All the great [nouvelle cuisine] chefs continued to automatically set a mound or a plate of fine butter on each table and to finish their stocks and pan juices with butter in the great classical tradition, without considering all the butter that went into making appetizers and pastries, in addition to cream and whole milk. [Prewar chef] Fernand Point must be laughing in his grave, while customers continue to dig their own graves with their teeth![40]

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[37] Michel Guérard, *Michel Guérard's Cuisine Minceur*, trans. Narcisse Chamberlain (New York: Morrow, 1976).

[38] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 69.

[39] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 69.

[40] Pitte, 148.

Furthermore, it is doubtful such a heavy cream sauce is really easier to digest than one made with a flour roux. In fact, Guérard's book states just the opposite.[41] Nevertheless, Gault and Millau were convinced that "al dente" vegetables, rare meat, and freshly prepared sauces were healthier and more digestible. As Pitte argues, nouvelle cuisine techniques correlated with post-1968 values exalting the body, nature, and truth.[42] In this way, claims about the healthfulness of minimally cooked dishes and sauces that relied on unaltered "natural" ingredients like cream and butter could go unchallenged because they seemed true in the era of the return to nature.

Invention

On *Apostrophes,* Millau compared classic haute cuisine with the neo-baroque decor of the *Train Bleu* restaurant, un-original and pompous even in its own time compared to artists like Manet, Degas, or Cezanne.[43] The implication was that while classic cuisine had grown complacent and conformist, nouvelle cuisine chefs were real, avant-garde innovators. One such innovator was Alain Chapel, whom Millau called "a cook that makes me regret […] having banished the word "artist" from the kitchen."[44] Millau admired how "unlike many of his prostrate contemporaries, Chapel paid little regard to that great mamamouchi, Auguste Escoffier, and his little 'red book' meant to be followed to the letter."[45] At the turn of the century, Escoffier had been French cuisine's great codifier, modernizer, and inventor whose recipes and techniques became a definitive and universal canon. Yet by the 1970s, this canon had become, according to

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[41] Guérard, *La grande cuisine minceur,* 73.

[42] Pitte, 147.

[43] "Existe-t-il une nouvelle cuisine française?"

[44] Christian Millau, (Paris: Plon, 2008), 204.

[45] Millau, *Dictionnaire amoureux de la gastronomie,* 205.

Gault and Millau, dogmatic and constricting. Nouvelle cuisine embraced new techniques like Bocuse's famous microwave-poached fish and repurposing ingredients as in Guérard's foie-gras vinaigrette. After all, letting the daily market's offerings determine the menu often required imagination.

The title of Chapel's 1980 cookbook, *La cuisine, c'est beaucoup plus que des recettes* (*Cuisine is Much More Than Recipes*), required explanation:

> Why write a cookbook that is more than a catalogue of recipes? First, no doubt, because the recipe, in its exactitude of measurements and techniques, presents itself as definitive, preempting all discussion. […] It totally negates the […] freedom of culinary creation and […] the many pleasures of change, innovation and surprise. […T]he recipe is a kind of prison.[46]

Chapel argued that recipes could not account for differences of culture, environment or personal tastes and habits, let alone spontaneous cravings, inspirations, and distant memories. He compared the recipe to "the schoolmaster of old" that demanded "parrot-like recitations." He continued, "we must bring the recipe down to size just like anything else that too easily presents itself as model."[47] In taking on the authority of the recipe in this way, Chapel challenged the imperialistic notion of a universal cuisine perfected in Parisian kitchens and then imposed across France and around the world. When environmental, cultural, and individual diversity are suppressed, he argued, culinary diversity and creativity go with it.

Gault and Millau also linked invention with a cosmopolitan openness to diversity. Under the heading of their Tenth Commandment, "These [chefs] invent," they wrote, "They do not scorn exotic ingredients, condiments and recipes."[48] They recognized Japanese and Chinese influences in particular. Many nouvelle cuisine chefs traveled to Japan as culinary instructors in

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[46] Alain Chapel, *La cuisine c'est beaucoup plus que des recettes* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2009 [1980]), 11.

[47] Chapel, 12.

[48] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 69.

the 1960s and 1970s where they reportedly picked up a taste for rare or even raw fish and learned the art of plating in the kitchen, rather than tableside.[49] Steaming vegetables and serving them al dente were techniques associated with a Chinese influence. Not coincidentally, *Gault-Millau* magazine frequently reviewed the many Chinese and Japanese restaurants that were becoming popular in Paris. In the 1976 comedy film, "L'Aile ou la Cuisse," one of the few dining experiences that actually pleases Louis de Funès's character, the restaurant critic Charles Duchemin, involves a Japanese teppanyaki chef's spectacular grill acrobatics.

In addition to international influences, nouvelle cuisine also took inspiration from regional cuisines. In a 1976 revision of their Ten Commandments, Gault and Millau included a new commandment, "the return to regional gastronomy." They claimed, "The willfully pretentious Parisian 'haute cuisine' suppressed the savory family recipes that expressed so well the talents of women, but nouvelle cuisine has rediscovered this treasure of simplicity."[50] As Chapter Three of this dissertation will show, this "return" to rural traditions would prove to be one of the most enduring trends in French cuisine for the rest of the century. But for nouvelle cuisine regional influences remained primarily sources of inspiration for the artistic inventions of professional chefs. While Gault and Millau ostensibly celebrated the "talents" of provincial women, and the "simplicity" of regional cuisines, they hardly expected chefs to subordinate their own creativity or professional technique to the authority of "authentic" traditions. When they did dig up dishes from the past, it was often the obscure "forgotten" not the familiar or traditional, and it was assumed that chefs would have to *aménager* (fix up) such dishes for modern diners.[51]

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[49] Pitte, 143, 149.

[50] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table,* 125.

[51] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table,* 126.

Despite their overtures to simplicity, tradition and nature, it was ultimately the audacity of these chefs to break with the traditional norms of French cuisine and create exciting new dishes that earned them the admiration—and later the ire—of critics and the media. To prove their point that "everything is permissible," Gault and Millau listed a number of quintessential nouvelle cuisine dishes, including, "Senderens' rabbit quenelles with lamb ham, […] Guérard's oven-roasted porgy in seaweed, Denis' profiteroles stuffed with veal sweetbreads instead of chocolate, […] Bocuse's mussel soup with Iranian saffron, […] Girard's combining crab with grapefruit."[52] It is easy to see how such experimentation could lead to some unpleasant meals, but nouvelle cuisine's supporters remained optimistic and this was a chance they were willing to take. Gault and Millau expressed this sense of adventure when they wrote, "there remain thousands of dishes yet to be created, and surely a few hundred worth keeping."[53]

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Each of these principles was a response to the perceived excesses and failings of classic cuisine and embraced contemporary progressive values like nature, health, and creativity. Yet, as should already be apparent, these principles suffered some contradictions of their own. Even more problematic, as Denis pointed out on *Apostrophes,* was that most of nouvelle cuisine's core principles already existed in remarkably similar formulations. Historian Susan Pinkard has argued that *the* defining principles of modern French cuisine from the 17th and 18th centuries onward were the "delicate cooking style" and "natural taste."[54] In fact, another nouvelle cuisine

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[52] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table,* 126.

[53] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table,* 125.

[54] Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: the Rise of French Cuisine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

chef, Alain Senderens, traced two similar culinary principles—quality ingredients and simple seasoning—as far back as the Ancient Greek Archestratus.[55] In addition, the assimilation of regional and foreign influences had long been a definitive component of French gastronomic universalism. The nineteenth-century gastronome, Brillat-Savarin, boasted, "A meal such as can be ordered in Paris is a cosmopolitan whole in which every part of the world is represented by one or many of its products."[56] At same time, many nouvelle cuisine chefs were achieving international fame on an unprecedented scale that proudly extended French culinary *rayonnement*—the universal "radiance" of French civilization. In addition to Bocuse's appearance on the cover of *Newsweek*, and Guérard's profile in the *New Yorker* mentioned above, both chefs, along with the Troisgros brothers, each had their cookbooks published in English within a year of being published in French.[57]

Ironically, nouvelle cuisine's closest predecessor was, in many ways, that great imperial prophet of *cuisine classique* himself, Auguste Escoffier. At the dawn of the twentieth century, he had written, "The complicated and sometimes heavy menus [that used be so popular] would be unwelcome to the hypercritical appetites so common nowadays."[58] Furthermore, as Stephen Mennell elaborates,

> [Escoffier's *Guide Culinaire*] marked a decline in in the near-universal use of the *espagnole, béchamel* and *velouté* [sauces], and the increased use of the lighter *fumets* […] used to intensify rather than conceal the natural taste of the

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[55] "La cuisine française."

[56] Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste,* trans. M.F.K. Fisher (New York: Vintage Classics, 2011), 321.

[57] Michel Guérard, *Michel Guérard's Cuisine Minceur*; Paul Bocuse, *Paul Bocuse's French Cooking*, trans. Colette Rossant, ed. Lorraine Davis (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Jean and Pierre Troisgros, *The Nouvelle Cuisine of Jean and Pierre Troisgros* (New York: Morrow, 1978).

[58] Auguste Escoffier, *A Guide to Modern Cookery* (London: Hutchinson, 1957), xii. Quoted in Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 159.

> dishes[…]. Escoffier and his associates aimed not to include a profusion of strong flavours in a single dish, but to achieve a perfect balance between a few superb ingredients.[59]

Mennell points out that it was doubtless the generations of Escoffier's disciples who treated his elaborate recipes as a "bible" while ignoring his basic principles that had sullied his reputation for Gault and Millau. But the fact that Bocuse and Gault and Millau also credited the most celebrated mid-century chefs, particularly Fernand Point and Raymond Oliver, as forefathers of nouvelle cuisine points to further continuity. Why then was nouvelle cuisine touted as a culinary revolution?

A Culinary Revolution

If the history of French revolutions, as Marx proclaimed, repeats itself first as tragedy, second as farce, he failed to predict that after several more recurrences, it eventually would come as dinner theater. When nouvelle cuisine burst onto the scene in 1973, it came equipped with origin myths soaked in revolutionary imagery and allusions that at once closely mimicked previous revolutions—culinary and otherwise—and critiqued their failures.[60]

The October 1973 issue of *Gault-Millau* magazine that contained the "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française" article featured on its cover a comical illustration picturing two chickens wearing chef's hats. The first—old, gray, and extremely obese—watches worriedly with bloodshot eyes as the other emerges from an egg with lush brilliantly colored plumage and cries, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française!" The article itself also began with an illustration: a scruffy young cook wearing blue jeans has his foot planted on the expansive belly of a supine older chef

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[59] Mennell, 160.

[60] On nouvelle cuisine and the theme of Revolution, see also: Heather Alison Mallory, "The Nouvelle Cuisine Revolution: Expressions of National Anxieties and Aspirations in French Culinary Discourse 1969 – 1996" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2011).

with medals on his chest. The young chef holds a placard that also reads, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française." Finally, behind the article's text was a tablet motif that recalled iconic images of both the Ten Commandments and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

Before describing the commandments, however, the article began by condemning the hypocrisy and decadence of the gastronomic old regime and its "prince," Maurice Sailland, better known as Curnonsky. Gault and Millau recalled Curnonsky's eighty-first birthday celebration in 1953 where he had proclaimed, "[True] cuisine is where things taste like what they are," while unselfconsciously praising an elaborate meal that drowned the flavors of the main ingredients in heavy sauces and seasonings. Gault and Millau then turned their attention to the prince's court and its ruling class of "bons vivants,"

> [Curnonsky] was what we still call a "bon vivant." And it is this image of "bons vivants"—plump people with napkins tied around their necks, saturated with veal stock, béchamel, and vol-au-vents, the decorated chevaliers of oenophile societies and fondlers of waitresses […]—that we wish to erase from our memories.[61]

Replace "bon vivant" with "aristocrat" and such words might just as easily have come from another journalist who used his pen to incite revolution some hundred-and-sixty-odd years earlier, that "friend of the people," Jean-Paul Marat.

Gault and Millau saw it as their mission to rid French cuisine of its lingering aristocratic tendencies. As Millau explained on *Apostrophes:*

> French cuisine was born with the kings at Versailles. And then the French Revolution left many of the great houses' cooks unemployed. As a result, these chefs opened restaurants in the Palais-Royal area [of Paris] and created, or rather returned to, a certain style of cuisine that was extraordinarily complicated, eye-catching, time-consuming, and expensive. […This] pompous style has never ceased make a fool of itself, to distort itself, and often to copy itself. […] And this *Grande Cuisine Française*, with a capital G, a capital C, and a capital F, became, over the years, something of a caricature of itself.[62]

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[61] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 67.

[62] "Existe-t-il une nouvelle cuisine française?"

Millau's account was a revisionist version of the classic myth of modern French cuisine's triumph residing in the democratization of courtly civilization precipitated by the Revolution. In 1846, Eugene Briffault wrote, "These restaurateurs accomplished a social feat. Under the regime they succeeded, good eating was the privilege of opulence; the restaurateurs put it within reach of everyone."[63] With such narratives, Briffault along with others like Brillat-Savarin reinforced the liberal myth of equality in the post-revolutionary French nation. But as Millau pointed out on *Apostrophes,* this nineteenth-century restaurant clientele was really "the bourgeoisie, or the new bourgeoisie, the *nouveaux riches.*"[64]

Ironically, however, nouvelle cuisine relied on strikingly similar liberal myths of democratization. Whereas the post-revolutionary restaurants of the Palais Royal district had supposedly modernized and democratized French dining through the entrepreneurship of restaurateurs, nouvelle cuisine likewise depended on the rise of the independent, entrepreneurial "*nouveau chef.*" As Bocuse explained on *Apostrophes*:

> I think that nouvelle cuisine is […] a state of mind: today, cuisine belongs to the cooks. […] Before, the cook was a servant [to the restaurateur]. Now we are the bosses. We are the public relations. We can go out into the dining room. […] We make our cuisine as we think it should be. We are no longer told what to do by someone else."[65]

According to this argument, the key to nouvelle cuisine's originality and contemporaneity hinged on the ability of chefs to own and manage their own restaurants.

Likewise, just as the birth of the restaurant required the rise of the restaurant-going bourgeoisie, nouvelle cuisine courted a new clientele. The so-called *cadres* were an emerging

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[63] Quoted in Ory, 455.

[64] "Existe-t-il une nouvelle cuisine française?" See also: Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[65] "Existe-t-il une nouvelle cuisine française?"

social category of typically urban, young, upwardly mobile, middle and upper management employees who rode atop the wave of French prosperity and modernization during the *Trente Glorieuses.*[66] The historian, Alain Drouard, observes that the *cadres* held a prestigious position in this period as "leading consumers in search of new values. Thinness, lightness, health and innovation could only seduce them."[67] Similarly, Jean-Robert Pitte argues that by extolling such virtues,

> *"Nouvelle cuisine"* […] closely corresponded to the entire post-1968 culture. […T]hanks to their familiar and often funny style, Gault and Millau attracted the *nouveaux riches* to restaurants headed by imaginative chefs, customers who, without these nods [to trendy ideals], would never have dared cross the Rubicon.[68]

Indeed, the meritocratic and technocratic liberalism associated with these *cadres* found expression not only in the success stories of ambitious, innovative chefs, but also in Gault and Millau's diatribes against the old and fat bons vivants who might have looked to these *cadres* like their own aging bosses resting on their laurels and perpetuating outdated ideas.

All of this revolutionary and youthful imagery, not to mention the use of the trendy word "nouvelle"—recalling the "new novel," "new wave" cinema, and the "new left"—was meant to link nouvelle cuisine with the radicalism that crested in May 1968. Indeed, Gault and Millau may well have meant to coyly invoke May's notorious paving stones when they wrote: "Refusing the title of gastronomes and defending a new style of '*amateurs*,' [we] have thrown a paving stone into the stew."[69] Their 1973 "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française" article's humorous

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[66] On the emergence of the "*jeunes cadres"* in the fifties and sixties see: Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 83-88; Kristen Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995).

[67] Alain Drouard, *Le mythe gastronomique français* (Paris: CNRS, 2010), 112.

[68] Pitte, 146.

[69] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table,* back cover. The phrase in French, "ils ont lancé un pavé dans la marmite," was above all meant to be a pun on the common expression, "lancer un pavé dans la mare," (to toss a paving stone into the pond), i.e. to make waves, but the connection to violent revolts of May 1968 would have likely

condemnation of pseudo-aristocratic gastronomic decadence in many ways recalled Marco Ferreri's film, *La Grande Bouffe,* that shocked audiences at Cannes just a few months earlier. In the film, four men took their hedonism to the extreme and attempted to literally gorge themselves to death on extravagant haute cuisine dishes and deserts. As one transgression led to another, gluttonous, sexual, and scatological misadventures became disgustingly intertwined.

But while Ferreri's film was widely read as an unflinchingly radical condemnation of modern bourgeois consumer society, nouvelle cuisine had little in common with the postmodern artists and intellectuals who called into question the whole project of liberal modernity, let alone the 68ers who had hurled actual paving stones. For all their revolutionary posturing, Gault and Millau stated from the outset, "We are not iconoclasts."[70] By 1976, they had already admitted that theirs was really a "palace revolution."[71] On *Apostrophes,* Bernard Pivot questioned Millau:

> The new novel, in relation to the traditional novel, was a total rupture. There were no more characters, no more action. Many said that the new novel was no longer a novel. Can we say that nouvelle cuisine française is no longer cuisine?

Millau laughed and said "no," as if this was not meant to be a serious question and changed the subject to the disappearance of dining scenes from contemporary French literature. By 1980, Gault and Millau had apparently had enough of such questions, declaring unequivocally, "No, we are not inciting a culinary May 68 in order to abolish all of the hexagon's traditions of eating well."[72]

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crossed their minds as adding another level of meaning. The connotation of "amateur" here is closer to the English word "enthusiast," rather than simply a "non-professional."

[70] Gault and Millau, "Vive la nouvelle cuisine française," 67.

[71] Henri Gault and Christian Millau, "La 'nouvelle cuisine française': une révolution de palais," *Gault-Millau* no. 83, March 1976: 46-47.

[72] Henri Gault and Christian Millau, "La Nouvelle Cuisine, c'est la grande: elle tiendra!" *Le Crapouillot* no. 56, Autumn 1980: 14.

Despite misgivings about an over-reliance on modern techniques and technologies, Gault and Millau remained confident in the ability of French cuisine to overcome obstacles through progressive modernization. In this way, nouvelle cuisine fits within a moderate, liberal narrative of 1968, situating it as a catalyst in a longer-term process of cultural liberation.[73] As Pitte puts it,

> [May 68] pushed what remained of the proletariat closer to the bourgeoisie […and] profoundly transformed the morals of the bourgeoisie, particularly in matters of sexuality and food, as the two phenomena are closely related. […] *Nouvelle cuisine* shared in the rehabilitation of the body, the worship of nature, as well as that of truth and the supremacy of the word.[74]

Similarly, Pascal Ory refers to the "outspoken hedonism of the 1968 generation," the "retreat into individualism" and the "exaltation of the body" as elements of the post-68 zeitgeist that influenced nouvelle cuisine.[75] But rather than being avant-gardists or political radicals, Gault and Millau were simply, to adopt Ory's term, "modernists":

> [The] two journalists [were] connected with a small but distinctive literary group, the so-called *hussards*. […Before launching their own guide,] Gault and Millau wrote for the daily *Paris-Presse* and the weekly *Nouveau Candide*, the two newspapers that in the early 1960s best typified the "impertinent" and "nonchalant" style that the writers of this group employed in their running battle with the academic, "committed" writers they detested—the "leftists," in a word.[76]

In this way, nouvelle cuisine was firmly situated in the same modern progressive legacy that had motivated the development and elaboration of French cuisine at least since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Stephen Mennell has argued that nouvelle cuisine, like so many French

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[73] Arthur Marwick, "'1968' and 'the Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties (c.1958-c.1974),'" in *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989*, eds. Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 81-94. See also: Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[74] Pitte, 143-144.

[75] Ory, 465.

[76] Ory, 462.

culinary "revolutions" before it—some also calling themselves "nouvelle cuisine"—was not a "revolution" at all, but rather an example of the forward march of the "civilizing process":

> For beneath the succession of dominant styles in French professional cookery is something more complicated than random vagaries of fashion: each new spurt of development has involved not just the overthrow of some aspects of the previous one, but also the renewal of recognisably the same pursuit of refinement, simplicity, restraint, and an increasingly conscious calculation of precisely how innovations will be received by an audience.[77]

When nouvelle cuisine proposed to overthrow orthodox *cuisine classique*, it joined a whole series of previous such "revolutions"—one every fifty years by one count—that had managed, paradoxically, to modernize and refine French cuisine while renewing its dedication to its founding gastronomic principles by presenting them as new.[78] Such contradictions were largely shielded from scrutiny during a time when notions of progress and modernization were crucial pillars French identity and ideology. But as evidenced by nouvelle cuisine's struggle to situate itself among the morass of cultural and political vectors converging around 1968, maintaining this revolutionary myth of newness became far more difficult in the era of skepticism and uncertainty toward the values of progress and universalism that contributed to the mounting "crisis" of French modernity.

The Unraveling of Nouvelle Cuisine

Jean-Paul Aron, author of one the seminal histories of French food, *Le mangeur du XIXe siècle* (*The nineteenth-century diner*), gave his final lecture before his death in 1988 on

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[77] Mennell, 165.

[78] Philip Hyman, "*Culina Mutata:* Carême and *l'ancienne cuisine,*" in *French Food: On the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture,* Lawrence R. Schehr and Allen S. Weiss, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 71-83.

"Glaciation in culture in general and in cuisine in particular."[79] In it, he correlated current trends in cuisine with a contemporary obsession with "signs" (i.e. semiotics) as symptoms of a "glacial culture" where the signifier had become abstracted from the signified, leaving it as empty, meaningless, and frozen, as a block of ice. He traced this back to Claude Lévi-Strauss's first ventures into structuralism, after which "society left behind their effusions, emotions, passions, affective conflicts, and sentiments, all that old useless junk […about] the meaning of life."[80] Along with Lévi-Strauss, Aron named Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan as perpetrators, but he also found this lack of meaning, purpose, and human subjectivity in contemporary advertising, TV *zapping* (channel surfing), and, of course, cuisine. Tying nouvelle cuisine to the "return to nature" aspects of May 1968, Aron describes three "glacial" features of nouvelle cuisine: representations of nature, representations of asceticism, and replacing substance with discourse.[81] Perhaps it was unfair of him to blame structuralism for uncovering the contradictions and arbitrariness of modern culture that were arguably already there, but Aron had a point. There was a kind of "observer's paradox" at the heart of the "crisis" of modernity: tearing down its myths made it impossible for modern civilization, and cuisine, to continue moving forward as it had.

Claude Lévi-Strauss first considered the underlying binary oppositions of cuisine in 1958 in *Structural Anthropology*, where he compared French and British cuisines, noting, for example, that while British cuisine drew strong distinctions between endogenous (national) and exogenous (foreign) ingredients, French cuisine apparently did not. Lévi-Strauss argued that such binaries,

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[79] Jean-Paul Aron, "De la glaciation dans la culture en générale et dans la cuisine en particulier," in *Internationale de l'Imaginaire no.* 7: *Cultures, Nourriture,* (Arles: Babel, 1997), 13-37; Jean-Paul Aron, *Le Mangeur du XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1973).

[80] Aron, 24.

[81] Aron, 34-37.

if corroborated in other areas, might reveal the "unconscious attitudes of the society."[82] Although Lévi-Strauss leaves his example there, the lack of French interest in differentiating foreign and domestic ingredients could plausibly be tied to French universalism. Subsequently, in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964) and "The Culinary Triangle" (1965), Lévi-Strauss explored other binaries with bearing on nouvelle cuisine, such as raw vs. cooked, and nature vs. culture.[83]

Yet while Lévi-Strauss revealed that such binaries may have ideological implications, others like Roland Barthes were more explicit in revealing the social and political implications of cuisine in modern France. In *Mythologies* (1957), Barthes took aim at one of France's beloved "national" foods, *steak-frites* ("steak and chips"), noting, "to eat steak rare represents a nature and a morality."[84] Yet Barthes gradually reveals how such values are myths constructed in the service of nationalism, imperialism, and bourgeois dominance. Barthes expanded his analysis of food in subsequent essays like, "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption" (1961).[85] In his 1975 preface to Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste,* he noted,

> BS [Brillat-Savarin] linked differences of taste to differences of income […to show] the social formation of taste, the values of which are established not in an absolute but in a determined field. Hence it is always through the relay of culture—and not through the relay of needs—that BS socializes food.[86]

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[82] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology,* trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 86-87.

[83] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: An Introduction to a Science of Mythology, Volume One*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle," 36-43. On Lévi-Strauss's theoretical contributions to the study of food, see: Bob Ashley, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones and Ben Taylor, *Food and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 27-40.

[84] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 62.

[85] Roland Barthes, "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," in *Food and Culture: A Reader,* ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterick, 2nd ed.,(New York: Routledge, 2008), 28-35.

[86] Roland Barthes, "Reading Brillat-Savarin," trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard, in *On Signs,* ed. Marshall Blonsky (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 61-75.

This social fact had hardly diminished by the 1970s, as Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated at length in *Distinction*, where he carefully broke down precisely how tastes—in food but also in music, art, and other areas—reflected and, more importantly, reproduced class structures through the accumulation of "cultural capital." Bourdieu wrote,

> The taste of the professionals or senior executives defines the popular taste, by negation, as the taste for the heavy, the fat and the coarse, by tending towards the light, the refined and the delicate. […] Finally, the teachers, richer in cultural capital than in economic capital, and therefore inclined to ascetic consumption in all areas, […] are thus almost consciously opposed to the (new) rich with their rich food, the buyers and sellers of *grosse bouffe*, the 'fat cats', gross in body and mind, who have the economic means to flaunt, with an arrogance perceived as 'vulgar.'[87]

The well-educated, young, white-color elements of the bourgeoisie, while not always possessing the most economic capital, exploited their cultural capital by promoting trends like nouvelle cuisine in order to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, the crass *nouveaux riches*, and the conservative old bourgeoisie all at once. Gault and Millau's diatribe against the snobby "bon vivant" suddenly appears less democratic, and more like a move to rewrite the terms of snobbery in their own favor.

The problem, however, for Gault and Millau and their coterie of stylish young professionals, however, is that Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, and Bourdieu had given away this secret. In fact, a whole generation of French intellectuals—including Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean Baudrillard—had turned their attention to the contradictions and myths of French modernity and bourgeois culture. Add to this radical and "postmodern" art, cinema, and literature, of the period it becomes clear that a large part of the "crisis" of French modernity exposed in 1968 was the generalized skepticism toward the myths of progress and

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[87] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 185. See also, Ashley et al., 59-73.

universalism. Past culinary "revolutions" had concealed their contradictions under a glaze of "progress," but after Barthes, France was on the look out for any such "coatings and alibis."[88] Indeed, this phrase from Barthes' critique of "ornamental cuisine" may have influenced Gault and Millau's own diatribe against "heavy sauces" and "tricky presentations," as Millau would approvingly cite this very passage from *Mythologies* years later.[89]

Less radical intellectuals joined in the critiques, too. Writing in 1979, Jean-François Revel suggested that nouvelle cuisine was only the latest chapter in a series of oscillations between three sets of opposing culinary principles going back to at least the mid-nineteenth century: complication vs. simplification, heavy seasonings vs. natural authenticity, and tradition vs. invention. In favoring the latter in each of these oppositions, Revel noted the similarities between nouvelle cuisine and earlier culinary styles. However, he pointed out how quickly and easily nouvelle cuisine had fallen into exaggerating and contradicting its own principles.[90]

In *Gault et Millau se mettent à table,* the authors had praised Michel Guérard for rejecting the assumption that "the best way to appreciate hot foie gras and a tournedos steak is to glue one onto the other."[91] Yet two pages later, they extolled his creativity in "mixing, for example, foie gras with green beans or turnips or into a vinaigrette."[92] Revel seems to have had this passage in mind when he wrote:

> It is amusing to see the liege lords of [nouvelle cuisine] haughtily excommunicate *tournedos Rossini,* a nineteenth-century recipe consisting of preparing a filet of beef with foie gras and truffles, as being a dish that is too artificially complicated,

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[88] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 78.

[89] Millau, *Dictionnaire amoureux de la Gastronomie,* 156.

[90] Jean-François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 267-269.

[91] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table*, 117.

[92] Gault and Millau, *Gault et Millau se mettent à table,* 119.

> when these same liege lords call for foie gras and truffles everywhere, and, at that, use them indiscriminately instead of organically incorporating them within a coherent preparation that has the continuity and the transitions of a truly erudite cuisine.[93]

For Revel, choosing one side over the other in any of the three sets of binary oppositions was a naïve and futile effort, resulting only in self-contradiction. Gault and Millau had launched their crusade criticizing the hypocrisy of Curnonsky's maxim about how food should taste of what it is, only to adopt that very same principle as their own, pretend it was a new idea, and then summarily fall into the same trap of hypocrisy they had initially condemned.

Revel's comments may be read as part of a larger critique of overzealous French modernization, universalism and exceptionalism. Regarding French *rayonnement*, Revel quipped in 1969, "Ever since France began its 'radiance,' it is a wonder the whole world hasn't died of sunstroke."[94] He deplored the mediocrity of standardized "international" haute cuisine as much as Gault and Millau, but he saw nouvelle cuisine repeating the same mistake:

> [Nouvelle cuisine] has very rapidly fallen, in its turn, into a new academism, wherein the cult of "lightness" and "invention" has driven imitators in the direction of a cuisine that is at once extravagant and dull, giving rise to a uniform international style that is still more forbidding than the old "hotel cuisine."[95]

Rather than repeating the culinary imperialism of the past, Revel welcomed a more decentralized globalization:

> ["Globalization"] is just as ugly a word [as "international cuisine"], but it means exactly the contrary: namely, the fact that one finds more and more frequently, in numerous countries, the most diverse and even the most local cuisines very far from their geographical origins.[96]

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[93] Revel, 270.

[94] Pierre Boncenne, "Le rire de Revel," *Le Point* no. 1774 (2007), accessed June 24, 2014, www.lepoint.fr/actualites-chroniques/2007-01-17/le-rire-de-revel/989/0/14375.

[95] Revel, 269-270.

[96] Revel, 271. I have made one significant change to from the published English translation. The original 1979 French edition uses the word "mondialisation" in this sentence, which the 1982 English edition translated as

Revel's observation of this potentially symbiotic relationship between the global and the local proved prescient, as much subsequent scholarship has confirmed.[97] But while local cuisines and traditional products would find success on the global market in coming decades, the ever-increasing integration of the global economy also presented unexpected dangers for luxury restaurants.

In October 1973, the same month in which Gault and Millau's article introduced nouvelle cuisine to the world, the Arab members of OPEC initiated an oil embargo that shook the global economy and marked the end of France's "thirty glorious years" of prosperity. The extent of this downturn—from which France's economic morale has never fully recovered—took time to be fully felt and understood. But by the end of the 1970s, the optimism, confidence, and prosperity that had characterized the 1960s waned as economic hardship settled in. To be sure, as Jean-Paul Aron noted, hunger had only been eradicated from France in the 1950s, and the economic issues of the 1970s and 1980s never really threatened this basic progress. The French diet arguably continued to improve, and restaurant diners continued to eat well. But in the face of widespread economic difficulties, nouvelle cuisine's reputation for ever-rising prices and ever-smaller portions seemed increasingly perverse.

By the end of the seventies, headlines on the cover of *Gault-Millau* magazine included: "Where to eat really well without [financial] ruin," "Good food, less expensive," "Holidays: Don't spend foolishly," and "Better than before, cheaper than the others: Bravo Chinese

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"universalization." I have replaced "universalization" with "globalization" because it is a more literal translation, and because "universalization" seems much closer to "universalism" and thus Revel's notion of "internationalization" here.

[97] Priscilla Ferguson made a similar observation more than twenty years later, although, interestingly, she reversed the meanings of the two terms, preferring "internationalization" for the global proliferation of distinctly local cultures, and reserving the term "globalization" for the processes of homogenization. Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 168.

[restaurants]!"[98] Numerous articles appeared listing the addresses of decent affordable bistros, increasingly a rarity. An article in their tenth anniversary issue (June 1979) titled "In 69, where did we eat and for how much?" implied that Bocuse's 45-franc fixed-price *menu* was a quaint reminder of a bygone era.[99]

The title of another article in the tenth-anniversary issue of *Gault-Millau* magazine may have been a wink at Marxist critiques: "Sommes-nous les fossoyeurs de la cuisine française?" ("Are We the Gravediggers of French Cuisine?"). In it, Gault and Millau responded to their critics, specifically referencing Courtine's "publicity gimmick" remark. They largely credited nouvelle cuisine, if not themselves, with rejuvenating French cuisine, and winning over even conservative restaurateurs and foreign chefs. Significantly, however, they admitted that "each era had its own nouvelle cuisine." They even acknowledged the dialectical pattern that would eventually bring their nouvelle cuisine down:

> We're under no illusions. No movement is eternal, and each carries within itself its own demise. The same is true for styles of cuisine. Escoffier was an innovator in his time, as was Carême before him. Both struggled against excess and overbearing [culinary] rules that had become distorted over time. One day, hopefully as far off as possible, another Gault and Millau will shake up our nouvelle cuisine once it has been taken over by incompetents and is suffocating under the weight of its deviations. Wherever they come from, we shall support them. Fortunately, we are not there yet, and for now it is simply a matter of redressing errors and bringing some order [to nouvelle cuisine.][100]

Despite this optimism for the foreseeable future, Gault and Millau had already begun to rein in their aspirations for nouvelle cuisine's impact on everyday life. A few years earlier, *Gault-Millau* magazine's headlines had boasted of nouvelle cuisine's "revolution [in] the art of eating," (1974)

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[98] *Gault-Millau* no. 124, Aug. 1979; *Gault-Millau* no. 138, Oct. 1980; *Gault-Millau* no. 128, Dec. 1979; *Gault-Millau* no. 129, Jan. 1980.

[99] "En 69, on dînait où et pour combien?," *Gault-Millau* no. 122, June 1979: 14-17.

[100] Henri Gault and Christian Millau, "Sommes-nous les fossoyeurs de la cuisine française?,"*Gault-Millau* no. 122, June 1979: 10-11.

and even a "nouvelle cuisine bourgeoise" (1977) for cooking at home.[101] By 1979, nouvelle cuisine's pervasiveness, even among professional chefs, seemed to be a weakness:

> It is not a matter of wanting to convert all of the restaurants in France and beyond to nouvelle cuisine. [Nouvelle cuisine] requires a kind of genius that is not within everyone's reach. […] Leave the brilliant simplicity of nouvelle cuisine to the few, and just plain simplicity to the rest.[102]

In 1976, Millau had declared on *Apostrophes* that nouvelle cuisine was not a passing fashion but rather a *style* with real substance, longevity and influence. But nouvelle cuisine's popularity and media presence ensured that it appeared as a fad to many. Gault and Millau discussed the negative effects of this trendiness in their "gravediggers" article. They derided the needlessly pretentious language typical of nouvelle cuisine menus. They approvingly quoted from Jean-Pierre Coffe's *Gourmandise au singulier*:

> "What began merely as a desire for simplicity, austerity, respect for ingredients, and accurate cooking, has become in many cases an overflowing of invention where it is fashionable to mix together anything to make something new."[103]

As France entered the 1980s, a more cynical view of nouvelle cuisine as a vacant fad gained ground. The headline of a 1980 issue of *le Crapouillot* read, "*La grande bouffe, un grand bluff?*" ("Is Fine Dining a Big Fraud?") The cover featured a cartoon of a smiling chef holding out a menu in one hand and hiding a shotgun with a bill hanging from its smoking barrel behind his back wit the other.[104] In his introduction to this special issue dedicated to cuisine, Jean Laborde complained,

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[101] *Gault-Millau* no. 67, November 1974; *Gault-Millau* no. 102, October 1977.

[102] Gault and Millau, "Sommes-nous les fossoyeurs de la cuisine française?" 12.

[103] Gault and Millau, "Sommes-nous les fossoyeurs de la cuisine française?" 12; Jean-Pierre Coffe, *Gourmandise au singulier* (Paris: Le Singe, 1979).

[104] *Le Crapouillot* no. 56, Autumn 1980.

> Whether you are forcing down a "whopper" on the Champs-Elysées, […] battling the giddy crowd at the latest little genius's restaurant, […or] tossing your salary to the wind for a table at one of the "greats," […] a thousand and one voices dictate how you "must" eat, lest you appear a dreadful "retro." Gratification in the middle of a crowd of people all doing the exact same thing: it is precisely what, in love making, we call an orgy [*partouze*].[105]

Clearly, for him, the notion of a dining trend was itself unsavory. He expressed even more antipathy towards the media's self-serving adulation for nouvelle cuisine:

> Are our chefs really inventors enlightened by a sudden grace as proclaimed by agile and complicit pens? Have we really become, after centuries of obscurantism, an army of gourmets, cultivated and refined, and possessing science and taste in equal measure?

All this for a cuisine "where anyone can do anything, pouring chocolate on a steak or raspberry coulis on veal sweetbreads [… and where] the bill grows and portions shrink." Laborde ranked such fashionable restaurants alongside the "express grills" found in train stations as certain disappoints for a foreign visitor in search of the famous French cuisine. His own list of preferred restaurants and dishes was dominated by traditional bistros, country dishes, and a few prewar institutions like Fernand Point's La Pyramide. His justification for these choices, ironically, could have been written by Gault and Millau in 1973: "The common thread: no *bluff* in any of these pleasures. Quality, nature, and no complication."[106] But if Gault and Millau praising the supposed natural simplicity of nouvelle cuisine now seemed just as self-deluded as they had accused Curnonsky of being, Laborde found such ironies, deceits, and contradictions a fitting portrait of "Contemporary *Grande Cuisine,*" (read: nouvelle cuisine).

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[105] Jean Laborde, "Pitié pour nous, messieurs les chefs," *Le Crapouillot* no. 56, Autumn 1980: 4.

[106] Laborde, 4.

Even Alain Chapel's nouvelle-cuisine-oriented cookbook began with an essay entitled, "Trends of the times," in which he (actually co-author Jean-François Abert) condemned much of what nouvelle cuisine had become. In a section called "The Days of Imitation," they wrote:

> In another time, Escoffier's cuisine lapsed into decorative one-upmanship, serving wild fowl wearing feather headdresses. Today we want to simplify, lighten, and rediscover the pleasures of the raw. It's just a lighter shade of culinary *make-up.* […] More than ever, twentieth-century diners consume, along with their grilled meat and "pink-at-the-bone" fish, symbols. For certain cooks, the food itself becomes less important than its culinary packaging or the *new-cooking* recipe to which it will be immediately reduced. At the market, they subordinate their purchases to the strict nomenclature of their recipes. In this way, cuisine has turned into a ready-to-wear industry dictated by fashion trends.[107]

Nouvelle cuisine had become, in the worst possible way, the kind of "fashion" Millau had denied it could ever become just four years earlier on *Apostrophes*. Worse still, it had turned out to be exactly the type of cuisine it was meant to overthrow: a cuisine in which style trumps substance and shock-value trumps harmony and where the true qualities of the ingredients are disguised by fancy preparations and language. If nouvelle cuisine engendered a cult of novelty rather than a strict adherence to a classic repertoire, this could lend itself just as easily to dogmatism, rote imitation, and artifice. Chapel and Abert saw that the demand for cuisine to stay current necessarily led to such superficial and corruptible gastronomic trends. They admitted novelty was important in arousing the appetite, but found little intrinsic value in culinary "progress."

Just as Jean Laborde had mentioned nouvelle cuisine in the same breath as *le whopper* above, Chapel's most damning move was employing English to render "nouvelle cuisine" as "*new-cooking,*" thus surrendering the movement to an Anglophone global culture. This simple substitution implied the only thing French about nouvelle cuisine had been its name. Consequently, the glory bestowed upon France by nouvelle cuisine's international success was

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[107] Chapel, 27-28.

empty and meaningless. Furthermore, maintaining French cuisine's universality and international hegemony necessarily came at the cost of French particularities and traditions.

La Cuisine de Terroir

In contrast with the vacuous pretensions of contemporary haute cuisine, Chapel found genuine beauty and joy in the simple rustic fare of a local farm:

> It seems to us, however, that a farm or a family home or a timid *amie* [female friend] can provide [excellent] cuisine as well as any great restaurant. We need not even go very far. In a neighboring house where no one knows anything of gastronomy, of three stars and the whole business, one can eat a sausage worth all the fish terrines in the world. It requires only a pig that had roamed the countryside eating acorns and chestnuts. In short, one that was happy when the knife cut his throat.[108]

In this case, cuisine did not begin, as Bocuse would have it, at the market, but rather on the farm. This emphasis on local agriculture, the natural environment, traditional products, and the unblemished authenticity of rural, feminine culinary knowledge all signal the rise of a different culinary movement in the 1980s, the "*cuisine du terroir*" (literally: cooking from the land).

The sociologist, Jean-Pierre Poulain, has argued,

> Despite its excesses, [nouvelle cuisine] did rehabilitate and return possibility to culinary creation, but it posed a problem for sources of inspiration. […] The arrival of the new *cuisine de terroir* responded to the need of an industrialized culinary world that lost its soul to return to its roots, by reuniting two contradictory [pre-modern/aristocratic and regional/popular] tendencies in French cuisine.[109]

The problem of the industrialization of food and restaurants is discussed at length in the next chapter and was a key factor in the turn away from modernization. What is important here is that

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[108] Chapel, 28.

[109] Jean-Pierre Poulain and Edmond Neirinck, *Histoire de la Cuisine et des Cuisiniers: Techniques Culinaires et Pratiques de Table, en France, du Moyen-Age à nos Jours*, 2nd ed. (Malakoff, France: Editions Jacques Lanore, 1992), 114-115.

cuisine de terroir was not simply a progressive "return to nature," but actually a return to an explicitly provincial and pre-modern traditional culture, an image of France that had been all but banished in 1945. And yet, I will argue here and in the next three chapters, it was this at once radical and reactionary move that ultimately helped to resolve the crises of French identity and redefine gastronomic Frenchness for the global age.

Cuisine de terroir shared nouvelle cuisine's emphasis on minimal cooking, natural flavors, and fresh, quality ingredients. However, in place of nouvelle cuisine's globetrotting universalism and trendy modernism, *cuisine de terroir* explicitly exalted indigenous particularities and local traditions. When Joël Robuchon was voted "the best cook in the world" in 1986 he was asked in a television interview how French tastes had evolved. He replied, "There was nouvelle cuisine before, but now our modern cuisine has come back to something more traditional, rediscovering that sense of taste and respect for flavor that had perhaps been lost." To him, nouvelle cuisine was not and could not have been a new revolutionary valorization natural simplicity, because simple, natural, local cuisine was the true French tradition that had been there all along. Robuchon went on to explain that flavor did not only come from fresh, high quality ingredients, but from the environmental particularities of their production: "Each country must develop its own cuisine based on its local produce. There is a cuisine of the land, a cuisine of the sky, a cuisine of the sea. Food eaten near the site of its production tastes the best."[110] This perspective integrating localized geography, culture, and taste came to be encompassed in notion of "terroir."

The term "terroir" had long been used in viticulture to refer to the specific soil and climate conditions of a given wine growing area. But in the late twentieth century, the term's

[110] November 21, 1986 episode of *C'est la vie* (Antenne 2).

usage expanded both in terms of the breadth of its application to many types of food products, and in terms of the depth of the "environment" it encompassed which came to include local agricultural and gastronomic human traditions.[111] While terroir is generally presented as a concrete, eternal, and material connection between culture and nature, it is important to remember that, as Olivier Jacquet explains, "*Terroir* is not a natural phenomenon […, it] is a historical construct, an object constantly redefined by a history full of contextual discontinuities, economic crises, political conflicts, and cultural debates."[112]

A documentary miniseries entitled *La France à la carte* appeared on French television during the summer of 1987 in which each episode featured a renowned French chef or food product. A clear example of the transnational construction of national identity, the series was hosted by the (part French) American journalist, Pierre Salinger, and was also broadcast in the U.S. (PBS) and the U.K. (ITV). In fact, in *Télérama*—France's equivalent of American *TV Guide*—Vincent Tolédano wrote that the series might help to boost France's global reputation and food exports.[113] Even though the series included a number of figures associated with nouvelle cuisine including Paul Bocuse and Christian Millau, they are reinscribed into a national narrative emphasizing the continuity traditions emanating up from of the soil through families, rural communities, and "the basis of the culinary art, the ingredients."[114] Episode titles included,

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[111] On the concept of terroir, see: Amy Trubek, *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2008); Claire Delfosse, ed., *La Mode du terroir et les produits alimentaires* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2011).

[112] Cited and translated in: Gilles Laferté, "The Folklorization of French Farming: Marketing Luxury Wine in the Interwar Years," *French Historical Studies* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 684; Olivier Jacquet, *Un siècle de construction du vignoble bourguignon: Les organisations vitivinicoles de 1884 aux AOC* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2009).

[113] Vincent Tolédano, "La France à la Carte: 1. La cuisine en fête: Paul Bocuse," *Télérama* no. 1952 (June 13, 1987): 77.

[114] Tolédano, 77.

"Provence: le goût du vrai" (Provence: the taste of the real), "De mère en fils" (from mother to son), "Famille de cuisine" (a culinary family), and "L'or du temps" (the riches of time).

In the first episode, Paul Bocuse defends his international celebrity and evokes quasi-universal values, especially the notion that cuisine should be festive. Moreover, he boasts of the superior flavor and aromas of the Californian variety of tomatoes he grows in his garden, a potential faux pas for terroir purists. But he also discusses his family's long history in Lyon, and he roots that city's gastronomic reputation in the quality of local products like Beaujolais and Rhone wines, Charolais beef, and Bresse chickens.[115] The second episode in the series also takes place in Lyon and places an even greater focus on local products, particularly charcuterie, which Salinger claims is a sign of the Lyonnais respect for using every part of the animal.[116]

From Lyon, Salinger travelled south to Provence to meet the Porsche-driving, confident young chef, Jacques Maximin.[117] However, *Télérama* called this portrait of Maximin, which emphasized luxury on the Riviera, "cynical" and "cold."[118] The next episode, still in Provence, was more inspired, with Salinger's opening monologue asking, "Can we speak of truth in cuisine? Simple truth? It is here, in Provence."[119] This episode features another of the great chefs of nouvelle cuisine, Roger Vergé who is shown giving cooking lessons to Americans at his restaurant. But another chef, Jacques Chibois, explains that nouvelle cuisine was not really new, it just better showcased the "truth" that had always been present in traditional products. This point is illustrated with scenes of the traditional production of olive oil, of chefs buying fish

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[115] "La cuisine en fête : BOCUSE," June 14, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte* (FR3).

[116] "Lyon: Tous les chemins mènent à table," June 21, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*.

[117] "Jacques Maximin : Accélérations," June 28, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*.

[118] Tolédano, 73.

[119] "Provence. Le goût de vrai," July 5, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*.

directly from fishermen in small boats, and of a farmer explaining to a chef how his zucchini blossoms were grown.

The fifth episode in the series was even more remarkable. It featured two families in which mothers and sons worked together in professional kitchens producing "cuisines that refuse to break with regional traditions, […] the cuisine of the family, of women, of mothers..."[120] One of the chefs featured was the "chef of the year" Michel Bras, who served in his restaurant, alongside his more contemporary creations, his great-grandmother's *pistou* soup, "a dish that has evolved for some, but not for us, because we make it exactly as our ancestors did."[121] Bras is shown teaching a younger chef how to make the *pistou* (pesto) with a mortar and pestle, explaining that with a food processor, one cannot incorporate the requisite quantity of the most important ingredient, love. Bras even goes as far as calling his cuisine, "peasant cooking" which for him means "ingredients for ingredients' sake" and "taste for taste's sake." In this spirit, Bras is shown meeting a woman who is collecting nuts and seeds in a picturesque meadow and gives Bras a special, seasonal seed. Curiously, however, the woman also shares with Bras some traditional culinary knowledge that is not local, but supposedly from ancient China.

Most of Salinger's *tour de France* really remained along the meridian stretching from Champagne in the north down through Burgundy to Lyon where it was most convenient to visit many of France's most celebrated agricultural products and chefs that, as in the 1930s, were still situated along the famous Paris-Lyon-Marseilles travel route. One episode visits chef George Blanc's restaurant in Bresse and a nearby chicken farm.[122] Another features the Troisgros

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[120] This quote is taken from a press packet produced for the series, but Salinger's narration included very similar statements. INA archives, AR E ORI 00014296 INA 035.

[121] "De mère en fils," July 12, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*.

[122] "Bleu, Blanc, Bresse," August 16, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*.

brothers in Roanne and local Charolais cattle.[123] Only in the final three episodes did Salinger reach the western half of France where he visited Bordeaux vineyards and learned the methods Cognac production… and consumption.[124]

The final episode in the series brings Salinger back to Paris to discuss the state of French gastronomy at the world-famous Lucas Carton restaurant with Christian Millau, Alain Senderens, Joël Robuchon, and Alain Ducasse.[125] It is significant that the only portions of the series to take place in Paris—apart from a part of an episode about the baker, Lionel Poilâne—are the very first scene at the Eiffel Tower with Christian Millau, and this final discussion, suggesting, perhaps, that French food is talked and written about in Paris, but it comes from the provinces. Each of these men, more or less personally invested in nouvelle cuisine, reiterate some of the main ideas of nouvelle cuisine, without actually naming it: Senderens embraced cosmopolitanism in attributing the contemporary taste for raw foods and sophisticated presentations to a "Pacific" influence. Similarly, Ducasse displayed progressive optimism in suggesting that cuisine was still heading toward greater simplicity and "true" natural flavors. Robuchon, however, expressed a similar idea, but for him, this was a "return" to past wisdom. Millau welcomed the reintroduction of traditional varieties of produce and livestock that had been disappearing.

In the final scene of the series, another chef, Marc Meneau, is shown collecting wild mushrooms in the forest with his elderly father. The two men then make a simple mushroom

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[123] "Famille de cuisine," August 2, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*.

[124] "Châteaux et légendes," August 3, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*; "L'or du temps," September 6, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*.

[125] "Passion du métier," August 30, 1987 episode of *La France à la carte*. *Télérama* indicates that this episode aired on September 6, 1987, as the final episode in the series, which is confirmed by documentation that appears to be a press packet for the series. However, INAthèque's database entry lists the air date as August 30, making it the third to last episode.

omelet using their fresh bounty. Despite the rustic simplicity of the dish, the father says "a mushroom omelet, its not every day that we eat such a luxury!"[126] In this way, the series sought to end by reasserting a certain continuity to France's gastronomic identity, not only across time between new and old cuisine, but also across space from modern restaurants to rural forests. Throughout the series, even as centered on world-famous professional chefs, most of the episodes emphasized the role of localized heritage and ingredients. It was these elements that were most identified with Frenchness, rather than the chef's cosmopolitanism or universalism. Moreover, it was the episodes situating renowned chefs—Blanc, Bardet, Bras—within their local and family traditions that received much more favorable reviews in *Télérama* than the two episodes that emphasized the talents and celebrity of Bocuse and Maximin.

The shift in attitudes toward traditionalism and localism could also take the form of lamentations about the perceived continuing dominance of nouvelle cuisine. In his 1986 book, *La bonne cuisine et les autres* ("good cuisine and the others"), Pierre-Marie Doutrelant's first chapter was entitled, "Adieu Bistro, we really loved you."[127] In it, Doutrelant argues that in all but a few of the most steadfastly traditional regions of France, the once ubiquitous "bistrots de terroir" have been stamped out by both American-style industrial restaurants and the vapid trendiness of the high-end "palaces of gastronomy." Doutrelant offers a scathing indictment of nouvelle cuisine as "an impressive racket: shrinking portions and growing plates; weighty bills for light sauces…dining rooms flooded—except in times marked by terrorist attacks—with American tourists."[128] But these are not true French gastronomy for Doutrelant. Even in its apparent absence, he affirms,

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[126] "Passion du métier."

[127] Pierre-Marie Doutrelant, *La Bonne Cuisine et les Autres* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1986), 9-19.

[128] Doutrelant, 13-15.

> What has constituted the substantive marrow of our gastronomy? More than the great restaurants of Bocuse or Guérard, it was the tens of thousands of bistros and humble inns that formed the skeleton of this great gourmet country, […] The real French cuisine of the people, rooted in the soil, has gotten the hell out. R.I.P. *blanquette* [braised veal].[129]

His book begins by profiling three famous young chefs to illustrate how much French cuisine has changed. First is Bernard Loiseau who he portrays as a calculating, fame-hungry phony.[130] Next is Michel Augereau who has inherited his father's restaurant famous for local fish with classic beurre blanc, but he feels pressure to abandon the family recipes and establish his own style.[131] That would be a tragedy for Doutrelant. Only the unshakably dedicated Joël Robuchon does Doutrelant deem sufficiently talented to justify his creativity and experimentation.[132] In Doutrelant's final chapter he seems oddly resigned to the fact that real traditional cuisine has been lost, and he actually appears optimistic about the potential of Georges Pralus' sous vide technology to make traditional specialties available and actually taste good in the brave new world of industrial food service.[133] Tellingly, however, Doutrelant includes the recipes of some seventeen chefs featured throughout the book, and nearly all of these are identified as either regional or family recipes—"the Charentais recipes of Joël Robuchon," "the family recipes of Georges Blanc," and so forth.

Just as nouvelle cuisine had couched its principles in diatribes against a decadent old regime, advocates of a "return" to *cuisine de terroir* embedded theirs in complaints about the

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[129] Doutrelant, 10-12.

[130] "La cuisine à l'huile, c'est plus difficile, mais c'est moins nouveau que la cuisine à…," in Doutrelant, 23-26.

[131] "L'héritier du roi du beurr blanc adiquera-t-il?" in Doutrelant, 27-30.

[132] "Le chef cuit dans le marbre," in Doutrelant, 31-36.

[133] "La deuxième révolution française," in Doutrelant, 197-201. "Sous vide" is a method of cooking utilized in both restaurants and the industrial food preparation in which the food is vacuum sealed in a bag and then placed in water heated to a specific (usually rather low) temperature to cook slowly and evenly.

excesses of the parvenus of nouvelle cuisine. Unlike Gault and Millau's depiction of classical cuisine as byzantine and overbearing, these critics harkened back to an entirely different image of traditional cuisine that was unpretentious, harmonious, and rooted in the local terroir. Here it is possible to see how national identities are constructed not only by defining the contemporary characteristics of a national culture, but also by asserting particular interpretations of the past. And the relationship between present and past can be altered as well. Proponents of nouvelle cuisine saw the ability to overcome the past as a definitively French virtue. Critics of nouvelle cuisine and advocates of *cuisine de terroir*, however, understood Frenchness to be inherited through traditions and potentially threatened by modernization.

Walking the streets of Paris in the twenty-first century, one sees countless bistros "à l'ancienne*"* (old-fashioned) and grocers offering traditional "terroir" products, indicating that Doutrelant may have been premature in declaring the death of regional and traditional French cuisine. Then again, he would likely point to the industrial production and corporate ownership which lies behind the Disneyfied facades and old-timey packaging. But what Doutrelant ignored, was that his idyllic image of traditional France with its "weekly family-style cassoulet" never really existed for most French people in the past any more than it does today.[134] Chapter Three will explore further the construction of a myth of traditional "women's cooking" developed over the course of the twentieth century, always in the context of its perceived imminent demise.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Nouvelle Cuisine

Critiques of nouvelle cuisine reveal deep reservations about the modern French notions of progress and universalism. Yet they should not be read simply as reactionary, parochial or

[134] Doutrelant, 153.

traditionalist. Rather, they represent an attempt to break the cycle of the myth of culinary modernization that was no longer convincing in an age of postmodern skepticism. They imagined a French cuisine that was not defined by its progressivism or its universalism, but by a willingness to embrace France's environmental particularities and local traditions.

Tracing the fate of nouvelle cuisine as popular mythology only tells part of the story. As Christian Millau put it in 1998, the term itself came to evoke "fantastical combinations of ingredients forced into marriage and Lilliputian portions that, like fishing boats in the fog, get lost amidst enormous plates."[135] Yet the chefs, journalists, and culinary principles originally associated with nouvelle cuisine fared much better. Bocuse and Guérard retained their three-star reputations. Gault and Millau continued to expand their gastronomic empire.

Indeed, some observers have seen nouvelle cuisine principles as the dominant culinary paradigm through the end of the century, interpreting subsequent trends as offshoots.[136] *Cuisine du terroir* continued to favor natural flavors and extended the careful examination of ingredients of *"cuisine du marché"* to the agricultural and environmental conditions of their production. Nouvelle cuisine's incorporation of Asian inspirations predicted fusion cuisine, while its embrace of invention and new technologies presaged molecular gastronomy. A 2000 television program titled "The Children of Nouvelle Cuisine" concluded:

> Thirty years ago, nouvelle cuisine truly liberated taste. It brought on an explosion of creativity among chefs. Since then, periodic culinary revolutions have brought cuisine into accord with its time. What will become of French gastronomy in

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[135] Christian Millau, "La revolution culinaire des années 70," *Les colloques de la fondation Auguste Escoffier,* 1998. Quoted in Alan Drouard, "La Nouvelle Cuisine en France dans le dernier tiers du XXe siecle," in *Histoire des innovations alimentaires: XIXe et XXe siècles*, Alain Drouard and Jean-Pierre Willot, eds. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), 207.

[136] Quantitative studies of menu offerings in Michelin-starred restaurants, for example, argue that many of the culinary trends associated with nouvelle cuisine continued to gain wider dominance throughout the 1980s and 1990s. See: Rao, Monin, and Durand; and Fischler, *L'homnivore,* 245-274.

> twenty years? What ever it is, it will be new, because, ultimately, taste and pleasure reinvent themselves everyday.[137]

All of this may lead some to dismiss the fluctuations in nouvelle cuisine's reputation as superficial in comparison with its real impact on cooking and eating. There is certainly some validity in this point, but it hinges on the dubious assumption that nouvelle cuisine actually constituted a new paradigm. Couldn't fusion's cosmopolitanism, molecular gastronomy's technological experimentation, or *cuisine du terroir*'s dedication to natural flavors just as easily trace their origins much further back to the eras of Escoffier or Carême or even earlier? This observation hardly negates the influence of Bocuse and Guérard's innovations or even Gault and Millau's modernization of gastronomic criticism, but it demonstrates that nouvelle cuisine was much less a paradigm shift than a renewed dedication to the core principles of modern French cuisine that had always included an expectation of progressive refinement and development.

While in the 1970s nouvelle cuisine was understood to be definitively French by French people and foreigners alike, the same cannot be said for most of the movements in *haute cuisine* since the 1980s. Is it possible to discuss fusion cuisine without mentioning Wolfgang Puck in California, or molecular gastronomy without Ferran Adrià in Spain? To be sure, French chefs have continued to play a prominent role in international *haute cuisine*, and so-called French techniques remain fundamental, but France's imperialistic claims to dominance and ownership over the field have waned. Conversely, while trendy *haute cuisine* remains popular in France, it is not necessarily strongly associated with Frenchness. The latest hip restaurant guide to shake up

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[137] "Les Enfants de la nouvelle cuisine," April 25, 2000 (France 3).

the French gastronomic scene has a mock-English title, *Le Fooding*, and frequently champions Paris restaurants helmed by American and other foreign chefs.[138]

While French diners may still have an appetite for inventive and cosmopolitan food, they may no longer think of this as typical "French cuisine." It is rather the simplicity of rustic country dishes and bistro food and the diverse array of regional dishes and *terroirs* that are most strongly associated with gastronomic Frenchness today. Nouvelle cuisine's valorization of simplicity, natural flavors, and regional influences certainly predicted this trend. But while nouvelle cuisine touted these values as revolutionary and at odds with the stuffy urbanity of traditional French cuisine, the *cuisine du terroir* of the 1980s and 1990s embraced these same values as part of a rich national heritage of agricultural and culinary traditions rooted in the countryside and the soil. Ultimately, it was a fundamental shift not in French tastes but in the very meaning of Frenchness that undermined nouvelle cuisine.

Nouvelle cuisine was an attempt to modernize French cuisine. As so many previous French modernizers had done, nouvelle cuisine relied upon the fundamental values of universalism and progress in its effort to rehabilitate and refine the core principles that had long guided French cuisine. Yet unlike previous culinary movements, nouvelle cuisine emerged in a critical environment when the value of universalism and progress were in question. This context initially supplied the opportunity for nouvelle cuisine's radical critique of French cuisine. But nouvelle cuisine's attempt to revamp old French ideals failed to appreciate the extent to which the world had changed. Many in France no longer wished to be saddled with what they perceived as bankrupt imperatives that no longer served the needs of the nation. What form a post-modern, post-colonial French identity will take and what its core values should be are not yet clear, but

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[138] One of the trendiest restaurants in Paris in the past few years has been American chef Daniel Rose's Spring. See *le Fooding's* review: www.lefooding.com/restaurant/restaurant-spring-paris.html

the story of nouvelle cuisine reveals that reforming, refining, and repackaging republican universalism and progressive modernization was—and is—no longer enough.

The *cuisine de terroir* that emerged among French chefs in the 1980s offered a glimpse of a more stable and relevant definition of French cuisine for the post-colonial period. However, *haute cuisine* chefs were not the ultimate authority on the subject of France's authentic rural gastronomic traditions. Chapter Three will examine how a middle-aged "peasant" woman from rural Gascony usurped the professional chef's monopoly over culinary television to become France's most beloved TV chef of the 1980s and 1990s. But first, Chapter Two continues the discussion of culinary modernization, tracing how modern, "American" fast food became the ideal foil against which to position France as a bastion of local culinary traditions and terroirs.

CHAPTER TWO:

"Non à McMerde!": Fast Food, Americanization, and Globalization[1]

Vincent Vega: You know what the funniest thing about Europe is? It's the little differences. […] In Paris, you can buy a beer at McDonald's. And you know what they call a Quarter Pounder with Cheese in Paris?

Jules Winnfield: They don't call it a Quarter Pounder with Cheese?

Vincent: Nah, man, they got the metric system. […] They call it a 'Royale with Cheese.'

Jules: "Royale with Cheese!"[…] What do they call a Big Mac?

Vincent: A Big Mac's a Big Mac, but they call it "Le Big Mac."

Jules: "Le Big Mac!" What do they call a Whopper?

Vincent: I don't know. I didn't go in a Burger King.
-Pulp Fiction, 1994

When I first began visiting France in 2002, I often asked my French friends and acquaintances what they knew about "American food," and what they thought of it. Few had much experience with barbeque or peanut butter sandwiches, but everyone seemed to like hamburgers. And yet when I inquired where one might get a good hamburger in Paris, the usual response was a quizzical look and a suggestion that I open my eyes a bit more, since there were McDonald's everywhere. If I persisted, explaining, "No, I mean a really *good* burger," my interlocutor, trying to be helpful, might suggest the fast food chain Quick as a superior option, or nostalgically lament Burger King's disappearance from France a few years earlier. When I explained that in the U.S., in most good restaurants, one could order a freshly-made hamburger that was thick and juicy, cooked to order, and topped with quality cheese and vegetables, the idea seemed lost on Parisians. To them, hamburgers were synonymous with quick and inexpensive fast food—satisfying enough, but nothing worth ordering in a real restaurant. What was more

[1] The title of this chapter, "Non à McMerde" [No to McShit], appeared on placards carried by demonstrators supporting José Bové during his trial in July 2000. Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2012), 244.

puzzling was that in the most celebrated gastronomic country on the planet, people seemed to *like* fast-food hamburgers. Yet around the same time, France also appeared to be ground zero for anti-globalization demonstrations in which McDonald's was a favorite target. On another visit to France during the 2007 election, I was surprised to learn that a candidate in the presidential election named José Bové had essentially built his political career on a 1999 incident where he had vandalized a McDonald's in the South of France. This chapter seeks to trace the development of this seeming contradiction between the popularity of fast food in France and its demonization as the unsavory face of American cultural imperialism.

Many scholars describe the popularity of fast food in France as a contradiction or even a "paradox" demanding explanation. Rick Fantasia has remarked that:

> […] the fast food phenomenon in France [is] a combination that, at first glance, seems thoroughly, oxymoronic in cultural terms. France, above perhaps all other nations, is known to take deep cultural pride in its "patrimoine culinaire" [culinary heritage], […while] fast food, with its suggestion of speed, standardization, and the homogenization of taste, would seem to represent the direct inverse of French gastronomic practices […].[2]

Similarly, Marianne Debouzy has written,

> [McDonald's] enduring success points to a paradox: France is known for its demonstrations against McDonald's, […a] symbol of tasteless and unhealthy food (*la malbouffe*)[…]. Yet France is the country where McDonald's has the best business record in Europe. The ambivalence of the French toward McDonald's is obvious […]. [3]

Scholars' attempts to grapple with this apparent contradiction have typically fallen into two camps. There are those such as Fantasia, Debouzy, and Richard Kuisel, who see fast food as an example of the process of Americanization—the idea that American culture has influenced and transformed French society in the second half of the twentieth century in order to make room for

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[2] Rick Fantasia, "Fast food in France," *Theory and Society* 24 (1995): 202.

[3] Marianne Debouzy, "Working for McDonald's, France: Resistance to the Americanization of Work," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 70 (Fall 2006): 126.

American products and ideology.[4] For them, the nationalistic resistance was warranted since traditional French cultural really was being eroded by an overbearing foreign influence. The second camp, represented by Claude Fischler, sees fast food primarily as a product of the universal process of modernization, a process that happened to affect food culture earlier in the United States than in France, giving the illusion of American influence.[5] He points to the success of pizza, tacos, and even croissants in the U.S. relative to the hamburger chains' still modest market share in France, as evidence that French fears of gastronomic Americanization are misplaced and reflect geopolitical antagonism more than real cultural difference. A third, hybrid view, represented by Paul Ariès, argues that fast food represents globalization, rather than merely "Americanization." He maintains that globalization decimates rather than disseminates global cultural diversity, and thus nations must defend their local gastronomic specificity.[6]

Fischler and Ariès make a strong point that fast food may not be fundamentally "American" simply by virtue of having been "invented" in the United States. By that measure, pasteurized milk—anathema to any true connoisseur of French cheese—should be considered distinctly French because a Frenchman, Louis Pasteur, invented the process. But for Ariès the falsity of fast food's American identity only further proves that cultures are traditionally meant to be separate and distinct and that globalization, under the guise of Americanization, is now threatening their stability and autonomy. Similarly, Fischler describes the "gastro-anomie" resulting from the modern breakdown of the gastronomic structures of traditional "rural village

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[4] Richard Kuisel, *The French Way: How the French Embraced and Rejected American Values and Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 151-208.

[5] Claude Fischler, *L'Homnivore: Le goût, la cuisine et le corps* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2001), 173-177, 219-224.

[6] Paul Ariès, *Les fils de McDo: la McDonalisation du monde* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

societies."[7] What all these perspectives have in common is that they find the contradiction between what French people choose to eat and how they define gastronomic Frenchness to be both paradoxical and unsustainable, like a kind of national bad faith. They project an image of traditional French gastronomy onto an idealized past where an ensemble of culinary practices is assumed to have been stable and congruent with expressed definitions of French cuisine.

Yet throughout history, the cooking and eating habits of French people have never been uniform, static, or isolated. As seen in the preceding chapter, French cuisine had long been proudly defined by the global reach of its universalizing modernity, so how exactly could fast food's embodiment of these same traits suddenly become an affront to French "traditions"? There is no reason to assume that people only eat food they wish to identify with personally or nationally—French people, like Americans, presumably eat fast food because it is cheap, quick, and tasty, not because they agree with everything it represents.[8] Claims about what constitutes authentic French cuisine have always been motivated by political and economic interests. Thus, I argue that it is not at all paradoxical that the growing popularity of fast food in France could also rouse nationalistic opposition invoking a supposedly incompatible traditional national cuisine. What remains to be explained, however, is why this particular opposition between "French" traditional gastronomy, and "American" modern fast food, which was not inevitable, became such a powerful and controversial site for constructing national identities within a specific set of historical conflicts.

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[7] Fischler, *L'Homnivore,* 212.

[8] By contrast, Jennifer Willging suggests that there may indeed be significant distress involved in physically ingesting unpleasant or foreign food, especially for the French who, since Brillat-Savarin's dictum "Tell me what you eat and I shall tell you what you are," have strongly associated consuming food with identity. I would add that the French are not actually more susceptible to "losing" their culture or identity in this manner, since there is a long tradition of gastronomic cosmopolitanism in France. But having this cultural legacy at the disposal of the debates and criticism of fast food may well heighten their drama and effect. Jennifer Willging, "Of GMOs, McDomination and Foreign Fat: Contemporary Franco-American Food Fights," *French Cultural Studies* 19 (2008): 199.

In this chapter, I use a wide range of popular media—including news reports, TV shows, commercials, and monographs—in order to explore a discrete set of questions. How and why was the opposition between "American" fast food and "French" gastronomic traditions established and negotiated by a diverse field of competing interests both in and outside of France? What roles did these opposing forces play in debates about modernization, American hegemony, and globalization? How did the debate about fast food help to redefine Frenchness and France's place in the world?

This chapter begins in the 1970s, when many of the key features later attributed to fast food were already present in the ongoing industrialization of restaurants and other parts of the food service industry. These drew much criticism, but this targeted modernization as a domestic, French problem. Things quickly changed in the 1980s when the English term "fast food" and the specific model of the American hamburger chain fixed French attention on American cultural imperialism. At the same time, for many French consumers, it was fast food's very "Americanness" that made it attractive, and this feature was exploited by the marketing campaigns of the American and the European hamburger chains alike. By the end of the century, fast food, and especially McDonald's, came to be seen in France as the epitome of globalization taken as a process that destroyed cultural diversity and traditions. I argue that over time fast food became a foil upon which French critics projected their anxieties about culinary modernization and universalism and against which they were able to define a more traditional, natural, and unique image of French gastronomy. Meanwhile, by distancing fast food from Frenchness, French diners could continue eating fast food without suffering a crisis of conscience or identity.

Of course, there is a long history of French fears and critiques of Americanization that target consumer capitalism, mass culture, and Fordist industrial production. Historian Richard

Kuisel has traced an arc of anti-Americanism in France beginning with the 1930 publication of Georges Duhamel's book, *America the Menace*, a scathing critique of crass American materialism and philistinism contrasted with European civilization.[9] Duhamel's legacy can surely be seen fifty years later in French critiques of fast food that juxtaposed the flashy advertising and mechanized production of fast food against the sophistication of French gastronomy. Prefiguring many French critiques of fast food, in 1937, another French writer, Paul Morand, described the speed, and animal-like efficiency of New Yorkers at lunchtime, standing at a counter, all in a row, "devouring [food…] as if in a cattle barn."[10] Yet, the continuity of national stereotypes should not be mistaken for essential differences between two separate cultures. This is not to deny a certain concentration of industrial innovation in the United States or French preferences for elegant cuisine, but these were differences in degree (not kind) between two locations within an already transnational industrial society and modern culture.

Kuisel argues that the construction of French national identity against an American "other" peaked when the "two nations [that had] lived in separate worlds on the same globe" finally met in the real and intense postwar encounter of "Americanization." He further argues that this French-American dichotomy subsided by the 1970s once the French had acquiesced to American-style modernity this gave way to more pressing global threats.[11] But as Jean-Philippe Mathy explains, following Régis Debray, "Americanization," and "American popular culture" are really metaphors produced in a global context where even "'America' itself is a metaphor,

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[9] Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 10-14. On ambivalence toward American cultural and economic influences in interwar France, see: Ellen Furlough, "Selling the American Way in Interwar France: *Prix Uniques* and the Salon des Arts Menagers," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 491-519.

[10] Claude Fischler and Estelle Masson, *Manger: Français, Européens, Américains face à l'alimentation* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2008), 7-24.

[11] Kuisel, *Seducing the French,* 1, 6.

the repository of the world's dreams, phobias, and fantasies."[12] Mathy continues, now citing Alain Finkielkraut, that once this universalistic metaphorical "America" rose to global hegemony, it provoked in many French intellectuals a romantic (or anti-colonial) ethnic nationalism when defining Frenchness.[13] Taking a similar approach, this chapter demonstrates that industrialization and modernization would have likely transformed French food (and society) with or without the American influence. But constructing myths of "American fast food" and "French gastronomic traditions" was an effective way of coping with ambivalence toward modernization and in mobilizing political action against it. Indeed, in the 1970s, this was only beginning.

Public Enemy Number 1: Jacques Borel

In the 1976 comedy film, *L'aile ou la cuisse,* the primary antagonist is an industrialist named Jacques Tricatel, a man whose company operates numerous workplace cafeterias and rest-stop restaurants that straddle the freeway. At the beginning of the film, Tricatel's company is planning to buy a number of high-end provincial restaurants and attempts, through corporate espionage, to find out which restaurants will be awarded stars in the upcoming *Guide Duchemin*, a *Michelin*-like restaurant guide named for the film's protagonist, Charles Duchemin (played by Louis de Funès). In preparation for a televised debate against one another, the two men escalate their efforts to spy on each other's operations. Eventually, Duchemin and his son (played by Coluche) sneak into Tricatel's factory where they observe robotic machines molding rubbery heads of lettuce, steaks synthesized out of petroleum, and a chicken that lays cubic eggs. When

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[12] Jean-Philippe Mathy, "The Popularity of American Culture," *Sites: Journal of the Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 151.

[13] Mathy, 151-154.

Tricatel learns of the intruders, he instructs his minions to turn them into canned goods. Once the TV broadcast begins and Duchemin has not arrived, Tricatel assumes his plan to eliminate Duchemin and his son has been successful. Tricatel declares into the TV camera,

> Duchemin is not coming, because he no longer exists! Or rather, what he represents no longer exists: a cuisine that is complicated and reserved for the privileged few. […] And me? I feed millions of people, and tomorrow perhaps I will feed the entire world! Simply and naturally. And Duchemin is not going to come and prove me otherwise!

But to Tricatel's surprise, a few moments later, Duchemin and his son do show up and they accept Tricatel's challenge to identify a range of food and wine by taste alone. Because Duchemin has lost his sense of taste earlier in the film, it is his son who must perform the taste tests. However, when the son gets stumped on the final glass of wine, his father must step in. Without tasting the wine at all, he looks at it carefully and says:

> Beautiful vermillion color, a bit of violet. A beautiful radiance. It is a Bordeaux, a great Bordeaux. A bit of suspended noble rot. The impurities sink slowly. This wine is twenty-three years old. It is a fifty-three, a very good year. Wine is the earth; this one is moderately gravelly. This is a Médoc. Wine is also sunlight; this wine comes from a good southwestern exposure on a sloping hill. This is a St. Julien-Château Léoville Las Cases, 1953!

These two characters thus represent two distinct ideas of Frenchness: Tricatel is modernity and technological progress while Duchemin represents unique traditions and *terroirs*. This scene is significant first of all because it demonstrates how the latter, the particular and traditional idea of France, triumphs heroically over the former, the universal and modern France. The other significant point worth noting here, however, is that Tricatel is shown to be just as French as Duchemin. For while Tricatel embodies the worst outcomes of culinary modernization and industrialization, these characteristics are depicted as having been purely domestic issues in the 1970s. In fact, Tricatel was a thinly veiled caricature of an actual Frenchman, France's most (in)famous food industrialist, Jacques Borel.

Four months prior to the unveiling of their "Ten Commandments" of Nouvelle Cuisine, *Gault-Millau* magazine published an interview with Borel. Their first question set the hostile tone: "For thousands of French people passionate about gastronomy, you, Jacques Borel, are public enemy number one. Do you realize that?" He did, but he reminded them that he served 300,000 meals every day, implying that he must have been doing something right if he was also effectively France's top restaurateur. Undeterred, *Gault-Millau* pressed on: "The fact remains that you are the symbol of a new way of life that many French people reject. On the one hand there is the France of Bocuse, and on the other there is the France of Borel…"[14] In other words, industrial cuisine was less appealing to *Gault-Millau* but no less French than Bocuse's simple, natural, refined dishes. Borel may have been "public enemy number 1," but he was a homegrown criminal. Neither the term "fast food" nor any of its French equivalents appeared anywhere in the interview, since the concept was not yet well-known France. However, most of the controversial practices already employed in Borel's restaurants, cafeterias, and rest stops were precisely those innovations that would come to be associated with "American" fast food.

After graduating from HEC, France's *grande école* for business, in 1950, Borel worked at IBM for several years before opening his own self-service restaurant called l'Auberge Express near the Champs-Elysées in 1957. There, Borel began developing his skill for meticulously examining and streamlining every aspect of the operation in order to maximize efficiency. To cite just one example, he used pedometers in order to determine how to minimize the time and energy that his employees spent walking as they went about their work. He reduced these

[14] "Jacques Borel: l'ennemi public n° 1," *Gault-Millau* no. 50 (June 1973): 58.

averages from 13 to 6 kilometers per day, because "when an employee is walking, you are paying him to walk and not to work."[15]

In 1961, Borel opened the first French franchise of the hamburger chain, Wimpy. Although Wimpy offered table service, with its limited hamburgers-and-fries menu, streamlined cooking operations, and rapid service in some twenty locations, Wimpy has been retrospectively called France's first fast-food chain. The company was actually British, but it adopted a stereotypically American décor and menu, and Wimpy's French customers would have likely thought of it as American. Borel realized that hamburgers and fries not only capitalized on France's taste for American popular culture, they also presented solutions to several modern problems. He claimed, for example, that industrial ground beef was the inevitable result of women entering the workforce, because, according to Borel, "60% of beef is hard like wood. To be eaten, either it must be cooked for hours, which working women do not have the time for, or it must be ground."[16] Similarly, fries met the contemporary demand for speedy service because they could be cooked continuously and those that were not sold could be thrown out within seven minutes. In 2011, fifty years after opening his first Wimpy, Borel claimed that if a dispute with Wimpy's British executives had not caused him to abandon the venture in the late 1960s, "Wimpy would be where McDonalds is today."[17]

Would'ves and could'ves notwithstanding, Wimpy's significance as a forerunner of the modern fast food restaurant only became apparent in hindsight, after McDonald's, Burger King,

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[15] J.-M. Durand-Souffland, "Un hôtelier pressé pour des clients bousculés Jacques Borel joue toutes les cartes de vitesse," *Le Monde,* March 3, 1974.

[16] Agence France-Presse, "Il y a 50 ans, le premier restaurant de hamburgers en France," *20 Minutes*, May 31, 2011, accessed September 18, 2013, http://www.20minutes.fr/societe/733524-50-ans-premier-restaurant-hamburgers-france.

[17] Agence France-Press, "Il y a 50 ans, le premier restaurant de hamburgers en France."

Quick, Free Time, and others cemented the equation of hamburgers with a specific fast food model in the 1980s. For all his foresight in other areas, in the 1973 *Gault-Millau* interview, Borel did not seem particularly distraught about losing his Wimpy restaurants, nor did he reveal any inkling of how wildly popular the hamburger restaurant was about to become. During Wimpy's 1960s heyday, observers saw it as just one of a whole range of quick, inexpensive, and modern dining options. Many of these exploited an Anglo-American image and were given names like *le self(-service), le snack(-bar), le drugstore, or le pub.*

Le Monde's resident food writer, Robert Courtine, under his pen name La Reynière, wrote a 1969 column entitled "Do you eat *franglais*?"[18] As French writers often do, Courtine grouped British and American culture together as one "Anglo-Saxon" civilization.[19] He reviewed a number of the American/British style establishments in vogue in Paris and found most (but not all) lacking in service, quality, and value. Although he grouped these *snack-bars* and *drugstores* as products of the "Anglo-Saxon world," he blamed their unfortunate popularity in France on the French investors who "whip out their checkbooks as soon as they hear the word 'pub,'" and the "Parisian airheads" who were their gullible customers. Tellingly, Courtine compared the self-service lunch counter to factory assembly lines, not in Detroit, but in in Billancourt (where Renaults are made). Like *Gault-Millau*, Courtine understood that there was plenty of French responsibility for the rise of hyper-rationalized restaurants and industrial food. Large international corporations owned many of these eateries, but most of these, like Borel's company, were based in France.

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[18] La Reyniére [Robert Courtine], "Mangez-vous franglais?," *Le Monde,* March 28, 1969. "Franglais" is a portmanteau of the French words *français* ("French") and *anglais* ("English").

[19] "Anglo-Saxon," in common French usage usually has nothing to do with medieval England; it represents a perceived common identity among Anglophone countries, particularly Britain and the United States. See: Emile Chabal, "The Rise of the Anglo-Saxon: French Perceptions of the Anglo-American World in the Long Twentieth Century," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 24-46.

Courtine concluded his article with a few recommendations for mom-and-pop restaurants where one could still "eat French" and have a traditional multi-course lunch including wine and cheese at a reasonable price. In another column praising Paris' handful of high-end, authentic Chinese restaurants, he wrote that judging Chinese cuisine by the "three or four hundred rice traps" that have popped up around Paris would be "a little like judging *la grande cuisine française* by Wimpy!"[20] Notably, Courtine assumed that it was France's culinary reputation that Wimpy would (unjustly) sully, not Britain's or America's. Courtine called for the preservation of French gastronomic traditions, but if Americanization was taking place, he blamed the French for importing it. In this way the vogue for (Anglo-)American food, like other American popular culture, was merely a symptom of French modernization rather than the victory of an Anglo-Saxon conquest. Courtine was making a plea for the preservation of national traditions, but he did so with the assumption that this was not currently the dominant trend in France.

This is not to say that there was no perception of American leadership in modern business and technology in the 1960s and 1970s, but as Borel explained to *Gault-Millau*,

> In the fifties, in reaction against our recent suffering, we were discovering a new world based on efficiency, standardization, plastic, and self-service. A world *à la américaine* where it was calculated, for example, that it requires nineteen minutes, and not one more, to eat lunch. […] Around 1964 or 65, I realized that that we had definitively turned a corner. The French people had come of age, and no longer wanted a homogenized [American] world."[21]

Thus, both Borel and Courtine represented Americanization as primarily a French project to adopt certain American ideas and products as their own, not an imperialistic imposition. Moreover, they did not necessarily define Frenchness in opposition to industry and modernity. Borel saw the future of French cuisine as the adaptation of industrial techniques and rationalized

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[20] La Reyniére [Robert Courtine], "Céleste Cuisine," *Le Monde,* February 27, 1971.

[21] "Jacques Borel: l'ennemi public n° 1," 59.

production, including those from the U.S., to French dishes and tastes, in order to modernize French cuisine.

By the late 1960s, Borel had determined that Wimpy was to remain an occasional indulgence confined to a niche market in France. Consequently, in order to grow his business he would need to diversify. His next move was to spearhead the *Ticket Restaurant* program, a subsidized national program that enabled employers to provide employees with lunch vouchers that could be used in commercial restaurants. While this helped to bring more students and employees to his Wimpy and Drug-West restaurants during their lunch hours, he also came to them, bringing his industrialized food services to the dining halls of universities and large corporations.

Perhaps Borel's most visible endeavor during the 1970s was the establishment of a chain of self-service restaurants situated along—and *over*—France's expanding system of *autoroutes* (freeways). These "restoroutes" (*restaurant* +*autoroute*) were part of new full-service rest stops offering gas, restrooms, shops, and tourist services, in addition to dining. But contrary to popular belief today, Jacques Borel invented neither the concept of a convenient and affordable meal for automobile travellers nor even the term "restoroute."[22] It was, however, Borel who would take the credit (and the blame) for perfecting the model by attaching his name to the chain of industrialized, high-volume, semi-self-service restaurants that the expression came to signify.

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[22] The term "restoroute" appeared in several articles in *Le Monde* in 1954 to announce the arrival of the first combined restaurant/service stations, an idea apparently imported from the United States. Curiously, one columnist referred to the term as an *anglicisme,* apparently believing the word was borrowed from English even though both of its components, "restaurant" and "route" (or "autoroute") are French words... as a matter of fact, two words that English has borrowed from French. "LE PREMIER 'RESTOROUTE' – restaurant – station – service – VA S'OUVRIR A ROUVRAY," *Le Monde,* March 24, 1954; "Le 'Relas de l'Epereur' est devenu le premier 'restoroute' Français," *Le Monde,* April 14, 1954; Albert Duzat, "Un nouveau monstre: restoroute – Encore les anglicismes," *Le Monde*, June 16, 1954.

Borel's company's prior successes in the food industry provided the capital (both intellectual and financial), to undertake such an endeavor and to win the necessary contracts with the new and rapidly growing system of privately operated tollways. There were many obstacles that went along with installing fast and inexpensive restaurants capable of serving thousands of meals each day in remote locations. Borel met each of these challenges as an opportunity to use modern technologies and techniques to create a more rational, efficient, and, above all, profitable operation. In order for one restaurant to serve customers travelling in both directions, Borel implemented an Italian design that built restaurants on "bridges" spanning from one side of the highway to the other. This provided, as an additional attraction for diners, the spectacle of watching vehicles speed beneath them as they ate. It also made the restaurants hard to miss from approaching cars.

Borel's most significant innovations, however, involved how food was supplied, prepared and served. The massive yet highly variable demand for food supplies in remote locations was particularly difficult. Borel later explained, "A city like Auxerre [the nearest city to his first *restoroute*] couldn't provide you with 2000 fresh croissants each day."[23] Without being able to rely on the standard local food supply networks, Borel turned to modern technologies and global markets. Employing economies of scale he bought produce in huge quantities and managed his own supply chain. He also utilized frozen produce, explaining to *Gault-Millau*:

> [With frozen foods], there is good and there is bad. We found some American frozen meat that is first rate. If we didn't use frozen meat, there would be days where it would be impossible to serve steak. And may I remind you that, like other restaurants, 20% of our sales are still steak and fries. However, I do not trust

[23] Agence France Press, "Il y a 40 ans ouvrait un Jacques-Borel, le 1er restaurant d'autoroute," *Le Point,* 11 July, 2009, accessed on July 22, 2012, http://www.lepoint.fr/actualites-societe/2009-07-11/il-y-a-40-ans-ouvrait-un-jacques-borel-le-1er-restaurant-d/920/0/360682.

> frozen prepared dishes. They are a technological fiasco, and cost no less than using fresh ingredients, so what is the point?[24]

By the same token, the *restoroute* menu was streamlined from eighteen dishes to six after it was determined that the remaining 12 dishes together only accounted for 4% of total sales.[25] In order to train his chefs, Borel even created his own culinary school. Anticipating a common practice in the fast food industry, Borel enlisted legions of local young people as part-time and seasonal workers in order to handle the wide fluctuations in the flow of customers.

Some of the early criticisms of Borel's *restoroutes* complained of a lack of promised services for tourists and difficulties dealing with large groups and mealtime rushes.[26] However, the most sustained criticisms dealt with the quality of the food and questioned the industrial model. As one journalist wrote,

> A stop at a *restoroute* was at once an obstacle course, an invitation to travel, and an initiation in culinary surrealism. The English plates looked like they had crossed the channel on sailboats and the *steak tartare* like it had roamed all of central Asia under Attila's saddle. The Camembert surely traced its provenance to the best cement factories.[27]

The comedian Coluche and the pop singer Renaud each separately exploited the easy pun on Jacques Brel's classic song "Le Plat Pays" by rendering them Jacques Borel and "le plat pourri" (the rotten dish).[28]

Even though Borel's restaurants served hamburgers and were, for a time, majority owned by an American company, the understanding that Borel and his modern industrial model were

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[24] "Jacques Borel: l'ennemi public n° 1," 91.

[25] Agence France-Presse, "Il y a 50 ans, le premier restaurant de hamburgers en France."

[26] C.V., "Les grandes chaînes ont manqué d'audace," *Le Monde,* July 21, 1969.

[27] Bernard Chapuis, "L'addition SVP," *Le Monde,* May 5, 1977.

[28] The pun appeared in both Coluche's sketch, *Le Belge* and in Renaud's song "l"Auto-stoppeuse." Noted in William Reymond, *Toxic Food: Enquête sur les secrets de la nouvelle malbouffe* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), 26.

French was rarely questioned. Thus for example, when one journalist sought to criticize the decidedly un-gastronomic plainness of the hamburgers and steaks Borel served, the austere seventeenth-century religious movement he invoked was not American Puritanism, but French Jansenism.[29] The battle between industrialization and rationalization on one side and tradition and living well on the other was still essentially a civil war. And much like his contemporaries promoting Nouvelle Cuisine, Borel sought to reconcile the two opposing camps. In the *Gault-Millau* interview, he preened about his two new high-end "gastronomic" restaurants helmed by accomplished chefs using high-quality local ingredients. While these restaurants were less profitable and more difficult to run, Borel hoped they could bolster his brand's reputation while helping to diffuse culinary knowledge and techniques among the rest of his company. At the same time, Borel began to feature local products and dishes in each *restoroute.*

Despite these efforts and widespread recognition of his entrepreneurial prowess, Borel was unable to overcome him reputation for providing bad food. His name had become so ubiquitous that *Gault-Millau* could write, "We now say 'go to Borel's' like we say 'take the metro.'"[30] In 1977, he was forced to resign from active leadership of the company. While Borel's aggressive foray into the capital-intensive hotel industry in a struggling economy may have directly precipitated his resignation, the company really needed to shake the reputation for bad industrialized food that his name evoked. Through a series of complicated mergers and acquisitions, even after his departure Borel's companies remained powerful players in many areas of the hotel and food service industries. But Borel's name was stripped from most of the company's brands while Borel himself spent most of the 1980s hidden from public view in South

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[29] Charles Vanhecke, "Les restaurants d'autoroutes n'ont pas encore fait naître un veritable 'paysage' touristique," *Le Monde,* July 21, 1969.

[30] "Jacques Borel: l'ennemi public n° 1," 60.

America. He later returned to France, however, and worked as lobbyist for the restaurant industry, and in 2008 he was awarded the Legion of Honor.[31]

"Les Nègres des Américains"

During a 1975 episode of *Apostrophes* entitled "American colonialism," a short film was shown called "New York sur Seine."[32] The film compiled hundreds of shots collected around Paris of bell-bottom blue jeans, cowboy boots, American cigarettes, English words on signage, and other images recalling the United States. The longest section of the film captures people eating at a Paris McDonald's—one of the first in France. As the song "Seasons in Sun" plays in the background setting a eerily peaceful tone, young people are show eating with their hands, mostly standing upright with a crowd of people moving around them. Most of them seem to be eating alone with blank expressions on their faces. Finally the brightly colored packaging emblazoned with McDonald's logo that the food is served in is show being discarded into an overflowing garbage can.

After the film, Bernard Pivot asks one of his guests, Jean Cau, for his thoughts. Cau replies that if he had not already written his book, *Pourquoi la France?* (*Why France?*), these images would inspire him to write it, because they "reveal the evil that is infecting us."[33] He then describes in language clearly and intentionally appropriated from anti-colonial writers how the French have become the "colonized" who "mimic" their American colonizers and have become

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[31] "Jacques Borel reçoit la Légion d'honneur," *L'Hôtellerie Restauration*, April 17, 2008, accessed on March 19, 2014, http://www.lhotellerie-restauration.fr/hotellerie-restauration/articles/2008/3077_17_Avril_2008/Jacques_borel_recoit_la_Legion_d_honneur.htm.

[32] The title of the short film is a play one words meaning both "New York on Stage" and "New York on the Seine River." "Le colonialisme américain," April 4, 1975 episode of *Apostrophes* (Antenne 2).

[33] "Le colonialisme américain."

"alienated from themselves." He states unequivocally, "Nous sommes les nègres des Américains!" ("We are the Americans' negroes!").

Throughout the broadcast, Cau expresses support for France's global influence and cultural *rayonnement*, but these arguments seemed to be mostly rote Gaullism, as Cau has little to say about what French culture may have to offer the world in the future. His primary focus remains defending French culture from the American invasion. Cau's chief adversary in that evening's debate, Jean-François Revel, insists it is hypocritical to condemn America for pursuing geopolitical influence without renouncing France's own such pursuits. He agrees with Cau that the French are suffering from a kind of pathological bad faith since they copy Americans while seeing them as oppressors. But he argues that the logical conclusion of Cau's position would have to be a totalitarian cultural isolationism that would require, among other things, banning American books. Furthermore, Revel argues that it is ridiculous to reject modern ideas and products simply because of their American provenance. He acknowledges American cultural hegemony, but sees little to fear in blue jeans and hamburgers. Revel insists that he thoroughly appreciates the French tradition of living well, but he finds retreating from international modernity not only pathetic and xenophobic but also ultimately highly detrimental to French culture.

By the 1970s it was finally sinking in that there was to be only one hegemon in the modern, capitalist West. Many, like Revel, had begun to question France's universalist projects of modernization and *rayonnement*, at least in their brazen imperialistic and Gaullist modes in which culture, expertise, and technology developed in France were exported to the world. The very concepts of modernity, industry, and capitalism were becoming more and more synonymous with Americanism and Americanization. The notion of a "French industrialist" like

Jacques Borel appeared increasingly oxymoronic. Indeed it was ironic, and unfortunate for Borel, that he had abandoned the overt Americanism of Wimpy in favor of a more overtly "French" approach to industrial food just as that sort of Gaullist marriage of modernization and nationalism was losing steam and only a few years before American-style hamburger restaurants would explode across France.

In the late 1970s, a wave of pro-American liberalism washed over France. Inspired both by Tocqueville's nineteenth-century liberalism and Foucault's twentieth-century iconoclasm, intellectuals like Jean-François Revel and the New Philosophers argued against the nationalistic obsession with French exceptionalism and independence that they felt had plagued French thought and politics on both the Gaullist right and the Marxist left. The historian François Furet traced this pathological nationalism all the way back to 1789. Many felt that Anglo-American liberalism, whether France liked it or not, had become the dominant mode of Western modernization, and France could either get onboard or get left behind.

But by embracing, explicitly or implicitly, an "Anglo-Saxon" modernity and rejecting French nationalism, these liberal intellectuals did not necessarily try to represent Frenchness. Indeed, they largely left the work of defining French national identity up to cultural conservatives (on the left and the right) who obligingly equated it with a proud cultural heritage and local traditions. For those invested in the preservation of tradition and cultural self-determination, it made perfect sense to see modernization and Americanization as two sides of the same external threat to French national identity. Critiques of Americanization were shifting from questions of influence to accusations of outright imperialism. By the early 1980s, debates about the industrialization of food and Americanization converged and became fixated on *le fast-food* as an emblem of American cultural imperialism. By casting fast food as a foreign

colonizing threat, critics were able to externalize French problems regarding industrialization and modernization. Moreover, this stance enabled France to take up a defensive position of "anti-colonial" nationalism rooted in indigenous cultural heritage and self-determination. Fast food became a foil against which traditional French gastronomy, stripped of its modernist and universalist trappings, could be defined.

American "cultural imperialism" had been a fixation of the far left at least since the days of the Communist party's spirited war against Coca-Cola in the 1950s, an invasion they called "Coca-Colonization."[34] But after decolonization, French nationalists on the right as well as the left not only renounced France's former imperialist identity, they also took notice of the viable forms of post-colonial nationalism demonstrated by the anti-colonial struggles for independence.

However, if the arrival and proliferation of McDonald's in the Paris region in the 1970s is to be understood as an imperial invasion, as Jean Cau suggested above, it was more like the work of a rogue officer who had little support from McDonald's central command in Chicago. The American company had little faith in the possibility of converting sophisticated French diners to McDonald's brash flavors and utilitarian service. However, a Frenchman (or rather a "Franco-Moroccan") named Raymond Dayan who had successful operated nine McDonald's restaurants in the Chicago area in the 1960s convinced the company to grant him exclusive rights to open McDonald's franchises in the Paris region. Reportedly because of a lack of confidence in Dayan's success, McDonald's agreed to collect a percentage of his profits that was far smaller than their normal rate. Dayan opened the first McDonald's in France in the Paris suburb of Creteil in 1972.

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[34] Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 37-69.

Within a decade, Dayan had expanded his empire to more than a dozen McDonald's locations throughout the Paris region. Then in 1982, following a prolonged legal battle, the company revoked Dayan's contract and forced him to stop using the McDonald's name. McDonald's claimed that Dayan's restaurants did not meet the company's standards of hygiene and quality, and were therefore in breech of contract. Dayan argued that these were merely excuses to cover McDonald's motivation to recapture a market that was proving more lucrative than expected. It is plausible that both sides' allegations were true, since after winning the case McDonald's launched an aggressive effort to re-conquer the French market while exercising stricter control from Chicago. It was a risky strategy, however, since cutting ties with Dayan had required McDonald's to turn over nearly all of its market share to Dayan's new chain, O'Kitch, which became the largest fast-food chain in France over night.[35]

It is difficult to estimate Dayan's actual influence on the introduction of fast food to France, since most of fast food's defining methods and products—if not configured in precisely same model—were already being used by Borel other French companies, which had a *much* larger presence in France than McDonald's in the 1970s. Nevertheless, a 1986 book entitled *La conquête du hamburger* (The Hamburger's Conquest) made a point of dismissing the influence of Wimpy and Borel's other "half-efforts."[36] The book declared that it was "a certain Ray Kroc, one of those 'self made men' that made America, who had launched the hamburger's international epic conquest."[37] The book credited Dayan as the man who "truly began the

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[35] Jean-Michel Ulmann, "Fast –food: Le géant mondial avalé par une marque inconnue," *Médias,* no. 45, December 22, 1982.

[36] *La conquête du hamburger* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie, 1986), 8-9.

[37] *La conquête du hamburger,* 5

hamburger's campaign in France."[38] The book's argument is rather surprising considering that it was sponsored by McDonald's chief European competitor, Quick, who had begun selling hamburgers in Belgium in 1971, a year *before* Dayan arrived in Paris. But even for Quick the history of the hamburger could not be separated from the archetypical fast food restaurant: McDonald's. Even though the book did claim that the hamburger had, by 1986, become "less Americanized and more professionalized," the authors clearly felt that the authentic, American origins of the hamburger restaurant were essential to its "conquest of everyday France" and the "new way of life" it represented.[39] In this way, even European proponents of fast food were willing to see it as a (welcome) example of American cultural imperialism.

The term "fast food" rarely appears in French sources prior to the 1980s. On the rare occasions that the term did appear in print in *Le Monde* during the 1970s, it was almost always used in an American context and required a translation and definition for French readers. Even though the first McDonald's franchise had opened in Paris in 1972, the fast food model was not well-known in France beyond industry insiders or people who had visited the United States in the 1970s.[40] In the rare instances that the presence of fast food in France was discussed, it was likely to be lumped in with larger problems of modern French society—from industrialization and consumerism to youth apathy—although the "New York sur Seine" film cited above was an obvious exception.[41] After 1980, however, both the term "fast food" and the specific concept it

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[38] *La conquête du hamburger,* 9.

[39] *La conquête du hamburger, 4.*

[40] "SUIVRE LES BESOINS DE CONSOMMATEURS," *Le Monde*, October 13, 1972; Louis Wiznitzer, "3,25 dollars, ketchup compris," *Le Monde,* November 5, 1977.

[41] Gérard Chalençon, "Quand la restauration devient une industrie," *Le Monde,* November 14, 1972; Charles Vial, "La bouffe ? Bof…," *Le Monde,* October 8, 1978.

referred to quickly became familiar in France.[42] The gatekeepers of the French language encouraged the use of several alternatives including "restauration rapide" and "prêt à manger"—a French phrase meaning "ready to eat" that is now the name of an international fast food chain that originated, ironically, in Britain in 1984. However, the English expression "fast food" remained the preferred term.[43] Significantly, each time that the English phrase was written or spoken its use reaffirmed fast food's foreignness while obscuring French complicity in its development, production, and consumption.

One of the earliest television programs to use the term "fast food" was a 1981 episode of *Aujourd'hui Madame*, a daily talk show directed at women.[44] This particular episode was broadcast from Lyon, a city known worldwide for its cuisine. The show's hosts mention at the outset that their guests are average women from Lyon who therefore, given the city's reputation, must be especially sensitive to all things gastronomic. During the discussion, the term "fast food" is applied to a broad range of dining options including, for example, *restoroutes*. Moreover, the hosts apparently still find it necessary to define the term or replace it with more descriptive language, for example describing fast food as "those establishments that cannot be called restaurants where one eats standing up and very quickly consumes some kind of sandwich accompanied by a non-alcoholic beverage."[45] Even the stock images that are used suggest little familiarity with McDonald's-style fast food—one is a photograph of a bun-less hamburger patty topped with a fried egg and served with fries and salad on a porcelain plate.

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[42] The term "fast food" appeared in *Le Monde* only 15 times prior to 1980, then 13 times each in the years 1980 and 1981, then jumped up to 27 times in 1982 and appeared between 20 and 40 times each year for the rest of the decade. www.lemonde.com.

[43] "Fast food" appeared in *Le Monde* 263 times between 1/1/1980 and 1/1/1990, while the term "restauration rapide" appeared 119 times, and "prêt-à-manger" just 76 times. www.lemonde.com.

[44] "Fast Food," September 22, 1981 episode of *Aujourd'hui Madame* (Antenne 2).

[45] "Fast Food"

Nevertheless, using the term "fast food" immediately presumes a foreign influence. Prompted by rather leading questions, the guests on the show dutifully agree that they worry about the effects on the French *art de vivre* of the fast food establishments that were replacing traditional French restaurants in city centers. They comment on the discordance between "the French mentality" and these "shocking imports from America."[46] But the guests also volunteer that busy schedules, shortened lunch breaks, and the high cost of traditional restaurants make fast food the practical or even the only option for many people. Thus, it is largely the show's guests, average French women, who addressed underlying socio-economic changes in France, and not the show's hosts who, for their part appear to expect the women to simply fear the loss of local and national traditions in the face of Americanization and modernization.[47]

This show demonstrates that even though the points of reference that most people had for fast food in 1981 were essentially unchanged from those of Borel's operations ten years earlier, by the 1980s there was a clear willingness to impose a narrative in which American influence was displacing French traditions and upsetting French cultural identity. What is more, as this broadcast shows, this discourse is one that was often imposed by the media elites, rather than emanating from those—in this case provincial women—who were expected to represent and defend traditional French culture.

This trend quickly gained momentum in the media. A 1982 television documentary called "La fast-food connexion ou le rêve américain" (The Fast Food Connection: or the American Dream) took a hardline stance against fast food.[48] The documentary, hosted by the famous

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[46] "Fast Food"

[47] In discussing the new TGV that would connect Paris and Lyon, the hosts questioned their guests about fearing "becoming Parisian suburbanites" or "this train that goes very, very fast." The guests, however, were more excited about being able to travel to Paris more quickly.

[48] "La fast food connexion ou le rêve américain,"April 30, 1982 episode of *Le Nouveau Vendredi* (FR3).

muckraker, Anne Gaillard, focused on Raymond Dayan's success bringing McDonald's to Paris, and his then-current legal dispute with Chicago. It makes a point of mentioning Dayan's "Franco-Moroccan" background and his time working in the United States, perhaps in an effort to disqualify his Frenchness. Showing video of the assembly-line production of hamburgers and obese Americans she called "whales," Gaillard grills Dayan on the nutritional, social, and cultural threats posed by fast food. Dayan counters that fast food was a positive result of American innovation and insists that France should embrace the entrepreneurial "American Dream." Both essentially agree, therefore, that fast food is emblematic of a distinctly American ideology that is entirely foreign to French society.

A live televised discussion followed the documentary in which a number of experts discuss the impact of fast food on traditional gastronomy and restaurants as well as the health and social integration of young people. A spokesman from an association representing the traditional restaurant industry argues that France does not need fast food because it already has cafés and other convenient, inexpensive options that preserve national tastes and customs and are not part of "this Americanized sickness."[49] However, others resist such closed-mindedness interpretations. Christian Millau expresses his wish to eat a burger cooked by the Troisgros brothers, and a member of the audience suggested it was hypocritical to criticize the nutrition of hamburger when the famous French staple, the *croque-monsieur*—a type of grilled ham and cheese sandwich—is no better.

But by the 1980s, gastronomic modernists like Gault and Millau occupied an increasingly lonely middle ground. Their sympathies had long aligned with the cosmopolitan spirit of French liberalism and modernization neither of which were, for them, at odds with French gastronomy.

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[49] "La fast food connexion ou le rêve américain."

In the 1970s, Nouvelle Cuisine had advocated embracing technological and industrial advances with greater precision and restraint in order to achieve new heights of culinary excellence. Fast food also employed technology and industry with extreme precision and purpose. Nouvelle Cuisine had promised simple, modern food that overthrew the stuffy conventions and pretensions of French gastronomy, and for its enthusiasts that was exactly what fast food was doing on a truly democratic level. The obvious difference was that, judging by the hamburgers being sold in France, fast food showed little interest in French taste or in taste at all.

The cover of the April 1982 issue of *Gault-Millau* magazine pictured the titular heroes seated before trays piled with burgers, fries, and soft drinks under the headline "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide': beurk ou miam-miam?" ("The 'fast food' invasion: yuck or yum-yum?")[50] The title of Millau's essay, "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide': la folie du hamburger" ("The 'fast food' invasion: hamburger mania!"), highlighted the apparent paradox of fast food's massive popularity in France despite being a seen as a foreign invasion.[51] Millau began his essay with a call to arms: "Get up you Foies Gras! The enemy is upon us. The Hamburger King has breached our walls. A formation of Unidentified Nauseating Objects is descending upon France's plate. To your pots and your frying pans! Let's repel the usurper!"[52] Millau was being facetious and perhaps meant to parody some of the more hyperbolic reactions there had been to fast food. But he clearly also saw fast food as a purely foreign force. He argued that the "really frustrating thing" was that the poor quality and value of "*les cafés-tabacs*," "*les snacks,*" and "*les selfs*" had

[50] *Gault-Millau* 156 (April 1982), cover.

[51] Christian Millau, "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide' : La folie du hamburger," *Gault-Millau* 156 (April 1982): 66-68.

[52] Millau, "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide,'" 67.

left a gap in the market that "America rushed to fill."[53] Millau insisted that he had nothing against hamburgers—he had become a "*homo hamburgericus*" himself on a road trip across the U.S.—and "could only see advantages in the fast food system."[54] The problem, for him, was the mediocrity of the fast-food hamburger restaurant once relocated to France. French fast food restaurants' décor recalled a "clinic or a service station." The "mediocre meat, spongy bread, and inconsistent cooking," they passed off as food might fool "young people who have never set foot in the United States," but not him.[55]

Millau argued that the best solution was neither learning to make hamburgers properly, nor to cling to outdated traditions, but to develop fast food "*à la française.*" This could include "cold and hot sandwiches, egg dishes, stuffed tarts and pastries, and many other items that, while not 'cuisine,' are not foreign to our national heritage."[56] As it so happened, a short article by Henri Gault on the adjacent page applauded just such a new chain called la Franquette that inserted frozen batons made of different classic dishes into a baguette and heated it in a microwave.[57] Now one could have fish in cream sauce, an onion omelet, or stewed beef and carrots in a convenient sandwich form! In opting for such solutions, Gault and Millau moved toward an essentialist and insular conception of French taste, while holding firm to their faith in modernization.

In fact, a number of fast food chains with more traditionally "French" menus had been launched by the early 1980s. The industry designated a whole category of fast food known as

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[53] Millau, "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide,'" 68.

[54] Millau, "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide,'" 68.

[55] Millau, "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide,'" 68.

[56] Millau, "L'invasion de la 'bouffe rapide,'" 68.

[57] Henri Gault, "La bonne Franquette," *Gault-Millau* 156 (April 1982): 69.

viennoiseries—French-style sandwich and pastry chains like Brioche Dorée that adopted the fast food model. But according to Rick Fantasia, "in the mind of consumers '[…] the viennoiserie [was] not considered the same as the concept of fast food.'"[58] While Gault and Millau might lament the absence of "French" fast food or pin their hopes on the latest outlandish start-up, no one seemed particularly interested in any of the numerous examples that *had* succeeded. Jacques Borel had already brought industrial techniques and fast service to traditional French fare on a massive scale in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, as Claude Fischler has pointed out, most "traditional" French restaurants increasingly employed industrial products and methods, as well, but kept quiet about it or risked losing customers who preferred not to know.[59] Only in the case of an avant-garde three-star chef might a respectable French restaurant receive any positive encouragement for employing modern technologies in the kitchen, and, as seen in the previous chapter, even this was likely to draw heavy criticism. In short, these examples of modern, industrial French food simply did not fit into the narrative of cultural imperialism that separated American industrial food from French traditional gastronomy.

By the end of 1982, this dichotomy had hardened. An episode of the television program, *Vous êtes juges* (*You Be the Judges*), tackled the subject of "America-mania" though a mock trial. Representing the "prosecution was an academic, Maurice Goldring, while the defense team for "l'Oncle Sam" included a journalist, Michel Drancourt, and a rock musician, Hervé Fornieri, better known as Dick Rivers.[60] The "jury" was made up of four "average" television viewers. The "trial" theme was merely a gimmick to spruce up a typical French roundtable debate show.

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[58] Fantasia, 218.

[59] Claude Fischler, "The 'McDonaldization' of Culture," in *Food: A Culinary History,* dir. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, ed. Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Penguin, 2000), 542-543.

[60] "Américanomanie," November 18, 1982 episode of *Vous êtes juges* (Antenne 2).

The program was also periodically interrupted with excerpts from a pre-recorded interview with the Minister of Culture, Jack Lang. Lang found himself backpedaling after a recent speech in Mexico City infamously calling for resistance to American "financial and intellectual imperialism" by nations that had become "vassals to an immense empire of profit."[61]

As the guests discussed different aspects of American culture that had become popular in France (movies, pop music, television series) their opinions largely fell into two mutually exclusive categories. Modernization, the free market, individual liberty, and cosmopolitan openness were identified with the pro-American group, while the anti-American group claimed self-determination, social justice, and cultural heritage. Predictably, among the "jury" the eighteen-year-old law student declared himself "for America-mania, and for good faith," while the two middle-aged women expressed concerns about the erosion of French traditions.[62]

When the program turns to the topic of fast food, it begins with a clip where Lang admits that while he doesn't care for this "anti-food," it does meet a real need in modern life, particularly in big cities, "to eat quickly, inexpensively, and unburdened by the protocols of the table."[63] When asked why it was the Americans who had discovered this solution, Lang replies, "the Americans are often very good at finding practical solutions to practical problems." Lang argues, echoing Gault and Millau, that the French response ought not to be protectionism in this case but creativity on the part of French restaurateurs to meet this new demand. The show's host then gives some examples of *croissanteries* and *briocheries* that had begun to pop up and the law student adds that a new fast food place on the Champs-Elysees serves classic French dishes, but

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[61] David Looseley, *The Politics of Fun: Cultural Policy and Debate in Contemporary France* (New York: Berg, 1997), 78.

[62] "Américanomanie."

[63] "Américanomanie."

the older women just smile knowingly at such youthful naïveté and no one seems particularly interested in discussing "French" solutions.

The host then poses a more provocative question: "Can one like both *boeuf bourguignon* and hamburgers?"[64] None of the guests appear to notice the essentialism or xenophobia implicit in the question. However, Dick Rivers offers a perceptive response:

> The Americans like *boeuf bourguignon* and hamburgers! One eats very well in the United States, and Americans like to gather around the table too. […] You mustn't take the hamburger as a symbol of the United States; it is a global symbol. Eating a hamburger can be very satisfying. They are very good when made well, but unfortunately in France they are rarely made well. But it is simply a way to gain more leisure time […] to do other things.

Goldring, however, counters that beyond hamburgers or fast food restaurants themselves, the real danger is:

> the United States [which] represents an enormous economic machine with ramifications. Businesses like McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and other fast food, their tendency is to spread everywhere. And Americans too […] are worried, because they know it will be a catastrophe if there is nothing but fast food left in our cities.

This exchange reveals an understanding on both sides of the debate that this "American" empire is distinct from the everyday lives of the American people, suggesting a nascent awareness of globalization.

But while there was recognition that America is more than cheeseburgers and *Dallas*, the flipside—French responsibility for helping to create global industrial modernity—was all but ignored. None seemed to recall the fact that France had, until very recently forced a universal modernity (i.e. capitalism, industrialization, and cultural homogenization) on its own colonies. To be fair, as Jean Cau had argued on *Apostrophes*, France hopefully had not learned the error of its own imperialism just to turn around and be colonized by the Americans. But the essential

[64] "Américanomanie."

separation of the two national cultures was taken as so absolute that the total "Americanness" of fast food was never questioned. The contributions by Frenchmen like Jacques Borel and Raymond Dayan were easily forgotten. No links were made to France's centuries-long leading role in modernizing and rationalizing cooking techniques, food preservation, the division of kitchen labor, or restaurant management. Instead the symbols of French cuisine cited on *Vous êtes les juges* were the regional cuisines of Burgundy and Périgord understood as reservoirs of indigenous culinary traditions and the exact opposite of the hamburger symbolizing a global modernity dominated by industrialization, consumerism, and standardization.

Historian Richard Kuisel has concurred with Christian Millau's assessment that American fast food succeeded in France because of the country's lack of fast, convenient, and affordable dining options.[65] This is certainly true insofar as no business can succeed without a demand. But the fact that *viennoiseries*, *restoroutes,* and many other types of "French" fast food alternatives also found increasing success in this period suggests it was not the lack of other options that drove French people to commit treason by way of eating hamburgers. What Gault and Millau, Lang, and many scholars failed to recognize is that many French consumers simply did not *want* to eat *coq au vin* or *sole meunière* for lunch, even if it was convenient and affordable (or even stuck into a portable baguette). Such arguments depend on the assumption that French people, given a choice, will always prefer to eat the food they define as "French." This is why many observers find it paradoxical that fast food continues to find success in France. In fact, sometimes French diners would simply prefer to have a hamburger.

Rick Fantasia has argued that it was the precisely fast food's Americanism that was its biggest draw. Fantasia's interviews with French customers suggest that eating fast food was akin

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[65] Kuisel, *The French Way*, 179.

to tourism. They told him, "hamburgers and coke are a way to live like an American," and "The first time I went, it was like visiting the United States."[66] Fantasia observes:

> It [was] simply not necessary to attempt to create anything other than a "genuine" fast food outlet in order to create 'an American atmosphere,' for the basic characteristics (the lighting, the color, the noise, the sense of space, the informality, the participation) [were] what was seen to be representative of an American place.[67]

In this way, what appears to be a paradox—the French affinity for something it sees as a foreign invader—is actually a mutually constituting dichotomy. By marking hamburgers as American, French diners can enjoy them without identifying with all of the problems they represent. Conversely, only by projecting the problems of industrialization, modernization, and consumerism onto hamburgers as an emblem of "American imperialism," can French gastronomy, at least symbolically, become a bastion of tradition. After all, which is more degrading to traditional French cuisine: being occasional supplemented by a hamburger or turning *boeuf bourguignon* into a microwavable sandwich?

Le Hamburger and The American Dream

The sudden increase in fast-food hamburger chains in France in the 1980s came after the narrative of American imperialism had already been established. Furthermore, for most of the 1980s, the majority of the corporations running hamburger chains in France were European. In fact, by 1985, American companies controlled only 3% of the market. In the early and mid 1980s, France experience a veritable fast food explosion with restaurants with names like

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[66] Fantasia, 228.

[67] Fantasia, 228.

Manhattan Burger, Comod Burger, Astérix Burger, Mister Goodfast, and Croissants de France opening (and closing) all the time.[68]

As Fantasia has argued, for its mostly young clientele, the lure of fast food was not only the virtual visit to America; it was also the transgressive and rebellious act of defying French tradition.[69] Like Wimpy—but unlike Borel's *restoroutes*— hamburger chains intentionally exploited an overtly and stereotypically American image. This was perhaps an obvious (but not inevitable) move for American brands like McDonald's and Burger King. However, the fact that their European competitors (Quick, Free Time, O'Kitch) and their products (Longburger, Giant, King Fish) likewise adopted English or English-sounding names is clear evidence of America's marketing appeal.

A survey of television commercials from the 1980s confirms that hamburger chains, *especially* those based in Europe, actively cultivated an "American" or "Anglo-Saxon" image. Of course, television commercials cannot tell us exactly why French diners frequented fast food restaurants or what they thought about their experiences there. To be sure, convenience, cost, and fast service made fast food attractive to customers regardless of cultural perceptions. But insofar as commercials are carefully crafted to appeal to dominant attitudes, they offer direct insight into how marketing strategists' perceived the French public, and in turn, also played a role in influencing public perceptions and desires. These insights are particularly valuable for understanding the massive expansion and success of the fast food industry in France at a time when the media was often sharply critical of fast food.

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[68] "Hamburgers, viennoiseries, et sandwiches, palmarés," *Le Monde,* 26 March 1983; "O'kitch, Freetime and Co.," *Le Monde,* 23 March 1985.

[69] Fantasia, 224-225.

A 1981 commercial for What A Burger features Eddie Mitchell, one of France's biggest rock stars who, like his friend Johnny Hallyday, had risen to fame in the early 1960s by appropriating a look and sound aping American teen idols like Elvis Presley.[70] Set in a fast food restaurant crowded with teenage customers and employees, Mitchell (now nearly forty himself) wears a black leather jacket and sings a rock n' roll jingle in his Elvis-like voice describing the fast service, great food, and low prices all available at practically any time of the day.[71] Mitchell's presence as known enthusiast of American culture but also a familiar French face helps to situate fast food and hamburgers among an image of American culture that that is fun and exotic while remaining safe and familiar.

A 1984-85 TV ad campaign for Raymond Dayan's O'Kitch restaurants took a more daring avant-garde approach, with a series of commercials employing noisy collages of videos, images, sounds, and words not unlike some music videos of that era. Images of hamburgers and Coca-Cola were interspersed with unrelated video game images, abstract artwork, and text including English words like "ROCK," "METAL," "FUNK," and "VIDEO." The commercial end with a slogan amounting to a bilingual pun: "Mangez chaud" ("Eat hot"), but written as "Mangez show."[72] O'Kitch, indeed!

A 1986-87 set of ads for Quick (at the time France's leading hamburger chain) was even more explicit in its deference to American authority, with the slogan: "The hamburger that

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[70] What A Burger was owned and operated by the Jacques Borel group, although Borel himself was no longer actively running the company. Whatever the relationship, if any, with the regional American chain Whataburger, it seems unlikely that many French consumers would have known about the American company, whose locations are scattered throughout the American south.

[71] "WHAT A BURGER : what a burger," February 1, 1981, accessed November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3249834050/what-a-burger-what-a-burger-video.html. All of the television commercials' titles and dates are exactly as they appear in the INAthèque catalogue. Most are also publicly available online at INA.fr, so each citation also includes the url when possible.

[72] "O'KITCH : RESTAURANT / FAST FOOD," January 1, 1985, accessed November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784051116.

impresses Americans." Each ad features a stereotypical group of Americans proclaiming their excitement over one of Quick's menu items. In one, a group of uniformed military generals is meeting with the President of the United States to discuss the "Giant" (the name of Quick's flagship burger) that has "invaded all of Europe." After a soldier takes a bite and confirms just how good the burger is, the American President furiously demands, "Can't we stop it?"[73] Another depicts an American naval ship full of sailors who cannot wait to get ashore and get their hands on some "petites poulets" (a term that slyly refers to both chicken and young women). But when the ship lands in the French port, the sailors run right past the attractive girls gathered to meet them and head straight to Quick for some "Chicken Dips."[74] Other ads in the series portray the New York marathon and a caravan of settlers in the Old West each changing their routes and striking out for Europe where they could eat a Quick "Giant."[75] This series of ads suggests that while Europeans may be able to make the better burger, it is American approval that grants authenticity.

A 1985 ad for Free Time traded American know-how for British cool. It begins with an unhappy man in a dark, dirty basement meant to be a fast food joint where he has to eat standing up while dripping food on his shoes and shirt and being mocked by onlookers. Then the camera cuts to scene two, where a man in a white tuxedo is seated in a fancy dining room next to woman calling herself Natasha. In the background, the music recalls the theme from James Bond films. The man's "Longburger" is held together with a paper ring that prevents spills. Finally, we cut

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[73] "QUICK BURGER : FAST FOOD," March 1, 1986, accessed November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784067012/quick-burger-fast-food-video.html.

[74] "QUICK BURGER : FAST FOOD," September 1, 1987, accessed November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784093009/quick-burger-fast-food-video.html.

[75] "QUICK BURGER : FAST FOOD," January 1, 1987, accessed on November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784075024/quick-burger-fast-food-video.html.

back to the first man as he is exiting the cleaners and complaining (in English), "My *teinturie* [cleaners] is rich!"[76]

The humorous, ironic, and absurd tone of many of these ads helped the European-based chains to walk a fine line. On the one hand, by draping their ads in Anglo-American symbolism they showed that their restaurants offered an authentic American experience. On the other hand, the only way they could claim superiority over their American competitors was to remind their audience that this was not serious cuisine. With a wink and a nod, they gave their customers permission to fully enjoy these "Anglo-Saxon" pleasures without identifying with them too closely or sacrificing their own French good taste.

McDonald's and Burger King had the advantage of being the "real thing," so their ads tended to be more sincere. As actual foreign invaders, they could not afford to appear arrogant or threatening to their French customers. In contrast to their European competitors, the American chains tended to focus their ads on wholesome family fun, suggesting an open, benevolent, gently American modernity from which Europeans had nothing to fear.

Initially, both companies simply reused commercials that appear to have been produced for the U.S. market. They evidently expected that the same English-language songs and stereotypical images of American life (cheerleaders, paperboys, baseball, the New York skyline, etc.) would appeal to French consumers as well as Americans.[77] If for Americans these images inserted fast food into the happy and familiar routines of an idealized American life, for French

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[76] "FREE TIME : RESTAURANT/FAST FOOD," September 1, 1985, accessed on November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784053001/free-time-restaurant-fast-food-video.html.

[77] "McDonald's Corp. : Morning Glory," January 1, 1980, accessed on November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3249397017/mc-donald-s-corp-video.html; "BURGER KING : Burger king," February 1, 1981, accessed November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/playlist-audio-video/306470/mc-donald-s-burger-king-playlist.html.

audiences these same images implied that by eating at McDonald's or Burger King they too could partake in an authentic American experience.

Soon, however, both companies began producing commercials specifically aimed at the French market. One 1982 Burger King commercial included a song with French lyrics that were actually rapped over a disco beat: "When I am hungry for a hamburger, to me, the Whopper is the best. I can go to New York right in the middle of Paris! It's a party at Burger King!"[78] Other ads focused on the components of Whoppers and Big Macs or introduced new products like chicken nuggets and value meals. Sometimes the announcers had noticeable American or English accents. A few commercials did employ light, good-natured humor, such as a 1985 McDonald's ad in which a woman who appears to be a news anchor holds a Big Mac up for the camera. As she describes all of its enticing ingredients, she finally can no longer resist taking a bite of the prop, forcing the frustrated but understanding director of this commercial-within-a-commercial to yell "Cut!"[79]

Fast food advertising intentionally concealed the less appealing aspects of their mass-produced product and its highly-processed ingredients. Indeed, most of the ads mentioned above made very little mention of how the food tasted or its ingredients, except in very general terms. However, one ad for McDonald's Big Mac, took the opposite approach, highlighting the ingredients in an appealing (if inaccurate) manner. Utilizing close-up shots of a rustic-looking table, the camera moves slowly across the fresh raw ingredients like whole onions and cucumbers, juicy steaks, a basket of eggs, and a bowl of unmilled wheat. There are old-fashioned ceramic jugs, wooden cutting boards and even a two-handled, curved mincing knife. The

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[78] "Burger King: Whopper Restaurant," 16 June 1982, accessed on 6 October 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3249918045/burger-king-whopper-restaurants-video.html.

[79] "MC MAC DONALD'S BIG MAC : FAST FOOD," March 1, 1985, accessed on November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784048063/mc-mac-donald-s-big-mac-fast-food-video.html.

announcer tells us, "You can stay up nights trying to figure out how McDonald's Big Mac is made. You will always see the same things: ingredients that are fresh and superb. But to succeed in making one, that's a whole different story." A "different story" indeed, but not one that has much to do with grandma's kitchen utensils and hand-cut steaks.[80] But if in this ad the virtues of tradition and nature are extolled, others could just as well tout industrial progress. Burger King's close ups of burgers being "flame grilled" on a kind of ultra-modern conveyor belt evoked cutting edge of culinary innovation[81]

Much like the American hamburger stands of the 1950s, fast food restaurants in France became popular gathering spaces for teenagers and students. One of Ray Kroc's key early innovations in the United States had been shifting McDonald's clientele from teenagers to families who, it is assumed, spend more money and cause less trouble. Attempting to repeat this success in France, many McDonald's ads placed a strong focus on families and overt marketing to children (as opposed to adolescents). Indeed, From the mid-eighties onward, Happy Meals and their toys appeared frequently in McDonald's television commercials in France. Additionally, many commercials featured Ronald McDonald playing with young children. Other ads targeted parents' sentimentality, such as one in which a little girl summons the courage to approach the cashier and order by herself while her mother watches proudly.[82] However if the goal was to shift their customer base from young people to families, the results appear to have been mixed. While their clientele did grow more diverse, Rick Fantasia has shown that well into the 1990s,

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[80] "McDonald's : fast food," February 1, 1986.

[81] "BURGER KING : FAST FOOD," June 1, 1985, accessed on November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784048099/burger-king-fast-food-video.html.

[82] "MC MAC DONALD'S : FAST FOOD," September 1, 1986, accessed on November 21, 2013, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784067049/mc-mac-donald-s-fast-food-video.html.

fast food restaurants including McDonald's continued to be places for young people to meet up with friends, if not usually places to socialize indefinitely.[83]

Astérix the Gaul vs. McWorld

Throughout the 1980s, French consumers had a range of hamburger chains to choose from, and most of these were actually French or European in origin. However, by the end of the decade, the picture began to look very different. Through a series of mergers, buy-outs, and heavy investment, two companies were well on their way to eliminating the rest of the competition: Quick and McDonald's. As McDonald's especially started to dominate not only the French market but also most of the planet, it became the quintessential symbol of globalization in France. In the 1980s, debates about fast food had mostly focused on the food itself, or on abstract ideas of cultural heritage and sovereignty. But during the 1990s, critiques of fast food and McDonald's in particular became more sophisticated in addressing the broader economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects of globalization. By the end of the decade, the opposition between French gastronomy and fast food had become the *cause célèbre* of the anti-globalization movement.

The movement known around the world today as Slow Food was founded in Bra, Italy in 1986 by Carlo Petrini as a kind of left-wing gastronomic society that soon began publishing successful restaurant and wine guides. In 1989, the alarming news that a McDonald's was being built at the foot of the Spanish Steps in Rome motivated the group to take a more proactive role in helping to preserve and sustain the local and traditional foods they loved. Seeing themselves as the antithesis of fast food, they adopted the name Slow Food, and decided to take their

[83] Fantasia, 223-225.

operation international. In December of that year delegates from fifteen countries gathered at the Opéra Comique in Paris to sign the Slow Food Manifesto—and to feast on traditional French and Italian regional specialties. The manifesto reads almost like a direct rebuttal to another Italian manifesto, one also published in Paris eighty years earlier—that of the speed-obsessed Italian Futurists. The Slow Food Manifesto declaims:

> Born and nurtured under the sign of Industrialization, this century first invented the machine and then modelled its lifestyle after it. Speed became our shackles. We fell prey to the same virus: 'the fast life' that fractures our customs and assails us even in our own homes, forcing us to ingest "fast- food". […] Against those - or, rather, the vast majority - who confuse efficiency with frenzy, we propose the vaccine of an adequate portion of sensual gourmandise pleasures, to be taken with slow and prolonged enjoyment. […] To escape the tediousness of "fast-food", let us rediscover the rich varieties and aromas of local cuisines. […] Slow Food is the alternative, the avant-garde's riposte.[84]

The manifesto signaled a shift toward local responses to a distinctly globalizing modernity. Significantly, the word "globalization" did not appear in the manifesto, but neither was there any direct mention of the United States—notwithstanding the conspicuous use of the English phrases "fast life," "fast food," and, of course "Slow Food," in the French and Italian versions of the text. The emphasis was on an American-accented but ultimately global epidemic and on local remedies.

This shift toward a more transnational critique of fast food united radical and reactionary resistance to globalization, but much of the manifesto's language was also invested with the language of liberal progress: "we can begin by cultivating taste, rather than impoverishing it, by stimulating progress […] Slow Food assures us of a better quality lifestyle."[85] A report on the event at the Opéra Comique that appeared on the television news for the Ile de France region

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[84] "Slow Food Manifesto," SlowFood.com, accessed on November 1, 2013, http://www.slowfood.com/_2010_pagine/com/popup_pagina.lasso?-id_pg=121.

[85] "Slow Food Manifesto."

reduced the movement to familiar nationalistic terms: "the second principle [of Slow Food]: To combat the American invasion, we must eat national. Last night it was Italian, […tonight:] French with foie gras replacing ravioli."[86] The piece began with footage of a French chef announcing a series of "Italian" dishes his kitchen had prepared for the Paris meeting. Writing about the event in the New York Times, Florence Fabricant questioned,

> How can an organization that promotes local culinary traditions insist that French chefs who are cooking dinners for the Paris conference use balsamic vinegar, grana padano cheese, Tuscan olive oil, San Daniele prosciutto, sturgeon from Lombardy and Alba truffles?[87]

It could also be pointed out how ironic it was that many of these "local" products were sold extensively in supermarkets around the world whose profits that enabled these industries to sponsor the Slow Food meeting in Paris.

Despite the international interest in the events in Rome and Paris in 1989, Slow Food attracted little media attention in France during the 1990s. However, McDonald's continued to be a target of anti-globalization protests. A facetious quotation from Carlo Petrini in Fabricant's New York Times article would prove more prescient than he probably intended:

> I was trained on the barricades of 1968. Now I'm older and wiser. I'm not trying to overthrow the system but I'm hoping we can offer an alternative to the fast life. We won't throw bombs at McDonald's. Maybe handfuls of tagliarini.[88]

In fact, vandalizing and even bombing McDonald's restaurants was to become a favored mode of protesting globalization in France. During the 1992-1993 international GATT and European PAC negotiations, many demonstrations by farmers and activists took place at McDonald's franchises, some of which became destructive and violent. A series of attacks in 2000 by Breton

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[86] "Slow Food," Actualités régionales Ile de France (France 3) December 8, 1989, accessed on August 2, 2014, http://www.ina.fr/video/PAC02002378/slow-food-video.html.

[87] "De Gustibus; A Faintly Amused Answer to Fast Food," *New York Times*, November 15, 1989.

[88] "De Gustibus; A Faintly Amused Answer."

nationalists even left one McDonald's employee dead and dismembered by a bomb in the town of Quévert.[89] Before discussing the most infamous of these incidents, however, it is first necessary to trace the escalating momentum fueling the anti-globalization critique of McDonald's over the course of the 1990s.

In 1993, an American sociologist, George Ritzer, published a seminal work entitled *The McDonaldization of Society.* In it Ritzer updates Max Weber's bureaucratization thesis, by claiming that "the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world."[90] Rather than being about McDonald's or fast food *per se*, Ritzer's critique of "McDonaldization" is actually about the new forms of rationalization in contemporary society, of which McDonald's served as the "paradigm." Although Ritzer's book would not be translated into French for more than a decade, Paul Aries, a French scholar, activist, and future member of Slow Food, coined a nearly identical term for the title of his book, *Les fils de McDo: La McDonalisation du Monde* ("The sons of McDonald's: The McDonalisation of the World").[91] Unlike Ritzer, Ariès was not particularly interested in McDonald's as an archetype representing of a whole social system, even though the threat of that horrifying eventuality contributed to the book's urgency. Rather, Ariès' focus was

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[89] "A Quévert la bombe fauche la serveuse du McDo," *Libération*, April 20, 2000, accessed on August 2, 2014, http://www.liberation.fr/evenement/2000/04/20/a-quevert-la-bombe-fauche-la-serveuse-du-mcdo_322179.

[90] George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Social Life,* revised ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1996).

[91] Paul Ariès, *Les fils de McDo: La McDonalisation du Monde* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997). Despite using an almost identical term (McDonalisation in lieu of McDonaldization), it appears that Ritzer's work did not significantly influence Ariès' theoretical approach, though Ritzer is cited as a source for various factual details throughout the text. In fact Ariès may not have been aware of the significant impact of Ritzer's book in Anglophone scholarship, in a footnote, Ariès thanked a colleague for bringing the Spanish translation of Ritzer's book to his attention with no mention of the multiple editions that had been published in English. Of Ritzer's book, Ariès wrote "the title is similar, but the objective is rather different in that the author considers the McDonaldization of the whole range of human activities following a Weberian approach."(p. 65).

on McDonald's itself as a "prototype of modern business."[92] In this way, his concept of *McDonalisation* referred not to a generalized transformation of Western society as Ritzer saw it, but rather identified generalization itself (i.e. "homogenization") as precisely the danger that McDonald's posed to modern societies—societies that were hitherto culturally differentiated. Ariès wrote:

> This *McDonalisation* of the world is concerning because it creates an alimentary cosmopolitanism that presents itself as universal. McDonald's is no more American than Chinese or French. It has brought together, for the first time in the history of humanity, an infra-cultural food product, because culture is precisely that which differentiates men and curbs the homogenization of eaters.[93]

This statement is extraordinary, not least of all, for the definition of "culture" it employs. While the word "culture" has a long and complex etymology with intertwining roots in several European languages, the dominant French connotation had long evoked the universal human capacity for artistic and intellectual achievement and the fruits of those endeavors. The idea of defining culture as that which fundamentally separates different peoples might have traditionally been advanced by right-wing French nationalists, but certainly not by the French left steeped as it was in republican universalism. But for Ariès, universalism was the enemy of French culture and, for that matter, all cultures. In this way, Ariès not only shifted focus from American cultural imperialism to globalization proper, but he brazenly cemented the inversion of one of the foundational principles of French national identity. As we have seen, this discursive shift had been in progress since the 1970s, but here Ariès did not even bother arguing for cultural essentialism or against universalism. He simply took it as given that cultures are fundamentally

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[92] Ariès, *Les fils de McDo*, 11.

[93] Ariès, *Les fils de McDo*, 9-10.

different, proving just how naturalized the ethno-cultural definition of national identity had become in France by the 1990s, even for those on the left.

Having established this fundamental opposition between culture and globalization, Ariès proceeds to demonstrate how every aspect of McDonald's operations—from taste and nutrition to marketing strategies and labor policies—degrades, standardizes, and homogenizes culture. For example, he explained how McDonald's standardized production requires uniform materials from its suppliers thus advancing the homogenization of agricultural products and practices around the world. On another level, Ariès described the hamburger as a "pure sign" alienated from its natural origins, nutritional content, and any specific cultural signification, making it a blank canvas for whatever meanings McDonald's marketing department chooses to impose.[94]

Interestingly, Ariès admitted that homogenous food was a response to the demand for stability from modern consumers faced with the anxiety and uncertainty of contemporary dietary concerns. However, for Ariès fast food was hardly a satisfactory solution. Rather, he argued that cultural diversity and traditions should be valuable in their own right, and if they are out of step, it is the economy and society that have changed for the worse. Yet paradoxically, even as he lamented the rigid standardization of culture, Ariès also worried about McDonald's contribution to the breakdown of strict social and cultural norms, writing "Our grandmothers taught us to eat at a fixed time in a structured manner. […] The modern man increasingly eats anything, anytime, any way."[95] Here, it is possible to see the alignment of a radical critique of capitalist modernity and globalization with a profoundly nostalgic cultural conservatism. Elsewhere, he wrote:

> The hamburger eater becomes a man without history, without memory. He no longer eats according to desire or tradition, but by impulse or imitation. […One

[94] Ariès, *Les fils de McDo*, 63-65.

[95] Ariès, *Les fils de McDo,* 31.

> McDonald's] commercial shows a grandfather learning from a youngster how to eat [a hamburger] with his hands, in big bites. Education is now going in reverse. Didn't it used to be the child who would have the pleasure of (re)discovering his grandmother's cooking every vacation? Didn't he keep always in his memory these visual, gustatory, and olfactory feasts? What will become of the dreams of today's youth if they can simply walk into a McDonald's tomorrow and recapture the flavors of their childhood?[96]

The impact of Ariès' book on French debates about fast food is uncertain. When Ariès attracted media attention in the late 1990s, it was mainly in conjunction with other books he had written (including one about Scientology and another that became involved in a high-profile plagiarism case—Ariès was the victim not the plagiarist).[97] But if the fact that in addition to *Les fils de McDo* he also published two other books on similar topics between 1997 and 1999 is any indication, McDonald's had clearly become a lightning rod for anti-globalization fury.[98] Then lightning struck.

On April 12, 1999 in the small city of Millau in Southern France, local farmers, activists, townspeople and even children gathered at the construction site of a new McDonald's restaurant. The crowd began cheerfully dismantling the building, removing doors, windows, electrical panels and roof tiles. Next they loaded the building materials onto a farm wagon and paraded it through the streets. Crowds gathered to cheer them on and children happily created a racket banging the wagons with sticks. After depositing the loot in front of the local prefecture, the festive atmosphere continued as many gathered on the terraces of Millau's restaurants to celebrate. Painted across what was left of the structure were the words, "Mac Do defora,

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[96] Ariès, *Les fils de McDo,* 41.

[97] Paul Ariès, *La Scientologie, laboratoire du futur?* (Villeurbanne cedex: Golias, 1998); Paul Ariès, *Le Retour du diable* (Villeurbanne cedex: Golias, 1996).

[98] Paul Ariès, *Petit manuel anti-McDo: A l'usage des petits et des grands* (Villeurbanne cedex: Golias, 1999); Paul Ariès, *La fin des mangeurs: Les métamorphoses de la table à l'âge de la modernisation alimentaire* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1997).

gardarem Roquefort!" ("McDonald's out, let's save Roquefort!" in the local dialect).[99] The leader of this modern *jacquerie* was José Bové, a charismatic sheep farmer whose (soon to be iconic) horseshoe moustache garnered comparisons with France's unofficial cartoon mascot, Astérix the Gaul.

The impetus for the demonstration was a decision by the American government to raise a 100% tariff on Roquefort Cheese (along with one hundred other European products) in retaliation for the E.U.'s refusal to import American beef from hormone-fed cattle. In fact, Bové's leftist farmers' union, the Confédération Paysanne, had been planning to take on McDonald's as the prime symbol of both American imperialism and industrial food in conjunction with the hormone-treated meat conflict even before it was revealed that Roquefort, the primary agricultural product of Bové's area, would be affected. Nevertheless, the fact that Roquefort was caught in the international crossfire attracted much sympathetic attention to the demonstration. Moreover, Roquefort was the ideal product to symbolize the Confédération's broader agenda. A spokesman for the Confédération Paysanne explained to *Le Monde* that we were witnessing "a confrontation between two agricultures. Ours is rooted in a *terroir* and a way of life. Theirs is uniform, industrial, and dangerous to both labor and public health."[100] Who exactly he meant when he said "ours" and "theirs," was left unspecified. Was this an international conflict between France and the United States? Was it about the struggle of farmers around the world to maintain local agricultural traditions against the tide of globalization? Or was it a battle for wholesome, natural, and flavorful products against bland industrial foods? A memorable statement by Bové suggested that he and his supporters meant to aim their outrage at

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[99] "Mac Do defora, gardarem Roquefort!," *Le Monde,* August 14, 1999.

[100] "Mac Do defora, gardarem Roquefort!"

all three: "As long as the American embargo remains in place, they will not have peace. We refuse to let ourselves be dominated by these multinationals who seek to destroy the peasantry and feed us shit."[101]

The demonstration received significant coverage in most of the major French news outlets, but it was Bové's subsequent criminal prosecution and imprisonment that attracted worldwide attention and made him an international hero of the anti-globalization (or more precisely, as Bové prefers to call it, the *alter*-globalization movement). Later that fall, Bové travelled across the United States, speaking to farmers and raising support as he made his way toward Seattle where he joined in the historic World Trade Organization protests. While Bové had been an activist even longer than he had been a sheep farmer—he had first come to the region, known as the Larzac, in the 1970s to join an epic struggle against the expansion of a military base—the McDonald's incident and his subsequent imprisonment made Bové one of the most famous radical activists in France.[102]

Following the McDonald's incident, Bové and his associates tried to make it clear that their intention had not been to inflict real damage on McDonald's, but to symbolically protest against the influence of multinational corporations. They stressed that their position was not crude anti-Americanism or nationalism but rather a principled opposition to the collusion of governmental bodies (including France and the E.U. along with the U.S.) with corporate interests whose neoliberal globalizing agendas that threatened the livelihoods and traditions of small farmers in France and around the world.[103] Bové and his colleague François Dufour attributed

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[101] "Mac Do defora, gardarem Roquefort!"

[102] On the Larzac military base conflict, see: Herman Lebovics, "Gardarem lo Larzac!" in *Bringing the Empire Back Home*, 13-57.

[103] This is somewhat complicated by the fact that the French state also took up the anti-globalization cause around this time. On these connections, see: Sophie Meunier, "The French Exception," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 4 (July

the outpouring of support and generally good press to the effectiveness with which they communicated this position.[104] Nevertheless, underlying their message of global cooperation and resistance was a belief in cultural essentialism that privileged localized traditions as authentic sources of national identity. As Dufour put it:

> Agricultural identity is part of this; you don't have to be a farmer or live in the country to feel rooted in the land. Such roots connect all parts of the country in a unifying whole, and this can't be undermined by Europe or globalization. The McDonald's issue came just at the right time to stir up such feelings. Even the most liberal economic milieux had to admit that the downgrading of agriculture and its appropriation by factories was destroying these roots. This is essentially what public opinion boiled down to – much more than to a sense of solidarity with the economic hardship being suffered by the producers of Roquefort or other affected products.[105]

Despite Bové and Dufour's claims not be motivated by nationalism, this statement about "roots [that] connect all parts of the country" demonstrates that preserving a specifically national identity by maintaining local heritage was a central concern for them as for the public.

Each of the three critics of fast food, Petrini, Ariès, and Bové that I have discussed here would go on to have an even greater impact in the new century. Ariès has published widely on a range of topics (including two books about Bové), and has been a leading proponent of *décroissance* ("de-growth"). Carlo Petrini has also authored a number of books and he founded the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy. His Slow Food movement has continued to grow around the world. Bové's political activism culminating in a 2007 presidential run 2007 and a seat in the European Parliament—a post he has held since 2009.

Petrini has criticized Bové's confrontational approach in taking on McDonald's, writing:

2000): 104-116; Gina Kramer, "McDomination: Trade and the Golden Arches," *Harvard International Review* (Summer 2000): 12-13.

[104] José Bové and François Dufour, *The World is not For Sale* (New York: Verso, 2001), 13, 26-27.

[105] Bové and Dufour, 27.

> We have never fully linked arms with the angry crowds on the streets of Seattle or Genoa, or said, with José Bové, that "when a hamburger place springs up, Roquefort cheese dies." […Bové] has voiced ideas that have often cast a spell over us. But when he adopts a strategy of direct action, he chooses a path leading to head-on confrontation with multinationals, the path of the guerrilla fighter, that we prefer not to take. That is not the slow style. […] If you want to revive a tradition and give it fresh life, what you need is a new toolkit and some avant-garde ideas.[106]

As Bové explained, however, the stunt at the Millau McDonald's was intended as a symbolic protest. Other than the criminal damage inflicted (which Bové claims has been exaggerated), it was not unlike Arcigola's own demonstration fifteen years earlier where the founders of Slow Food threw pasta at the McDonald's in Rome. During Bové's presidential run in 2007, Petrini voiced support, but reiterated his warning that "you cannot stay in the denunciation phase, you must propose something else."[107] Paul Ariès expressed disappointment with the Bové campaign's misguided attempts to use base populism and provincialism to poach voters from the National Front. Ariès bluntly wrote that such a strategy was "politically dangerous and intellectually stupid." He continued, "We will defeat these fascists not with Bové's Gallic moustache but with values. We will defeat these racists not with populist talk but with ideas."[108] Nevertheless, the very fact that a leftist like Bové even thought it possible to capture votes from the far right demonstrates the broad appeal of agrarian traditionalism and ethno-nationalism, especially at the extremes of the French political spectrum.

Quibbles over strategy notwithstanding, all three of these figures represented an emergent ideology that married radical anti-capitalism/anti-imperialism/anti-globalization with a strong

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[106] Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food: The Case For Taste,* trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 26.

[107] Eliane Patriarca, "Manger est un acte agricole, produire est un acte gastronomique," *Libération,* January 13, 2007, accessed on August 2, 2014, http://www.liberation.fr/week-end/2007/01/13/manger-est-un-acte-agricole-produire-est-un-acte-gastronomique_81789.

[108] Patriarca.

cultural conservatism that favored traditional practices and promoted ethnocultural essentialism. This is not to suggest that any of these men were secretly motivated by racism, xenophobia, or national chauvinism; their commitment to cultural diversity, equality, and sovereignty especially for people in the so-called "third world" was evident. If the emerging confluence of conservative and radical critiques of liberal modernity and globalization was not yet politically viable—Bové won less than two percent of the vote in 2007—its influence on public opinion in France grew strong enough that it forced a detailed written response from McDonald's.

In 2002 McDonald's France's executives responded to their critics (particularly Bové) with a book-length rebuttal entitled *McDo se met à table* [a pun meaning both "McDonald's sits down to eat" and "McDonald's lays it all on the table"].[109] The book begins by identifying three broad criticisms leveled at McDonald's, namely that the company was serving "*la malbouffe*," promoting globalization, and profiting from exploitation.[110] The authors sidestep the accusation that McDonald's serves unhealthy food in the same way defenders of fast food had done for years, pointing out that more traditionally "French" lunchtime foods like ham and butter sandwiches or sausages are nutritionally no better. Indeed, they add that the meals served in Michelin-starred restaurants actually contain more than double the calories of a meal at McDonald's.[111] They go so far as to question the notion of terroir, calling it a marketing scheme. Moreover, they argue that McDonald's rigorous quality and hygiene standards may not be very "cool" or "terroir," but their company's focus is on safety and consistency. They even agree with Ariès and others who have argued that McDonald's standardized products are a response to the

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[109] Denis Hennequin, Jean-Pierre Petit, and Philippe Labbé, *McDo se met à table* (Paris: Plon, 2002). Note that the "se met à table" pun had been used before, namely in *Gault et Millau se mettent à table* (see Chapter One) and *Maïté se met à table* (see Chapter Three).

[110] Hennequin, Petit, and Labbé, 13.

[111] Hennequin, Petit, and Labbé, 44-47.

anomie of too many dietary choices, observing "McDonald's is a point of reference and a known quantity for those who fear unlit signs and unmarked jars, and are dubious of trends."[112] They claim that the quality and affordability of their products creates competition that has helped to reverse the declining quality of "traditional" products like bread or ham. Moreover, they write that McDonald's filled existing gaps in the market by serving food in locations and at hours of the day where most French restaurants either could not or would not.

The authors boldly claim that McDonald's represents "the opposite of globalization […] the anti-globalization," because rather than outsourcing, they fuel local employment and agricultural production.[113] To this end, the authors call out Bové and the Confédération Paysanne for attacking McDonald's, arguing that such actions equate to attacks on local farmers. They admit that their stockholders are primarily American, though they neglect to consider how this might undermine their claims to being "100% French." Finally, the authors deny that McDonald's plays a roll in the exploitation of labor, claiming instead that the company magnanimously trains and employs young people, minorities, and immigrants who would not otherwise find work in underprivileged neighborhoods.[114] In the end, McDonald's France's arguments hinge on revalorizing modernity and universalism. Implicitly evoking French republican openness, they write "Our name and origin is American, just as many French people have Spanish, German, North African, Italian or Greek names and origins…But, try to tell our over two hundred fifty franchisees that they are not French—they who were born here and who have invested in their cities."[115]

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[112] Hennequin, Petit, and Labbé, 81.

[113] Hennequin, Petit, and Labbé, 16-17.

[114] On labor disputes, see Debouzy.

[115] Hennequin, Petit, and Labbé, 84.

While some of these rebuttals may have been more convincing than others, ultimately, McDonald's France simply approached problems differently than did their critics. For example, they often repeated that they were neither responsible for their customer's patronage, nor were they preventing their employees' from seeking work elsewhere. Such statements of course presume that both consumers and workers are entirely free from both cultural determinism and economic necessity. On the one hand, this enabled McDonald's to effectively refute critics who sought to limit consumer choices in the name of the social good. On the other, this idealization of individual freedom let McDonald's ignore the ethics of marketing to children, exploiting labor and agriculture, and serving unhealthy food. What is especially notable, however, is the way in which McDonald's felt compelled to remind its readers that the basic liberal and republican principles that the company sought to defend were inherently French.

By contrast, having abandoned universalism and modernization in favor of tradition and cultural difference, the critics of McDonald's presumed that the public would see cultural identity as necessarily rooted in specific national traditions and territory. This is how Bové or supporters of the Slow Food movement could present the replacement of a local restaurant by a McDonald's, or a local breed of cows by a herd of Holsteins as an irrefutable tragedy. Yet these arguments rely on visions of a utopian past in which isolated societies lived in social and environmental harmony until global capitalism interfered. Furthermore, they ignore how rigid traditions and social conventions may oppress individual autonomy and enforce social hierarchies and how cultural essentialism can marginalize "outsiders" and hinder transcultural understanding and cooperation.

Conclusion

Fast food did not become popular in France despite its "American" and later "global" image, but precisely because of it. It was rejected and resented for the same reasons. Yet, as this chapter has shown, there was nothing essentially American about fast food. As Borel's story illustrates, if the fast food model had not emerged first in the U.S. or had failed to cross the Atlantic, France would have still—and indeed did—develop its own versions of the fast food restaurant. It is worth noting that many things invented in the U.S.—from airplanes to ipods—have not been viewed as being particularly "American." As I have argued throughout this chapter, France viewed *le fast-food* as quintessentially American because doing so helped to reinforce some important ideas about French national identity and to erase others. To put it another way, fast food was American because in the second half of the twentieth century both the French and Americans wanted and needed it to be so.

This does not mean that the French consumers of fast food necessarily wanted to become American or that they wished that French cuisine would incorporate fast food's "American" innovations (though these were possibilities). For some, fast food offered the opportunity to partake in the conveniences and pleasures of global cosmopolitanism without compromising their personal or national identity. For others, eating fast food was a transgressive act that served to criticize and reject traditional French norms. Opponents of fast food attacked its "Americanness" in order to give a patriotic boost to their efforts to preserve local and traditional foods. Moreover, fast food served as a foil representing capitalism and globalization against which farmers, leftists, conservatives, and nationalists alike could define a French national identity that better suited their individual and collective interests.

In this chapter, I have traced how debates about fast food have been closely related to larger discussions of modernization, Americanization, and globalization. Fast food has been a central terrain in defining both "Frenchness" and "Americanness," constructs that are constantly being reshaped and mobilized in new ways as the global context and the interests of the parties involved change. What was originally a debate about domestic modernization and industrialization in the restaurant industry in the 1970s transformed, by the 1980s, into a critique of American imperialism, and then, by the 1990s, became an indictment of globalization. Throughout this period, corresponding ideas about French gastronomy were also being defined in opposition to fast food that became increasingly understood as traditional and insular, favoring preservation over innovation.

One of the most powerful ideas advanced by Petrini, Ariès, Bové, Lang, and even Cau has been the rather paradoxical principle of the universal value of cultural diversity, the freedom to maintain one's own heritage and identity and protect it from the encroachment of global homogenization. But European critics that see fast food as a sign of either American cultural imperialism or unwanted globalization have generally posited the nation as the "natural" and "authentic" unit of cultural difference. Even those who celebrate cultural diversity at the regional and local level continue to privilege a nationalistic definition of cultural authenticity based on geographical and ethnic permanence. What, in this worldview, are the cultural rights of immigrants or multiethnic families? Should one eat only what is produced locally as in nearby, or should everyone support products with a "local" pedigree—Roquefort cheese, for example—available on the global market? And if the same Roquefort is available in supermarkets around the world, then how exactly does it differ from a Big Mac? France has learned the lesson that cultural universalism can easily become cultural imperialism. But what happens to individual

liberty, racial equality, or intercultural fraternity once France—or any nation—seeks to identify, define, and defend specific reified national or regional cultures in the name of diversity?

It is interesting to note that by 2012, hamburgers had taken Paris by storm. Not those tiny overcooked patties between two tasteless slabs of bun, but real, *good* hamburgers; the kind that were nearly impossible to find ten years ago. It seemed like every trendy bistro and café in the Marais now boasted a menu section entitled "les burgers." Food trucks selling moderately expensive, gourmet burgers were attracting long lines near the Canal St. Martin.[116] Yet does this fact mean that either Americanization or globalization has "won"? This chapter suggests the opposite: the omnipresence of "le burger" in the classic French bistro—or the willingness of fashionable *bobos* to eat standing up, with their hands, *outside*—serves as proof that France may finally be coming to grips with its place in the post-colonial world. At least for certain Parisians, the hamburger no longer threatens French gastronomy—especially when topped with Roquefort.

[116] Julia Moskin, "Food Trucks in Paris? U.S. Cuisine Finds Open Minds and Mouths," *New York Times,* June 4, 2012, accessed on November 24, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/04/world/europe/food-trucks-add-american-flavor-to-paris.html?_r=2&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20120604&.

CHAPTER THREE:

"Une Sacrée Bonne Femme": The Triumph of Maïté

The nobility of women's cooking comes from the heart. Bourgeois yet tinged with regionalism, it is rooted in the ingredients of its native soil.
-Robert Courtine, 1970[1]

Chapters One and Two focused primarily on restaurant food. Yet there of course are sources and sites of "French cuisine" outside of professional kitchens. Indeed, as the preceding chapters have shown, when the classic pillars of modernization and universalism gave way, restaurant chefs looked to the countryside and to home cooking for inspiration. In French culinary history, besides haute cuisine there are at least two other main cooking styles in France: bourgeois cuisine, and regional cuisine.[2] By contrast with professional cooking, which has been a (nearly) exclusively male domain, bourgeois and regional cuisines are sometimes described as *cuisine de femmes* ("women's cooking"), because they are typically prepared by women—either housewives or female servants.

Although these three types of French cuisine can each influence the others, traditionally there was a clear hierarchy that placed haute cuisine at the top. Technique and style trickled down to the bourgeois cuisine that was meant to be the wholesome and refined home cooking of the modern nation.[3] Regional cuisine sat at the bottom and represented traditional, rustic, "peasant" dishes. It sometimes served as a source of romantic inspiration for bourgeois

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[1] Robert Courtine, *La Gastronomie* (Paris: Presses Univérsitaires de France, 1970), 72.

[2] Gault-Millau published a series of cookbooks in the early 1990s entitled *Les Trois Cuisines de France: Régionale, Bourgeoise, Moderne,* (*The Three Cuisines of France: Regional, Bourgeois, Modern*). Substituting "modern" for "haute" not only confirmed their "modernist" stance associated with nouvelle cuisine, but also implied that the regional and bourgeois cuisine were not modern.

[3] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French* Cuisine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 42.

cookbooks or creative chefs, but professionals rarely looked to it as a legitimate culinary authority.[4] However, that all began to change by the 1980s, when three star chefs-took up the *cuisine de terroir,* and activists looked to rustic, peasant traditions as an antidote to fast food. Sylvette Giet has noted that French television *feuilletons* (sagas) of the 1990s frequently relied images of traditional foods to evoke nostalgia for "lost origins" and "terroirs."[5] This chapter looks more closely at this so-called "return" to local traditions, agrarian "roots," and rural terroirs, by focusing on a "peasant" woman named Maïté who became one of France's best-loved TV chefs of the 1980s and 1990s. By asserting the feminine culinary authority of traditional regional cooking over French gastronomy, Maïté upended the established class and gender hierarchies of French cuisine, and helped reimagine a French national identity rooted in rural traditions and embodied by provincial women.

The boundaries between the three types of French cuisine were rarely firm, as certain dishes—*bouillabaisse* or *pot-au-feu* for example—have appeared in versions corresponding to each of these categories. A more useful way of thinking about these three types of cuisine would be to consider the values associated with each, particularly in relation to French national ideals. As discussed in Chapter One, haute cuisine generally derived its authority from concepts like artistic innovation and scientific knowledge, ideals long central to modern French civilization. Bourgeois cuisine, while carried out by women, traditionally deferred to the universalistic (i.e. masculine) authority of haute cuisine while placing greater emphasis on practical, economic, and

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[4] Throughout this chapter I will use the English term "peasant" to refer to the French term *paysan/paysanne.* It is important to note, however, that the French term has a more complex meaning. On the one hand, encompasses the constructed image of the inhabitants of rural, pre-modern world conveyed in the English term. On the other hand, it has been reclaimed in French as a contemporary class identity, with cultural and political implications related to the term's historical significance. In this way it is not unlike the Spanish term *campesino* that is sometimes used in English. See: Susan Carol Rogers, "Good to Think: The 'Peasant' in Contemporary France," *Anthropological Quarterly* 60 (2) (April, 1987): 56-63.

[5] Sylvette Giet, "La table du peuple télévisé," in *Le Populaire à Table,* Mireille Piarotas and Pierre Charreton, eds. (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne), 264.

health concerns, since it was theoretically meant to be the everyday food of the nation. By contrast, regional cuisine relied on local and family customs passed "from mother to daughter," and represents the historically conservative values of tradition and ethnic heritage.[6]

From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, haute and bourgeois cuisine together formed the two prongs of France's highly centralized, "top-down," "national" cuisine. Haute cuisine promoted the international reputation of French cuisine, while bourgeois cuisine brought modern culinary values and techniques to the rapidly growing urban middle class. By the mid-twentieth century, both had been quite successful: haute cuisine and French chefs dominated the world's fancy restaurants, while modernization and bourgeois standards of nutrition had, by the 1950s, all but banished hunger and malnutrition from the hexagon.[7] But as these achievements came to be taken for granted, many in France began to question unfettered modernization and universalism especially as urbanization and consumer culture appeared to threaten rural and traditional ways of life. This was evident in the debates about nouvelle cuisine and fast food discussed in the preceding chapters. The 1980s and 1990s saw the revival of a traditionalist counter-discourse that had first championed regional cuisines as the authentic source of French gastronomic identity during the first part of the twentieth century.[8] However, I argue that these regional cuisines were mythical cultural constructs that reflected contemporary exigencies more than any actual pre-modern peasant food. This is clear in the Maïté's spectacular demonstrations of an idyllic peasant life and robust country cooking.

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[6] Patrick Rambourg, *Histoire de la cuisine et de la gastronomie françaises: Du Moyen Age au XXe siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2010), 276.

[7] Jean-Paul Aron, "De la glaciation dans la culture en générale et dans la cuisine en particulier," in *Internationale de l'Imaginaire no.* 7: *Cultures, Nourriture,* (Arles: Babel, 1997): 30.

[8] Julia Csergo,"The Emergence of Regional Cuisines," in *Food: A Culinary History*, ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, ed. Albert Sonnenfeld [English edition] (New York: Penguin, 1999), 512.

Chapter One revealed how haute cuisine chefs turned to traditional rural and regional cooking to inspire the *cuisine de terroir* of the 1980s. This chapter focuses on the parallel shift within television cooking shows, which I argue took up the role of "bourgeois cuisine"—that is the dissemination of a "national" cuisine—for the second half of the twentieth century. The first half of this chapter traces the evolutions of regional cuisine and bourgeois cuisine in the twentieth century, as well the development of the television cooking show. The second half examines the convergence of these developments in the unlikely superstardom of Maïté and the valorization of regional diversity and rural traditions as sources of national identity.

With the veneration of regional cuisines came the corresponding elevation of the traditional feminine *savoir-faire* of *paysannes* ("peasant women") to a prominent role in French gastronomy in the 1980s and 1990s. But this hardly represented gender equality. Although Maïté's personal success was remarkable, her image reflects a highly stereotypical image of regional women and their cuisine. This celebration of the *paysanne* was possible only once real peasant women and their "backward" culture had become obsolete and thus ceased to represent an obstacle to the modern national culture. Furthermore, the idealized image of a rural housewife spending the afternoon happily fussing over stews and cakes in her cottage was a fantasy onto which were projected middle-class notions of the role of women in a feminine domestic sphere. Actual peasant women mostly spent their days performing grueling labor and eating a meager diet.[9] Because she no longer—in fact, never—existed, this imaginary, quaint *paysanne* could

[9] Susan K. Foley, *Women in France since 1789* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 80-101. On women in rural France, see: Tessie P. Liu, "*Le Patrimoine Magique:* Reassessing the Power of Women in Peasant Households in Nineteenth-Century France," *Gender and History* 6, no. 1 (1994), 13-36; Marion Demossier, "Women in Rural France," in *Women in Contemporary France,* ed. Abigail Gregory and Ursula Tidd (New York: Berg, 2000); Marion Demossier, "Women in Rural France: mediators or agents of change?" in *Women in the Rural Countryside,* ed. Henry Buller and Keith Hoggart (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 42-58.

symbolize a mythical French identity rich with diverse traditions that were firmly rooted in French soil.

However, if peasants no longer posed any great threat to the nation, regionalism remained somewhat more irritating. Separatist movements were reinvigorated in the 1970s in the wake of May 1968 and inspired by the successful anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. As Herman Lebovics has argued, the state responded with efforts to recognize the diversity and validity of regional cultures while reinscribing them under the heading of the nation.[10] This was mostly successful, although the situation remained unsettled as regionalists continued to agitate in different ways, sometimes teaming with immigrant activists, other times with nationalists.[11] Thus repeating a pattern already seen during the early twentieth century, by absorbing this regionalist energy, the nation was also transformed, pushing it toward a more traditional, ethnocultural, "rooted" identity, while relegating the modern, universal civilization of Republic into the background.[12] This rekindling of the volatile affinity between the French nation and its regional cultures helps to explain the rise of *cuisine de terroir,* José Bové's agrarian activism, and the stardom of Maïté.

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[10] Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

[11] Paul Silverstein, *Algeria in France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 58-75, 226-236.

[12] On the regionalism and nationalism in the early twentieth century, see: Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890-1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1998).

Regional Cuisine

"Regional" or "provincial" cuisines as they are understood today came into existence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[13] To be sure, certain dishes and ingredients have been associated with Provence, Périgord, or Alsace for centuries. But the contemporary myths about *Marseillais* fisherman whipping up an "authentic" bouillabaisse for lunch, or the peasants of Languedoc selecting specific meats and charcuteries to make "real" cassoulet are romantic fantasies. Eugen Weber's unappetizing descriptions of stale bread, gruel, and meager soups in his classic history, *Peasants into Frenchmen,* are closer to the quotidian reality for most French peasants than the idyllic image of a country cottage with fresh bread cooling on the window-sill and *boeuf bourguignon* simmering over the fire.[14] To the extent that the rich and savory regional specialties known today existed at all prior to the twentieth century, they were more likely served in bistros and the homes of the provincial well to do.[15]

Twentieth-century "regional cuisines" were largely produced by the very act of resisting their supposed destruction at the hands of modernization and industrialization.[16] As Patrick Rambourg has pointed out, the concept of "regional cuisines" could only exist once the "specialties" of each region could be identified and differentiated from both each other and the more modern "national" haute and bourgeois cuisines.[17] Although the Trois Frères Provençaux restaurant in the Palais-Royal, Paris's famous nineteenth century restaurant district—had been

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[13] Rambourg, 270; Jean-Robert Pitte, *French Gastronomy: The History and Geography of a Passion*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 25-30.

[14] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 130-145; Pitte, 26-27.

[15] Pitte, 29.

[16] Csergo, "The Emergence of Regional Cuisines," 507.

[17] Rambourg, 269-276.

serving provincial specialties like bouillabaisse and *brandade de morue* (a type of salt cod casserole) since 1808, efforts to capture "authentic" regional cooking *in situ* did not begin until the second half of the nineteenth century, and took off during the interwar years. In this period, regionalist and ethno-nationalist missions to recover the "True France," contributed to the interest in regional cuisines.[18] This coincided with the advent of automobile tourism that enabled curious urban and foreign tourists to journey deeper into the hinterlands. Experts and enthusiasts alike, virtually all male urban elites, organized clubs and set out to catalogue and promote France's endangered culinary traditions, often to the chagrin of regional restaurateurs who felt slighted by the lack of confidence in their capacity to provide haute cuisine.[19] It was these efforts that codified a set of "authentic" recipes for each region of France. Leading the patriotic recovery was the "Prince of Gastronomes," Curnonsky, who, along with Marcel Rouff, wrote the twenty-eight-volume *France Gastronomique* —one of the first serious attempts to catalogue provincial France's regional dishes, wines, and restaurants.[20]

As historian Alain Drouard argues, the association of regional cuisine with women was cemented and celebrated during this period. Drouard writes, "The 'adorable little granny' with her 'white bonnet,' sharing a great [culinary] secret in her Provençal dialect, was the stereotypical embodiment of the regional cuisine ideal constructed in interwar France."[21] Further illustrating this point, Drouard cites Philéas Gilbert and Prosper Montagné's glowing review of the cookbook, *La bonne cuisine du Périgord* ["the good cooking of Périgord"]:

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[18] Lebovics, *True France.*

[19] Julia Csergo, "Du discours gastronomique comme 'propagande nationale' : Le Club des Cent 1912-1930," in *Gastronomie et identité culturelle française*, ed. Françoise Hache-Bissette and Denis Saillard (Paris: Nouveau Monde éditions, 2009), 198.

[20] Pitte, 138-139; Csergo, "The Emergence of Regional Cuisines," 510-511; Alain Drouard, *Le mythe gastronomique français* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2010), 75-85.

[21] Drouard, 96.

> [The author] does not play the role of the professor; she simply states what she knows and what she has learned being in the company of old *périgourdine* women cooks… This is the honest truth, an exemplary book of regional cuisine in its original, natural state.[22]

La bonne cuisine du Périgord was written in 1929 by Andrée Mallet-Maze, a well-heeled Parisian woman who adopted the folksy pseudonym "La Mazille." While the author took advantage of her own Périgourdin family heritage in order to identify with the women whose recipes she transcribed, she simultaneously emphasized their pre-modern "otherness":

> [The women cooks of Périgord] possess the innate Art of good cooking. […] Only don't try to ask them how they do it! Is it a mystery or a professional secret? My goodness, no! But it would never occur to them to explain why they are successful in creating these culinary masterpieces. Perhaps that is why they are artists. […] Only through patience, surprise, studied comparison, and slow perseverance may one glean their process and learn their little tricks. If I were not a "périgourdine" myself, and had not grown up in the region, I never could have collected the materials for this book.[23]

Despite evident frustration with her protagonists' experiential approach and lack of rational method, la Mazille recognized that their very incomprehensibility reflected a certain kind of genius that had escaped modern science.

Since the nineteenth century, women had operated and even owned restaurants and *auberges* (inns) in France. In the city of Lyon, several such women began using "la Mère" (Mother) as a title (one possibly given to them by their male boarders). By the 1920s, several of these restaurants became renowned gastronomic institutions. Perhaps the most famous of these was run by la Mère Brazier. Eugénie Brazier was among the first chefs in France to be awarded three stars by Michelin, and she remains one of the few ever to own two different three-star restaurants at the same time. Master chef Paul Bocuse, who apprenticed in her kitchen, argued

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[22] Drouard, 96.

[23] La Mazille, *La bonne cuisine du Périgord* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994 [1929]), 9-10.

that it was she who was responsible for Lyon's prewar reputation as, in Curnonsky's words, "the gastronomic capital of the world."[24] Yet, Brazier, and the other *mères* of Lyon were exceptions whose success proved the rule that professional culinary authority resided with men. Importantly, however, unlike her male contemporaries (such as Fernand Point), Brazier was renowned not for her creativity or technical knowledge, but her innate simplicity. Bocuse venerated Point for "eliminating overly complicated sauces and dishes" from his repertoire, thus paving the way for nouvelle cuisine.[25] But in his praise for Brazier's talents, Bocuse afforded her no such awareness or agency: "What we find revolutionary today in nouvelle cuisine was, for her, quite simply *des trucs de bonne femme* [women's little tricks]."[26]

The Vichy Regime's fervent traditionalism and provincialism incited postwar France to throw itself headlong into modernization, with new kitchen gadgets, convenience foods, and inexpensive restaurants occupying French consumers' attention after the war. By the 1970s, however, the neglect of local traditions exacerbated by the depopulation of the countryside and women's entry into the workforce led to renewed concerns about the loss of regional cuisines. In his 1970 contribution to the long-running paperback series, *Que sais-je?,* entitled "Gastronomie," Robert Courtine wrote,

> Provincial cuisine, unlike that of Paris, has been developed by women, and this *cuisine de femmes*, by virtue of is empirical simplicity, brings something new to gastronomy. […] While chefs favor study, the woman relies on empiricism. What she knows, she got from her mother who got it from her grandmother. While lacking in attention to presentation, perhaps, her cuisine is an alchemy of patience and love. Isn't that the secret of success? Isn't that the essence of gastronomy?[27]

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[24] Paul Bocuse, preface to *Les sécrets de la Mère Brazier*, by Eugénie Brazier (Paris: Solar, 1992 [1977]), 9.

[25] Paul Bocuse, *La cuisine du marché* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980 [1976]), 6.

[26] Bocuse, "Préface," 10.

[27] Courtine, *La Gastronomie,* 71-72.

This usage of the term "empiricism" [*empirisme*] to mean experiential knowledge without any scientific implications—indeed quite the contrary—was often used pejoratively, but here Courtine welcomes the absence of systematic rationale. Courtine went on to argue that true gastronomy was not to be found in the artistic pretentions of haute cuisine nor inside a can of soup:

> "[…] The instinctive cuisine that forms the basis of gastronomy is neither craft, nor art, but *love*, and remains the prerogative of women. Gastronomy is, in a sense, a return to our roots. When the gourmet seeks out simple, humble, and traditional provincial dishes, it is more than an interest in folklore it is the search for the truth of the soil itself. Soil does not lie—except when modern chemistry tries to make it lie! […True] gastronomy is the woman at the market who prefers the lettuce of a local farmer over that which just arrived from Algeria. It is the consumer who selects unpasteurized butter over the one wrapped in obnoxious advertisements and produced in a factory .[28]

Courtine's larger aim with this book was to call for a new "gourmet revolution," and a "new *savoir-manger*" (roughly: "understanding of eating"). In fact, this was just three years before Gault and Millau were to declare their "nouvelle cuisine" revolution—a revolution that shared many of the principles Courtine advocated here: simplicity, natural products, minimal cooking, regional inspirations. Yet, while Gault and Millau saw these changes as progressive innovations, Courtine claimed them as part of a "reactionary *savoir-manger*, a return to our roots."[29] As the natural inheritors of what he dubbed "Paleolithic cuisine," women carried a "natural" culinary knowledge tracing its origins back to the Stone Age. While Gault and Millau's modernism prevailed for the next decade, in the long run, Courtine would be vindicated. The

[28] Courtine, *La Gastronomie,* 73.

[29] Courtine, *La Gastronomie,* 91.

1980s and 1990s would see the revival of traditionalism, terroir, and *cuisine de femmes.* Even the "Paleo diet" Courtine championed would grow in popularity well into the twenty-first century.[30]

Bourgeois Cuisine

While haute cuisine clearly rooted its authority in "masculine" technical knowledge and "universal" values, regional cuisines relied on "feminine" traditional and local authority. "Bourgeois cuisine," by contrast could be understood as a contested terrain where "masculine" scientific knowledge and techniques from haute cuisine were adapted for female cooks to replace their "feminine" repertoires of "trucs" and "tours de main"—both terms meaning "little tricks." As far back as the eighteenth century with Menon's *La cuisinière bourgeoise*, bourgeois cookbooks and manuals, whether written by male chefs like Menon or not, attempted to "simplify" professional culinary techniques and recipes and render them "intelligible" for home cooks.[31]

As Priscilla Ferguson notes, in the eighteenth century going from aristocratic haute to "bourgeois" cuisine did not move us "far down the social scale."[32] Jennifer Davis, however, adds that at this time "bourgeois" referred to "city-dwellers" more than it did to class in the modern sense.[33] Yet over the course of the nineteenth, and especially the twentieth centuries, both the "middle class" and "urban" populations grew exponentially, and bourgeois ideals of family life, economics, and citizenship became dominant "national" ideals. Bourgeois cuisine embodied

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[30] For instance: Marc-Olivier Schwartz and Thomas Renoult, *Manger paléo* (Vergèze, France: Thierry Souccar Editions, 2014).

[31] Ferguson, 42-43.

[32] Ferguson, 42.

[33] Jennifer J. Davis, *Defining Culinary Authority* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 81-82.

these ideals by being refined but not extravagant, thrifty but favoring high-quality products, tasty but also nutritious. It embraced modern technologies and nutritional science. It emphasized a woman's duty to feed her family (and by extension the nation), and her subordination to male culinary and scientific authority.

Even during the 1930s vogue for regional cuisine, bourgeois cuisine remained firmly dedicated to modernizing, rationalizing and universalizing the way that French women cooked. Possibly the most popular French cookbook of the twentieth century was Ginette Mathiot's *Je sais cuisiner* (*I Know How to Cook*), selling more than five million copies in numerous editions since 1932. While Mathiot wrote authoritatively about cooking techniques and nutrition, she systematically relied on implicitly patriarchal scientific, medical, and culinary discourses. The forward to the 1950 edition of her book stated unequivocally, for example, "our constant priority has been to abide by the latest modern rules of culinary health and hygiene."[34] At the same time, she discouraged reliance on feminine experiential knowledge and discouraged experimentation and originality:

> A housewife does not improvise; household management is a science. A cook does not improvise; cooking is an art. Most cookbooks give useless details and mediocre recipes derived from empiricism and outdated, expensive customs. Therefore, we saw it necessary to produce a book that is logical and based on generalizable scientific data.[35]

Note that here the same word, "empiricism," that Courtine used to characterize regional feminine culinary knowledge is understood pejoratively here to be an obstacle to good cooking rather than a source of gastronomic authority. As an advocate of bourgeois cuisine, Mathiot clearly

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[34] H. Delage and G. Mathiot, *Je sais cuisiner* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1950), 8. I suspect that the text of the forward, signed "Mlles H. Delage et G. Mathiot," appearing in this 1950 edition is likely very similar to or same as the original 1932 edition . All editions from 1953 onward would list Mathiot as the sole author. Mathiot would revise the forward several times, though only explicitly acknowledged the age and existing legacy of the text with the 1990 edition.

[35] Delage and Mathiot, 7.

disapproves of the traditional practices and received wisdom typical of *cuisine de femmes*, preferring instead the intervention of a logical, scientific approach.

Mathiot explicitly links the objectives of *Je sais cuisiner* with dominant bourgeois ideals of domesticity and gender roles. The very first lines of the book read: "IT IS THE DUTY OF WOMEN OF ALL SOCIAL STATIONS TO TAKE CHARGE OF HER HOUSEHOLD [whether one] supervises housework carried out [by servants] under her orders or must do it alone."[36] By suggesting a common set of values and duties for women of all classes, Mathiot illustrates the links between bourgeois cuisine and the republican ideal of building a universal civilization through modernization and education. It is also clear, however, that women were not meant to savor the fruits of their own creativity but rather to find joy in serving others: "What a pleasure it is for a woman to finally be able to serve her family and friends a good, well prepared meal!"[37]

By the 1970 revised edition of *Je sais cuisiner*, Mathiot had removed some of the cookbook's more infantilizing and moralizing language, along with its references to servants. The reader was still assumed to be a housewife but the book addressed her as a busy modern woman with little time to cook. Mathiot continued to embrace modern science and technology, which now included many new conveniences invented since the book was first published. However, forty years on, Mathiot took a kinder view of the value of traditional knowledge:

> There exist today many timesaving products: soup packets, instant desserts, canned or frozen dishes that are fully prepared. But it is essential to know how to prepare these correctly with an attractive presentation. For that, one must still be familiar with the basic culinary principles explained in *Je sais cuisiner.* You will also find […] traditional recipes that require a more delicate execution and may

[36] Delage and Mathiot, 7.

[37] Delage and Mathiot, 7-8.

> be reserved for moments of leisure and holidays. No need to be apprehensive about taking on a culinary challenge of your own choosing.[38]

In fact, a concern about the overreliance on modern conveniences replaced warnings against "unscientific" traditional practices. Apparently, the massive social and cultural changes since the war had meant that, the passage of feminine culinary traditions had ceased to pose a significant obstacle to modern techniques. In fact while Mathiot remained firmly committed to modern scientific knowledge, she also hinted at modern cuisine's propensity for homogeneity and mediocrity:

> The recipes and menus [contained herein] were developed with the sole purpose of respecting the rules of dietary health and hygiene. A selection of regional dishes and foreign recipes—so fashionable today!—are provided to bring welcomed variety to a potentially monotonous cuisine.[39]

When Courtine, Bocuse, Denis, Gault and Millau went on *Apostrophes* to debate nouvelle cuisine (discussed in Chapter One), none other than Ginette Mathiot was among the guests,[40] Once invited to speak, Mathiot was quick to point out that in the 1930s both she and especially her former mentor, Dr. Edouard de Pomaine, had already favored the simple dishes and quality ingredients central to nouvelle cuisine. In agreement, Christian Millau declared that nouvelle cuisine represented a reconciliation of male professional cuisine with the simpler *cuisine de femmes.*

Millau and Courtine's overtures to "women's cuisine," however sincere, could hardly hide the fact that all of France's well-known professional chefs were male. Moreover, no one argued that women deserved to be admitted into professional kitchens or respected as innovators,

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[38] Ginette Mathiot, *Je sais cuisiner* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1970), 11.

[39] Mathiot, *Je sais cuisiner* (1970), 12.

[40] "Existe-t-il une nouvelle cuisine française?" March 26, 1976 episode of *Apostrophes* (Antenne 2). She was there to promote her latest book: Ginette Mathiot, *A Table avec Edouard de Pomaine* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1975).

creators, or gastronomes. Indeed, when the gastronome and journalist Jean Ferniot called out Paul Bocuse's "misogyny" on the television program *L'homme en question* (*The Man in Question*), Bocuse protested that he "loves women," but a professional kitchen is like the military, and "you don't see any women sea captains either."[41] What was underway, I argue, was not a loosening of gender norms vis-à-vis haute, bourgeois, and regional cuisines, but rather a hierarchical reorganization of cooking types as well as of the forms of authoritative knowledge that flowed between them. The valorization of regional cuisine combined with the loosening of professional male authority over bourgeois cuisine created the opportunity for a rural *paysanne* to become a veritable culinary star. Yet neither the restaurant industry nor publishing cookbooks made viable avenues for such success. Only the spectacular potential of television could make possible the meteoric ascent of Maïté.

Cooking on Television

Soon after television entered into French homes in the early 1950s, it made its way into the kitchen. TV became an important medium for communicating culinary techniques. Viewers marveled at the possibility of actually seeing chefs cook as they explained recipes. Although not the first cooking show to appear on French TV, *Art et magie de la cuisine* (*The Art and magic of cooking*) really established the genre in 1954.[42] The program fit well into the tradition of bourgeois cuisine, simplifying professional *savoir-faire* for women cooking at home. This premise was actually embodied by the show's two stars: Raymond Oliver and Catherine Langeais. Oliver was the owner and chef of the three-star Grand Véfour restaurant located in

[41] "Paul Bocuse," December 11, 1977 episode of *L'homme en question* (FR3).

[42] The first cooking show on French television, in 1953, was hosted by "a mysterious Monsieur X, alias Georges Adet," who is now all but forgotten to history. Thérèse Rocher, "Le cuisinier, la ménagère et le petit écran," *TéléObs*, May 18, 1995.

Paris' Palais-Royal district, ground zero for the birth of modern restaurant culture in the nineteenth century. His mastery of haute cuisine was such that his innovative style and techniques earned him the right to call himself, "the grandfather of nouvelle cuisine."[43] Oliver had also "traveled the world over, with [his] culinary knowledge as his only baggage, and [he] found the same welcome in Tokyo, Mexico, Montreal or Johannesburg."[44] He had not only extended the shining light of French gastronomy; he also absorbed foreign dishes and influences with cosmopolitan openness and imperialistic confidence, thus epitomizing haute cuisine's universal ambitions. And just like Menon two hundred years earlier, he simplified and distilled his recipes and techniques for home cooks in order to sustain and modernize the bourgeois cuisine of the nation's dinner tables. Catherine Langeais, meanwhile, acted as an avatar for the audience. She played the role of the charming housewife with little culinary knowledge. In each episode, the manly, bearded Oliver would demonstrate how to prepare a dish providing authoritative explanations in his deep booming voice, while Langeais would ask practical questions and offer simple observations, in order to facilitate Oliver's Socratic method.

In one notable 1956 episode, Oliver is demonstrating how to make moussaka, a dish, according Langeais, with "a strange name."[45] Oliver's response demonstrates his breadth of knowledge by explaining that the dish originated in "Central Europe" but by now, it had been "international" for some time. He points out that even the great Escoffier had a recipe for moussaka. While describing several traditional variants of moussaka, including a Jewish recipe without pork, he nearly proclaims that the "true" moussaka should be made with lamb. However,

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[43] "R Oliver," April 9, 1984 episode of *Midi 2* (Antenne 2).

[44] Raymond Oliver, *La Cuisine,* trans. Nika Standen Hazelton and Jack Van Bibber (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1969 [1967]), 11.

[45] "Moussaka," August 27, 1956 episode of *Art et magie de la cuisine* (RTF).

he quickly stops himself to repeat the word "true" in an ironic tone in order to renounce such myths of authenticity.

In other episodes, Oliver made more farfetched claims such as suggesting that English cooking and Louisiana creole cuisine share many similarities as they are both essentially are medieval French cuisine. Fanciful as they may have seemed, such claims serve to reinforce the leading role of France in the history of food.[46] By citing Escoffier or eighteenth-century English cookbooks, Oliver anchors his claims in the modern (masculine) authority of scholarship. In another episode, Oliver also asserts the authority of a scientific, rational approach to cuisine. When demonstrating several egg dishes, for example, he takes the opportunity to show how universal techniques and principles (such as poaching an egg), once mastered, held the key to an endless array of recipes and dishes.[47]

In his magnum opus, *La Cuisine,* an eight-hundred-page cookbook published in 1967 and translated into English in 1969, Oliver made his unflinchingly modernistic stance clear. While expressing empathy for the nostalgia for grandma's cooking, Oliver writes,

> It is a widely held misconception that our ancestors were, in their day, incomparable gastronomes. […] Today, cookery has become democratic, vulgarized, to use the true meaning of that word. What was the moving force of this evolution? Essentially two factors: transportation and equipment. […] Isn't our nostalgia for the past just a little bit fanciful, creating a seductive image, letting us see only the good side? […] Napoleon III, as aware of his epicurean role as he was of his role of emperor, had to bring some order out of the complicated mess of a gastronomy encumbered with "sauçailles." All the great French cooks who were to make our colors shine the world over were born during this period, therefore not long ago.[48]

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[46] "Chicken Pie," April 28, 1956 episode of *Art et magie de la cuisine* (RTF).

[47] "Les oeufs," December 3, 1956 episode of *Art et magie de la cuisine* (RTF).

[48] Oliver, *La Cuisine,* 7-12.

Moreover, Oliver repeatedly emphasizes the universal value of French professional culinary techniques as he has simplified them here for the home cook. While acknowledging, "Nothing can replace [experience], not even talent," he is not referring here to the "empiricism" associated with women's cooking.[49] He maintains:

> Cooking is governed by a certain number of very strict laws; one must be familiar with the main points of these. It is the A B C of all art or of all technique. It is perfectly true that some gifted people can rely successfully on their guesswork in a few preparations, but they must be in a "state of grace." […] It is well known that specialization is to be feared (if specialization is anything but monotony), and that imagination has its weaknesses. […] This cookbook […] represents a sum of knowledge and everyone can, from this point of view, usefully consult it.[50]

There is one sense, however, in which Oliver broke with the tradition of bourgeois cuisine. Unlike Menon, Mathiot, or Bocuse, he did not assume his reader would be a housewife, or even a woman. Without escaping gender stereotypes, Oliver addressed an implicitly male reader, suggesting, "You may be a cook without equal, perhaps, but please leave to your wife the care of creating with love the [table setting] that is to set off your work."[51] But then, men in France have always been granted the liberty to dabble outside of their prescribed gender roles more than women. Cooking, after all, was also becoming a leisure activity in the postwar period.

In addition to *Art et magie de la cuisine*, which ran for fourteen years, Oliver and Langeais also hosted two other cooking shows: *Cuisine à quatre mains* (*Cooking with Four Hands*) and *La Cuisine pour les hommes* (*Cooking for Men*). In the latter, each episode featured Oliver preparing a dish supposed to interest male viewers who were invited to participate in a competition by attempting the recipe themselves and sending in photographs of their creations. While Langeais was also present in her typical role, the show's premise allowed her to make

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[49] Oliver, *La Cuisine*, 8.

[50] Oliver, *La Cuisine,* 13-14.

[51] Oliver, *La Cuisine*, 16.

humorous comments about men in the kitchen that reaffirmed traditional gender norms. For example, in a special episode where a male viewer was invited onto the show to cook alongside Oliver, Langeais feigned surprise at the man's attestation that he enjoyed cooking for his family.[52]

The dynamic established by Oliver and Langeais—a famous professional chef accompanied by a female novice—established the standard format that most cooking shows on French television would follow for the next three or decades. For example in the 1970s, the program *La grande cocotte* (*The big pot*) capitalized on the popularity of nouvelle cuisine with Michel Guérard, Paul Bocuse, Roger Vergé and the Troisgros brothers trading off episodes in which they demonstrated a recipe with the inexpert assistance of the actress Marthe Mercadier. Later Michel Guérard hosted his own show with Anne-Marie Peysson on *La cuisine légère*. If the traditional gender roles of the chef and the presenter remained in place, their seriousness was softening. One episode even featured Oliver dressed in drag, posing as his "auntie" claiming that the recipes on the program were really hers![53] Even as Guérard's transgressive stunt played with and even challenged the rigidity of gender norms, he did so at the expense of women.

In the late seventies and early 1980s, Raymond Oliver's son, Michel, hosted several different cooking programs which introduced new formats without a female co-host, including one in which he visited a market or shop at the beginning of each show, and another where he invited "friends" to teach or to help him prepare a dish.[54] What all of these programs had in common (and what situated them firmly within the tradition of bourgeois cuisine), was that in

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[52] "Potage aux moules," March 14, 1969 episode of *La cuisine pour les homes* (ORTF)

[53] "Poisson rôti au four et nouilles au citron," March 22, 1980 episode of *La cuisine légère* (TF1)

[54] Titles of Michel Oliver's programs included *La vérité est au fond de la marmite* (*The truth is at the bottom of the pot*) , *Bonjour, bon appetit!*, and *Dis moi ce que tu mijotes* (*Tell me what you have stewing*).

each, a male professional chef applying simplified haute cuisine know-how to more common dishes—Michel Guérard prepared a classic *pot-au-feu*, for example.[55] One program, "Le regard des femmes" (A woman's view), did feature a woman demonstrating recipes for a male TV presenter, but her persona and authority, like Ginette Mathiot's, were limited to the practical concerns of the modern housewife. Then in 1983 a "peasant woman" with no television or restaurant credentials whatsoever seemingly appeared from out of nowhere and stirred the pot.

Marie-Thérèse Ordonez and *La Cuisine des Mousquetaires*

The Southwestern region of Aquitaine has had a long-standing reputation in France for its excellent gastronomy. Amidst the pines of the Landes Forest that stretch from Bordeaux to Bayonne, in the heart of that part of Aquitaine known as Gascony, is the small town of Rion-des-Landes, population 2500. It contains a church, a school, a rugby team, and a railroad line.[56] When this rugby team was hungry, someone had to supply the duck confit and Armagnac. And when a train approached a construction site on this railroad line, someone had to blow a horn to warn the workers. Both of these rather unglamorous jobs fell to a woman named Marie-Thérèse Ordonez, or "Maïté." But Maïté's destiny was in show business. She was well acquainted with the stage, having once participated as an amateur actor in her church's theater troupe. And when a TV producer came to town to cover a story on the rugby team, Maïté impressed him not only by preparing a feast to feed a hundred, but also by serenading the crowd with a cappella renderings of "Ave Maria" and "la Dacquoise," a local folk song. This producer just happened to

[55] "Le pot-au-feu," November 26, 1976 episode of *La Grande cocotte* (TF1).

[56] Arnaud Vivant, "Maïté, la castafiore du confit," *Libération,* February, 28, 1992.

be searching for a cook for his new show, a program based loosely on Alexandre Dumas' *Grand Dictionnaire de la cuisine*. Suddenly, he had found his star.[57]

The show, called *La cuisine des mousquetaires*, after Dumas' Three Musketeers, began airing on the regional television station, FR3-Aquitaine, in 1983. Following the classic format established by Oliver and Langeais, a Parisian-accented television professional (but culinary novice) named Micheline Banzet hosted the program alongside Maïté in the role of the chef. In fact, Maïté shared a number of traits with Oliver including a resonant Gascon-accented voice and even his muscular jaw—"the telltale mark of a Gascon even without his beret," according to Dumas.[58] Yet this is where the similarities ended. Oliver had traveled the world and run one of France's most renowned restaurants, and had helped found nouvelle cuisine. Maïté's work on the railroad had only taken her as far as Puyoô, Dax, and Bayonne, all within 100km of Rion-des-Landes).[59] Her culinary experience was mostly limited to catering for the rugby team, although she would later open her own rustic inn. As for nouvelle cuisine? Maïté told a TV reporter in 1989, while stirring a giant pot of soup, "What a horror! Shameful, even. […] Food served on huge plates without even any butter! […] It is very colorful with reds, greens, yellows, and whites—very pretty—but that does not give it any taste. It's awful."[60] By contrast, Maïté's Gascon cooking was hearty, rustic regional cuisine, and her lack of bourgeois sophistication and cosmopolitanism only confirmed her unassailable authenticity as a *paysanne*.

In some ways, Maïté's irreverence and informal behavior on-camera resembled Raymond Oliver's American contemporary, Julia Child. Indeed, both women began their television careers

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[57] Vivant.

[58] Vivant.

[59] "Portrait du Maïté," April 18, 1989 episode of *Actualités Aquitaine* (FR3 – Aquitaine).

[60] "Portrait du Maïté."

later in life—Maïté was forty-five and Child fifty-one—and both cut tall imposing figures, a rarity among women on television. Yet while Julia Child's persona seemed to confound gender and class stereotypes, Maïté embodied an immediately recognizable rural feminine type—even if journalists did occasionally unkindly compare her to burly men like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Oliver Hardy.[61] She was not the comely "farmer's daughter" so much as his boisterous sister-in-law. Maïté fulfilled a gender and class stereotype that was so immediately familiar, one journalist felt entitled to refer to her as a "sacrée bonne femme" ("damn fine woman") and an "être nature" ("natural being").[62]

Maïté was the archetypical *paysanne*, or female "peasant." Anthropologist Susan Carol Rogers has argued that the "peasant" image and identity is so powerful in France because it is invested with so much meaning as the dialectical antithesis of modernization and the centralized state.[63] She argues that for this reason peasants have been imbued with especially positive imagery in times of crisis, such as the 1970s and 1980s when French confidence in the state and modernization was low. She points out that while championing peasants and traditional peasant society had long been the prerogative of French conservatives, in the years following 1968, the radical left had also taken up their cause:

> Rhetorical discussion of French peasants often borrows the vocabulary and logic of third worldism (internal colonization, core/periphery), and explicit parallels are frequently drawn between peasants and Third World peoples, both in terms of the inherent value of their ways of life, and in terms of the processes by which they have been crushed. […] It is perfectly consistent, for example, that decentralization, once a priority of the political agenda of the peasant-admiring

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[61] Henri Haget compares Maïté to Arnold Schwartzenegger in: Henri Haget, "Maïté: cuisine et indépendance," *L'Express,* December 15, 1994. Accessed 1 March 2014, http://www.lexpress.fr/informations/maite-cuisine-et-independance_601151.html. Vivant makes the Laurel and Hardy reference in: Vivant, "Maïté, la castafiore du confit."

[62] Vivant.

[63] Rogers, "Good to Think: The 'Peasant' in Contemporary France," 56.

> Vichy regime, reappeared in the 1980s as a priority on the agenda of the Left. […] The peasant persona has slid about the political spectrum in accordance with the changing political color of critiques of the centralized State and of the French Civilization it advances.[64]

Of course, as Rogers points out, the idealized peasant no longer existed in 1980s France, if she ever had. Like Proust's Françoise or La Mazille's *périgourdines*, the *paysanne* was a voiceless "other" constructed by modern, bourgeois observers to reflect their own ideals of tradition and local heritage.

While Maïté was anything but voiceless, *La cuisine des mousquetaires* cast her as an anachronistic "other" who, paradoxically, also represented a certain stereotypical Frenchness. The first episode in 1983 begins with the show's host, Micheline alone on camera, delivering a monologue about Alexandre Dumas and his *Dictionnaire*.[65] Micheline then turns to describing Dumas' most enduring hero, D'Artagnan, who is living a life of adventure in Paris but dreaming of returning with his musketeer comrades to his home in Gascony, where "waiting beside the fireplace he would find the good Maïté." Then, turning to Maïté, who has just appeared on screen for the first time, Micheline asks, "So, Maïté, when D'Artagnan arrives, what would you serve him?"

Without hesitation, Maïté replies with a list of dishes including *garbure* (duck stew), foie gras, and duck confit—the implication being that these are timeless dishes passed down from one "good Maïté" to the next.[66] At that moment, there is movement inside a picnic basket from which Maïté produces a live duck. Maïté handles the duck delicately, petting it and cooing pleasantly to keep it calm as she places it head first into a large metal cone used to hold the body and expose

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[64] Rogers, "Good to Think: The 'Peasant' in Contemporary France," 59.

[65] "La cuisine des mousquetaires (no. 1) " October 22, 1983 episode of *La cuisine des mousquetaires* (FR3-Limousin).

[66] "La cuisine des mousquetaires (no. 1)."

the head and neck at the narrow end. Before the bird is actually slaughtered the camera cuts away, but in the next shot Micheline is holding a bowl full of duck blood and *ventrêche* (a local pork product similar to pancetta). With a scoop of duck/goose grease from her big clay urn, Maïté sautés the blood and meat to form a sort of crêpe called a *sanguette*, which she assures Micheline is a recipe so old that even D'Artagnan would have known of it.

In the next scene Maïté demonstrates how to pluck the duck's feathers by first rubbing it with powdered resin and then dipping it in boiling water.[67] Maïté makes quick work of removing the feathers "just like a shirt," though the entire operation is not shown. Next Maïté demonstrates how to butcher the duck, albeit rather too quickly for anyone unfamiliar with the process to actually learn it. Unlike butchering a chicken, all of the meat, fat, and skin of the duck are removed from the carcass in a single piece, from which the *magrets* (breast filets) and *cuisses* (thighs) are removed afterward. Maïté saves the remaining skin and fat from which she will render grease for cooking or making confit. Finally, Maïté butterflies the two duck breasts and grills them in her enormous fireplace.

Over the next several episodes, Maïté cooked the other dishes from the hypothetical menu she would have served D'Artagnan, all using different parts of the duck. In the second episode, when making confit—duck thighs that are cooked and preserved in duck fat—Micheline points out that the technique is so old it appeared in Dumas' *Dictionnaire* and suggests that perhaps the Musketeers would have brought it with them to Paris, thus collapsing the two centuries which separate Dumas from his characters.[68] The two women then sit down by the fire

[67] "La cuisine des mousquetaires (no. 1)."

[68] "Les confits," January 1, 1983 episode of *La cuisine des mousquetaires* (FR3).

"to supervise their confit, and chat." Micheline asks Maïté, "in your country, do you still tell stories in your patois?" Maïté replies by speaking a few sentences in the Gascon dialect.

By speaking a language quite distinct from modern French, Maïté's aligns her regional identity with a traditional peasant culture in direct opposition to one of the main pillars of modern French civilization, its "universal" language. At the same time, Micheline's repeated references to Alexandre Dumas, a literary giant of modern France, suggests that the purpose here is not to assert a regionalism in opposition to French national identity, but rather to reconcile the two by affirming a discourse of national identity rooted in France's diverse regional traditions. Moreover, the fact that this program appeared on a state-owned television network (albeit a regional subsidiary), further demonstrates that such regionalism-cum-nationalism was not only sanctioned, but also encouraged by the French government. The historian, Herman Lebovics, has studied a similar re-appropriation of regionalism under the umbrella of a less domineering national culture in the deployment of professional anthropologists to the provinces in order to undermine the dissident "guerilla ethnography" of the 1970s.[69]

Once the confit has cooked, Maïté describes how to prepare a "good old-fashioned earthenware pot" with wood ash in order to clean and sterilize it before using it to store the confit.[70] As she fills the pot with the duck thighs and molten fat, she explains that one must not let the meat touch the sides of the pot, and Micheline confirms that she had read the same warning in Dumas' *Dictionnaire.* Maïté then demonstrates how one may use conventional glass canning jars for the confit instead of the rather impractical clay pots which hold a dozen or more thighs and require a special operation involving paper and salt to seal the top. This concession to

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[69] Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 83-114.

[70] "Les confits".

modern convenience illustrates one of the show's central contradictions: the opposition between what the show purported to teach, and what it actually communicated. Maïté was ostensibly teaching her viewers how to prepare these recipes, but was anyone really planning to slaughter, pluck, butcher, and utilize every part of a duck after watching a few fifteen-minute episodes of a television program? And what of the episode in the second season, when Maïté spent a significant portion of one episode skinning and butchered an entire wild boar?[71] Since the vast majority of viewers were unlikely to attempt Maïté's recipes, there must have been another reason for the show's popularity. Surely curiosity about historically and culturally "authentic" recipes and techniques from "days of old" would have been a significant motivation for many viewers, especially those who identified these practices as part of their heritage. At the same time, it was clearly entertaining to watch Maïté skin a boar or bludgeon a wriggling live eel.[72] If viewers were ostensibly interested in learning about their own "roots," they must have nevertheless have found such practices to be quite foreign, even exotic.

One of the most spectacular episodes of all was when Maïté prepared and then ate an ortolan (bunting): a tiny songbird native to her home department, les Landes.[73] The ritual eating of an ortolan is associated with royalty and is notorious in French gastronomic mythology. The titillation and scandal is only heightened by the fact that it is illegal. The famous Parisian chef Denis served ortolan as part of an infamous menu served to American restaurant critic Craig Claiborne in a 1975 meal that came to be known as the most expensive restaurant meal ever

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[71] "Le sanglier," January 1, 1984 episode of *La cuisine des mousquetaires* (FR3).

[72] The eel incident in particular has remained an iconic moment in French television history, as evidenced by the popularity of the video clip on both youtube.com and ina.fr. "HUMOUR: Maïté qui assomme son anguille," YouTube.com, accessed on November 14, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IhaexkUUYo; "Maïté ORDONEZ aux prises avec une anguille," Ina.fr, accessed on November 14, 2014, http://www.ina.fr/video/I04197096/maite-ordonez-aux-prises-avec-une-anguille-video.html.

[73] "Palombe grive ortolan," January 1, 1984 episode of *La cuisine des mousquetaires* (FR3).

consumed.[74] Then there was François Mitterrand's "Last Meal," an elaborate ceremonious feast that culminated with the eating of two ortolan which were reportedly the last thing that Mitterrand ingested before dying eight days later.[75]

According to tradition, the ortolan must be captured live and have its eyes plucked out, which somehow motivates the bird to gorge itself on grain. Once it is sufficiently fattened, the little bird is then drowned in brandy and roasted. Maïté's ortolan demonstration, however, focused not on these rather unpleasant aspects, but instead on the equally codified ritual of eating the tiny bird whole. A key element is placing a napkin over one's head either in order to capture the roasted bird's aroma, or to hide this sinful indulgence from God. Maïté spared none of the sensual, almost erotic, pleasure that accompanied her repast. After deeply inhaling, she touches the tiny bird gently to her lips and exclaims with delight that it is still very hot. Indeed, she herself appears to be perspiring. Next she begins to, as she puts it, "sucer le derrière" ("suck its bottom"), sliding the bird in and out of her mouth and before finally taking a bite. She whispers "oh que c'est bon!" ("oh it's so good!"). The camera lingers on Maïté's face for at least another thirty seconds as she chews in silence and savors the bird in apparent ecstasy. Maïté was hardly the only person ever seduced by the little bird; the American food writer, Anthony Bourdain, once opined that, "a written account of [Mitterrand's last meal] remains one of the most lushly descriptive works of food porn ever written."[76]

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[74] Rudi Chelminski, "He Can't Believe He Ate the Whole Thing! Craig Claiborne Flies to Paris for a 33-Course, 4 ½ Hour, $4000 Dinner," *People* 4 (21), 24 November 1975, accessed on March 1, 2014, http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20065872,00.html.

[75] Michael Paterniti, "The Last Meal," *Esquire*, May 1, 1998, accessed on March 1, 2014, http://www.esquire.com/features/The-Last-Meal-0598. Paterniti also retells this story on a 1998 episode of the radio program *This American Life*: "Poultry Slam 1998," *This American Life,* accessed on March 1, 2014, http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/116/poultry-slam-1998.

[76] It seems plausible that Bourdain is referring to the *Esquire* article cited above, although he neglects to name the article. Anthony Bourdain, *Medium Raw: A Bloody Valentine to the World of Food and the People Who Cook* (New York: Ecco, 2011), xiv.

While some viewers might have had vivid memories of their grandmothers' *garbure* or foie gras, surely wild boar or ortolan must have been pure fantasy for most of the audience. However, uniting the hunter's boar with the king's ortolan and the peasant's *garbure* in Maïté's rustic country kitchen, created a timeless image of Frenchness, one rooted in tradition and terroir that reconciled the regional with the national and the noble with the common in the viewer's imagination. In this way, Maïté's culinary spectacle was always anchored to some familiar historical or cultural basis with which the audience could identify even as they delighted in Maïté's oddity and antiquated recipes.

Maïté represented the same feminine "empiricism" that Ginette Mathiot had discouraged and Robert Courtine so admired in the *cuisine de femmes.* One of *La cuisine des mousquetaires* cookbooks called Maïté "a bridge between instinct and experience which leads to the triumph of know-how over theory."[77] There may have been no greater distillation of this "empiricism" than Maïté's guiding maxim, "faut c'qui faut"—a verbal condensing of "il faut ce qu'il faut," meaning, "it needs what it needs." She used the expression frequently to explain or justify a technique or ingredient by indicating that this was "just how it is done." Her measurements were imprecise and idiosyncratic. Her "soupçon" ("dash") of Armagnac became infamous.[78] For example, when the three-star chef Bernard Loiseau was asked in a television interview if his light, delicate style made him the "opposite of Maïté," Loiseau joked condescendingly that Maïté's theatrics were impressive, but "making a sauce with half a bottle of Armagnac might be just a bit heavy."[79] Yet Maïté never backed down from the boldness and richness of her food or

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[77] Maïté, Micheline, and Jean-Marc Soyez, *La cuisine des mousquetaires no. 2* (FR3 Aquitaine Editions de la Presqu'ile, 1994), 226.

[78] Haget.

[79] "Spéciale Gastronomie- les français et la table," December 10, 1994 episode of *Ah Quels Titres!* (France 3).

apologized for its effects on her figure: "At 185 cm [6' 1"], I weigh 115 kg [254 pounds]. That is forty more [kilograms] than on my wedding day. I've tried diets with no luck. I am too much of a glutton."[80]

From 1983 to 1990, *La cuisine des mousquetaires* aired on FR3-Aquitaine, the regional television network based in Bordeaux—except for a two-year hiatus during which Maïté opened her own restaurant in Rion-des-Landes and built a new television studio on the premises. After 1990 the program was not only added to France 3's national line up, it also aired around the world on the French-language satellite channel, TV5. On the strength of sensational episodes like those described above and the periodic "bétises" (bloopers) shows, Maïté and Micheline became household names in France and Francophone Europe in the 1990s. Indeed, Canal+'s *Le Zapping*, a daily five-minute collage of extraordinary moments from the previous day's television programming, apparently "relished showing clips of Maïté indulging in animal sacrifice."[81]

Along with her expanded audience, Maïté expanded her repertoire as well. In its first few seasons, the show had focused mainly on traditional Gascon cuisine, occasionally featuring dishes from other parts of the greater Southwest such as Périgord, Languedoc, or the Basque country. But in the 1990s, the show began to include recipes from other parts of France and even from abroad. For instance, in one episode Maïté demonstrated an Alsatian specialty known as *baeckeoffe*—a stew made of pork, beef, lamb, vegetables and white wine.[82] When introducing the dish, Maïté addressed her Alsatian viewers, hoping they would "pardon [any mistakes], since [you] know that this is an excellent dish and we will prepare it just as you do," turning to look directly into the camera as she said "you." Micheline then noted that Southwesterners tended to

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[80] "L'interview de la semaine: Maïté: "J'ai refusé tous les ponts d'or," *Télé 7 jours* 1737, 11-17 September 1993, 30.

[81] Vivant.

[82] "Baekeoffe – rognons de veau au sauternes," May 22, 1995 episode of *La cuisine des mousquetaires* (France 3).

be a bit chauvinistic, but really there were great specialties all across France that were a pleasure to discover. In this way, she revealed and even embraced the paradox of a national identity defined by the diversity of its proudly regional traditions.

This exchange exemplifies the realignment of French culinary authority in the eighties and nineties. Regional cuisines were no longer considered subordinate to, or mere inspiration for, universal/national haute and bourgeois cuisines; they became the very essence of culinary Frenchness, even if their common defining feature was their difference. Mutual curiosity and appreciation for all of the diverse local traditions of France became in itself a shared value and source of national identity. In this way, Maïté derived her authority over Alsatian dishes not from her mastery of the universal principles of haute cuisine or her cosmopolitan experience and erudition. As a good *paysanne*, rather than refining, simplifying, or modernizing recipes,, Maïté could be trusted to understand and preserve the traditions of Alsace, or of any other regional cuisine.

All For One…: Maïté Goes Solo

As Maïté's unpredictable personality continued to blossom on screen, Micheline was increasingly overshadowed.[83] In 1995, at the height of their popularity, the duo split up. One magazine headline read "Maïté cries out: 'between Micheline and me, there was one too many!'"[84] In the accompanying interview, Maïté was asked which of the two was the better cook. She replied, "Guess! Micheline is intelligent, cultivated, a woman of the world. She has extraordinary qualities, but don't ask her to peel a potato!" And when asked why she—and not

[83] Vivant.

[84] Franklin Didi, "Le cri de Maïté: 'Entre Micheline et moi, il y a une de trop,'" *Télé 7 Jours* 1816, March 18-24, 1995, 132.

Micheline—had become a celebrity, she replied: "Who knows! I am a *paysanne* with the earth under my feet. Peasants stay true to what they are: frank and passionate. Peasants love what they do, and love to share their happiness with others."[85] Maïté's point was clear: audiences did not want history and literature lessons from a stuffy bourgeois Parisian when they could commune directly with a real *paysanne* of the terroir. Micheline responded in the press with barbs of her own, calling Maïté a "brave country girl,"—in French *brave* means "courageous" and "kind" but also "dim."[86] She pointed out that, unlike Maïté who had been plucked from obscurity and could be replaced, she had built her own career in broadcasting. Yet Maïté was right; despite the fact that Micheline was the creator, host, and producer of *La cuisine des mousquetaires*, she would forever be remembered as Maïté's sidekick.

Micheline represented a modern, rational sensibility. Like most early television hosts she was not unlike a schoolteacher, the classic disseminator of modern bourgeois civilization in France. She was always probing Maïté for the logical explanations and exact measurements that were rarely forthcoming. She supported her claims about traditional dishes by referencing a male cultural elite, Alexandre Dumas. By situating her authority in reason and erudition, Micheline reasserted these as dominant values. A short biography provided at the end of the second *La cuisine des mousquetaires* cookbook detailed how Micheline had been a violin prodigy, entering the Paris Conservatory at age six, eventually studying under "the greatest masters," and later curated the Biarritz music festival.[87] In the fifties and sixties, an era when millions were joining the urban middle class for the first time, TV hosts like Catherine Langeais had represented a bourgeois aspiration. By the 1990s, however, television audiences idealized not Micheline's

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[85] Didi.

[86] J.-F. R., "Maïté–Micheline : le torchon brûle," *Le Parisien*, 21 March 1995.

[87] Maite, Micheline, and Soyez, 227.

sophistication but rather Maïté's unpretentious, even crass demeanor, and authentic connections to her "roots." Maïté represented an ideal of French culture that demanded only that one be true to one's own heritage and cultural identity.

Even as *La cuisine des mousquetaires* was disintegrating in 1995, Maïté had already begun developing her own media career. She had upcoming acting parts in a film, a play, and the popular police drama, *Van Loc: un grand flic de Marseille*. She even released a record single.[88] In 1993, she had begun selling foie gras, confit, cassoulet, and other canned and vacuum-packed products under her name by mail.[89] By 1995, supermarket shelves were lined with her products.[90] Like Michel Guérard more than a decade earlier, she had evidently accrued enough culinary capital and good will that consumers were willing to overlook the obvious contradiction between her traditional, made-from-scratch recipes and the ready-to-eat, modern convenience food that bore her name.

Or perhaps, Maïté simply did not demand that she be taken too seriously because she retained the power of her regional "authenticity." She was the butt of many jokes and weathered her share of criticism, but the legitimacy of her provenance was considered beyond reproach. Secure in her identity, by her own definition she simply *was* a *paysanne landaise* ("peasant of Landes") and could not be anything else. She claimed that she had not asked for celebrity, but if the people wanted to buy her canned food products at the supermarket or hear her sing novelty songs, who could blame her for relishing the opportunities that her "real life fairy tale"

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[88] Didi.

[89] "Interview de la semaine."

[90] Haget.

presented?[91] If these exploits were judged hypocritical or inauthentic by the standards of the same modern culture that had demanded them, that was not really her problem to resolve.

At the same time, Maïté sought to insert her true personality and life experience into her public persona. In 1994, she published an autobiographical-cookbook, *Maïté se met à table*—to the great chagrin of France 3 who was releasing the third *cuisine des mousquetaires* cookbook at the same time.[92] Compared with the formal tone of the *cuisine des mousquetaires* series, *Maïté se met à table* was recounted entirely in the first person (including the recipes), reflecting Maïté's expressive, colloquial, and occasionally profane voice. Maïté included a candid description of growing up in poverty in rural France in the 1940s. Whereas the *cuisine des mousquetaires* cookbooks emphasized the idealized quaint, archaic, and delectable recipes of Maïté's "grandmother," in *Maïté se met à table*, Maïté recalled sparse meals concocted from corn porridge and snacking on boiled potatoes meant for the pigs:

> On the farm, it was a big day when my mother would make *escaudon* for us. In the cauldron used for boiling the pigs' potatoes, she would prepare the corn meal gruel. At our house, that was what we called *escaudon.* […] The other treat [made of boiled corn meal] that we enjoyed was called *cruchade.* If you cannot tell *escaudon* from *cruchade*, that is because you know nothing about the great potential of corn meal! […] The poorest among us would make *cruchade* with millet; now, that was really unpleasant![93]

There is an added level of irony here, because the in twentieth century *escaudon* or *escaoudoun* generally refers to a Landes specialty consisting of pork braised in sweet wine—exactly the sort of thing middle-class city-dwellers might think of as a classic regional peasant dish—but one that in Maïté's real peasant household featured neither meat nor wine. Unlike the elite urban authors

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[91] Didi.

[92] Haget.

[93] Maïté and Alain Pujol, *Maïté se met à table* (Bordeaux: Mollat, 1994), 11.

of most cookbooks on regional cuisine, Maïté was willing to challenge the idyllic myths and expose the harsher realities of peasant life.

Maïté returned to daily television in 1997 with a new program entitled *A table!* (*Come to the Table!*). While Maïté had initially entertained the possibility of a male co-host, instead each episode featured a different guest chef who taught Maïté a recipe. Thus Maïté now took up the (Catherine Langeais) role of charming and curious host. But Maïté was too irrepressible to limit herself to the role of spectator—so each episode also featured an actual viewer, often a young woman with little cooking experience.

While on *La cuisine des mousquetaires* Maïté's occasionally foul-mouthed but endearing sense of humor had been relegated to the blooper reels, with *A table!* it was featured front and center. In more than one episode, for example, she tried to play matchmaker by suggestively commenting on the attractiveness of her female guests to her male chefs (and vice versa). In one episode, she even joked about what the young woman's husband might do if he found out about the imaginary affair.[94] Other slightly risqué topics included jokes about the effects of alcohol, her weight, or racial and national identities. For example, more than once she wore a stereotypical costume corresponding to the West African or Indian dish they were preparing.[95] Maïté's disregard for *politesse* was part of her appeal. Further reinforcing her populist image, she would indicate the prices of all the ingredients required for each recipe.

Maïté had an irreverent disregard for prudish manners, bourgeois education, and modern science, but she had a principled belief in respecting and protecting the authenticity of regional gastronomic traditions. For example, in one episode, a chef demonstrating how to prepare a *far*

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[94] "Tiramisu," February 13, 1998 episode of *A table!* (France 3).

[95] "Recette indienne : samousssa," December 3, 1998 episode of *A table!* (France 3); "Cuisine sénégalaise : mafe," May 21, 1998 episode of *A table!* (France 3).

breton—a custard-like cake—includes a minor personal variation. Maïté feigns indignation saying, "So, the Bretons don't do it that way?!" The cook responds apologetically that her technique simply lightens the cake a bit and assures Maïté that it is still a "traditional recipe."[96] In another episode, a chef from Senegal who is cooking *maafe* suggests that is okay to "Gallicize" the recipe a little, by adding thyme and bay leaf. But Maïté insists on knowing whether or not these would be used *là bas* ("over there"), in Africa.[97]

With the dawn of the new millennium, Maïté turned over France 3's daily cooking show to Joël Robuchon, who would host a show called *Bon appétit bien sur*.[98] Maïté kept busy however, releasing a slew of cookbooks published by Michel Lafon. In 2001 alone, she launched a whole series dedicated to six of France's most famed regional cuisines: those of Alsace, Provence, Languedoc, Brittany, Lyon, and of course her home region, Aquitaine. While "Maïté" is the only author listed for these books, there is little in the text to indicate that her involvement was much more than a marketing scheme. For example, over the course of less than two pages, the introduction to the volume on Brittany cited Robert Courtine, Chateaubriand, and Pliny the Younger.[99] Regardless whether Maïté was familiar with these authors, deference to such classic elite male cultural authorities would seem out of character. More problematic, however, is the question of why Maïté was authoring a cookbook on Breton (or Alsatian or Provençal) cuisine at all. Although Maïté's legitimacy was theoretically premised upon the inalienable singularity of local knowledge and experience, as discussed above, Maïté's authority extend beyond her home region, not because she had an erudite knowledge of cuisines, but simply by virtue of being a

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[96] "Far breton," April 7, 1998 episode of *A table* (France 3).

[97] "Cuisine sénégalaise : mafe."

[98] "Robuchon remplace Maïté," *le Monde,* December 5, 1999.

[99] Maïté, *La Cuisine de Bretagne* (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Michel Lafon, 2001), 7-8.

peasant woman. In fact, I argue that many average French people neither knew nor cared about the specific terroirs or departments of France, as much as they did about the mythologized abstract ideal of regional specificity. When a 1999 *le Monde* article incorrectly identified Maïté as a "périgourdine" (ignoring the more than 100 kilometers separating Landes and Périgord), neither the journalist nor the editors noticed the error or bothered to double check.[100]

Of course, celebrity chefs do not necessarily need to prove their authority on a subject in order to sell books. Maïté's popularity meant there was a market for almost any cookbook with her name on the cover. Furthermore, despite the dominance of male chefs, Maïté was not the only provincial woman to be granted national culinary authority; commercial advertisements also capitalized on this special brand of "feminine" expertise. Take for example, a series of television commercials for Tipiak frozen foods starring a group of *Bigoudènes*—the female inhabitants of the Bigouden area at the western tip of Brittany famous for wearing very tall lace bonnets. Starting in 1993, three quite elderly women in traditional bonnets were featured examining Tipiak's scallops *à la bretonne*. Impressed, they exclaim with distress that the "pirates" at Tipiak have stolen their recipe.[101] Over the next decade, these women would return to make similar judgments about Tipiak's other Breton-style frozen foods from *galettes* (crêpes) to *cassolettes* (mini seafood casseroles).

Like Maïté, the *Bigoudènes'* claims to authoritative knowledge of regional cuisine extended far beyond their home region. Subsequent ads had the *Bigoudènes* confirming the authenticity of Provençal *brandade de morue* (salt cod casserole). This suggests that by the 1990s regional cultures and identities were no longer set in opposition to national culture. Quite

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[100] "Robuchon remplace Maïté."

[101] "Tipiak : 2 coquilles à la bretonne surgelées," November 21, 1993 (TF1).

the contrary, "regional cuisine" came to represent a broader national ideal about the mutual respect of tradition and regional diversity. Regional cuisine was no longer defined relative to its geographic specificity so much as against a common foe: the industrialized global food market.

Conclusion

In the concluding lines of an article about innovation in the food industry, the historian Frédéric Duhart argues:

> So many innovations have played a fundamental role in constituting the regional cultural food identity of Southwestern France that I am reminded of the words of a slender Indian dancer that hold true even in the land of the ample Maïté: 'Tradition is like a river which flows and widens without end.'[102]

Here, Maïté is meant to be a humorous embodiment of unchanging tradition as a contrast to a more historically "accurate" image of tradition that evolves with the times. Duhart's article is surely correct in pointing out the myriad ways in which technological, agricultural, and culinary innovations have shaped the evolving food culture of Southwestern France. But by Duhart's own implicit admission, it is the quaintly old-fashioned Maïté who continues to represent the way people actually identify Southwestern French food culture. This chapter has sought to shed light on how and why, in the post-colonial period, a discourse of static, even retrograde, feminine traditionalism came to be celebrated as a core pillar of not only regional cultures but of French national identity.

There is no one else quite like Maïté, but she serves as an important example of the central place ascribed to rural women more generally in reorienting France's gastronomic identity in the 1980s and '90s. This was evident everywhere from TV commercials to the

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[102] Frédéric Duhart, "Le poids des innovations récentes dans la constitution de l'identité culturelle alimentaire actuelle du Sud-Ouest de la France (de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle à la fin du XXe siècle," in *Histoire des innovations alimentaires: XIXe et XXe siècles*, ed. Alain Drouard and Jean-Pierre Williot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), 256.

presidential palace. In 1988, President Mitterrand had apparently grown tired of the fancy cuisine served at the Elysée and hungered for the simple, hearty food of his childhood. He asked (ironically) the celebrated three-star chef Joël Robuchon to find him a woman to be his private cook. Robuchon recommended Daniele Mazet-Delpeuch from Périgord.[103] The global success of a 2012 film about her experiences, *Les Saveurs du palais* (meaning "the flavors of the palace" but inappropriately rendered for its American release as *Haute Cuisine*) illustrates just how powerfully the narrative of the French provincial woman reclaiming her gastronomic authority still rings true.

As regional cuisine and provincial *paysannes* like Maïté moved to the center of France's gastronomic identity, perhaps the greatest indication of their dominance is how they wrestled influence over bourgeois cuisine away from haute-cuisine chefs. Most tellingly, even Ginette Mathiot's *Je sais cuisiner*, came to advertise itself as "the cult classic passed down from mother to daughter" and "the bible for women cooks for four generations."[104] In other words, Mathiot's book had come to symbolize the traditionalistic "empiricism" of the *cuisine des femmes* that she had set out to combat. Similarly, in his 2008 *Dictionnaire amoureux de la Gastronomie* (*A Loving Dictionary of Gastronomy*), Christian Millau defined "bourgeois cuisine" as the product of the traditionalistic *cuisine des femmes* it had, at one time, been meant to reform. Yet even in valorizing this "feminine" culinary authority, Millau chided those few women who had transgressed traditional gender roles and broken into professional kitchens:

> When women are at the stoves of restaurant kitchens, they have but one thing on their minds: to rival and surpass the men to take their turn as the next Veyrat, the next Loiseau or the next Robuchon. This does not bother me one bit, and I am happy for them when one captures a third [Michelin] star and another graduates to

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[103] Daniele Mazet-Delpeuch, *Carnets de cuisine: Du Périgord à l'Elysée* (Paris: Bayard, 2012).

[104] Ginette Mathiot, *Je sais cuisiner* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002 [Livre de Poche, 2008]).

> giving courses at the Sorbonne. But personally, I prefer […] the loving cuisine of women that is, when they want it to be, unmatched. Why would you want to compete when you can be unique?[105]

Now that French gastronomy has made room for women and their traditional cooking, there was no longer any need to try to compete with the men! Even when inverting the gender dynamic of the whole bourgeois cuisine canon from *La cuisinière bourgeoise* to *Art et magie de la cuisine* in order to celebrate women's culinary authority, Millau still managed to reinforce traditional gender roles. More paradoxes…[106]

If men make their own history but do not make it just as they please, then this is surely doubly true for women and even more so for a *paysanne* from Landes. While Maïté's personal agency was key to her incredible rise to fame and fortune, it was made possible by a specific conjuncture of broader historical conditions. Maïté became a cultural icon because she represented an unambiguous image of Frenchness in a time when the classic republican ideals of universalism and modernization were a source of anxiety rather than reassurance about France's place in the world. The discourse of Frenchness rooted in diverse cultural particularities represented by Maïté was no less contradictory or problematic than one rooted in republican universalism, but it better suited France's needs in the face of American cultural imperialism, immigration, and the global market for "authentic" traditional foods.

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[105] Christian Millau, *Dictionnaire amoureux de la Gastronomie* (Paris: Plon, 2008), 156.

[106] Joan Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

CHAPTER FOUR:

"L'Europe des casseroles": Rebranding French Food in the Global Countryside

In a time when dieticians insist on the importance of variety in the diet of the human organism, there is no doubt that the living diversity of the culinary heritage the Pays de la Loire region represents an act of faith in our future as we face the growing menace of the "fast-food civilization."

-Olivier Guichard, President of the Regional Council of the Pays de la Loire (1992)[1]

In April 1985, the well-known writer, journalist, and gastronome, Jean Ferniot, delivered a report to the French Ministers of Agriculture and Culture based on his interviews with more than 200 food industry professionals.[2] The purpose of his report was to outline the contemporary challenges that French cuisine and the French food industry faced, and to suggest policy initiatives that the French state could enact in order to better support this important sector of the French economy. By the mid-1980s, France was the world's second largest exporter of food products, which represented thirty billion francs in 1984—almost twenty percent of all French exports. However, since France specialized in a relatively small number of products, mostly basic raw commodities like grain, it was susceptible to the unpredictability of global markets and European Economic Community regulators. Moreover, the ever-increasing industrialization and commoditization of these sectors threatened to erode the distinctive quality and reputation of French agricultural products and gastronomy.

This chapter examines how, in the 1980s and 1990s, the French state responded to these challenges through agricultural, tourism, and cultural policies designed to exploit an image of French foods as unique, traditional, natural, and high quality. While France did continue the

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[1] Olivier Guichard, preface to *Pays-de-la-Loire: Produits du terroir et recettes traditionnelles* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 7.

[2] Jean Ferniot, "Rapport aux Ministres sur la promotion des arts culinaires," April 1985, accessed on December 16, 2013, http://www.repasgastronomiquedesfrancais.org/pdf/RapportFerniot1985.pdf.

highly industrialized production of certain agricultural commodities for the global market, it also came to realize the economic potential of the global demand for "authentic" and "traditional" French foods. If globalization was perceived as a threat to France's diverse gastronomic traditions, as the epigraph above suggests, this chapter examines how it also provided opportunities for their preservation and exploitation.

Most of the projects discussed in this chapter may be considered part of the general theme of "patrimonialisation"—the wave of efforts to document and preserve France's collective *patrimoine* or heritage (literally "inheritance")—identified by Jacques Revel as part of the larger French interest in "memory" since the 1980s.[3] Elizabeth Barham suggests that this wave of heritage preservation was likely precipitated by the "malaise" following the shock of rapid postwar modernization and globalization that revealed the fragility of cultural traditions.[4] However, as Barham also notes, these processes of globalization and modernization also created the opportunities and economic incentives that drove the identification, exploitation, and often invention of local traditions.

This chapter demonstrates that it was not a question of whether the traditional local food "market" could coexist alongside the global "market," but how a co-productive relationship of both symbiosis and antagonism developed between the two. Further, I argue that identity and heritage must be examined as modern constructions determined by contemporary social relations with local, national, and global dimensions. Thus, while the historical reality or "authenticity" of local heritage and identity is a red herring—indeed a wild goose chase—it is precisely the

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[3] Jacques Revel, "Histoire vs. Mémoire en France aujourd'hui," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 18, no.1 (Spring 2000): 2.

[4] Elizabeth Barham, "Translating terroir: the global challenge of French AOC labeling," *Journal of Rural Studies* 19 (2003): 132.

quixotic pursuit of such elusive game that continues to legitimize French local and national food traditions and fuel global trade.

The shift in French policy and government initiatives toward embracing local food traditions was accelerated by a set of converging issues that came to a head in France's international relations in the 1980s and 1990s. First, the heavy subsidization and intensive modernization of postwar French agriculture had taken France from being a net food importer to the second largest food exporter in the world, but this "productivism" was causing significant economic, ecological, and demographic problems, as well as seriously chafing France's European partners.[5] This issue finally came to a head during the Uruguay Round of the international GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations that lasted from 1986 to 1993, led to the creation of the World Trade Organization, and which sought the liberalization of global agricultural trade. At the same time, at the European level, the terms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and European Economic Community (EEC) were being renegotiated alongside the creation of the European Union. In reaction to this sweeping economic liberalization and political Europeanization that seemed to diminish French independence, an imaginative and proactive set of cultural policies helmed by the charismatic Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, were aimed at rekindling French cultural creation and pride.[6] In some cultural industries, especially film and music, this meant subsidizing local production and erecting protectionist quotas and trade barriers. France managed to have these industries

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[5] Hugh Clout, "Rural France in the New Millennium: Change and challenge," *Geography* 91, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 205-217.

[6] On Lang's cultural policy, see David Looseley, *The Politics of Fun: Cultural Policy and Debate in Contemporary France* (New York: Berg, 1995).

exempted from free trade agreements by introducing the principle of the "cultural exception."[7] However, in the agricultural and food industries, France actually began to reduce existing subsidies and other protectionist measures—under heavy external pressure, to be sure—while exploring new opportunities to promote distinctive national traditions on the global market.

This chapter focuses on several specific policy initiatives as examples of some of the ways the French state rebranded French gastronomy and exploited this image at the end of the twentieth century.[8] First, I examine the expansion of gastro-tourism in rural France beyond its longstanding niche of well-to-do connoisseurs to become an important part of the world's largest tourism industry. Then, I discuss the tense international GATT and CAP negotiations on the eve of the Maastricht Treaty that called for the overhaul of French agriculture and a shift toward the economic potential of traditional and specialized foods. Next, I look at France's AOC system and efforts to expand such geographical indication protections internationally in order to guarantee the authenticity and thus the value of many French food products. Finally, I consider the ambitious *Inventaire du patrimoine culinaire* project—an inventory of the traditional local foods of each region of France—that helped to legitimize geographic specificity and historical longevity as gastronomic values. While economic interests were at the heart of all of these initiatives, each of them also involved cultural imperatives to identify, protect, and promote distinctive culinary traditions as expressions of French national identity. Although I examine each project separately, they were largely concurrent and closely interrelated, especially around

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[7] Hugh Dauncey, "'L'exception culturelle," in *The End of the French Exception?: Decline and Revival of the 'French Model'*, ed. Tony Chafer and Emmanuel Godin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 72-84.

[8] The term "brand" is used here in commonsensical way, simply to mean constructing an image that serves economic interests, without implying any technical marketing definition. On the more recent phenomenon known as "nation branding," by which nation-states actually employ marketing professionals to help craft their image, see: Melissa Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For another exploration of the potential connections between national heritage and "branding" in the 1990s, see: David McCrone, Angela Morris, and Richard Kiely, *Scotland – The Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

the key turning point of the early 1990s when France renegotiated its agricultural and trade agreements, joined the European Union, and faced globalization head-on with a new national mission as a bastion of local heritage and cultural diversity.

While it ultimately took considerable economic and political pressure to shift the course French trade and agricultural policies, the basic principle of France's gastronomic rebranding was already clear in Jean Ferniot's 1985 report to the Ministers of Agriculture and Culture. Ferniot insisted that the quality and consistency of French food had never been better, even recognizing both nouvelle cuisine and fast food as important innovations. Nouvelle cuisine had updated haute cuisine to contemporary standards of taste, health, and hygiene. Fast food had helped drive the expansion and diversification of the commercial restaurant industry to better serve modern consumers. Ferniot found it liberating that one could now have a hamburger for lunch and eat in a 3-star restaurant for dinner. But he felt modernization had reached an appropriate balance with tradition, and what worried him now was the potential "homogenization of taste" engendered by "market research, agricultural and oenological science, refrigeration, and transport" in the quest for greater profitability.[9] As he put it, "Having found the equilibrium between *Ancienne* and *nouvelle cuisine*, we must now strike a different balance, between profitability and diversity."[10]

However, Ferniot realized that the apparent opposition between profitability and agricultural diversity was a false dilemma, rooted in an economic logic that focused only on maximizing the efficiency of production through industrial modernization. Ferniot argued that preserving and promoting France's diverse culinary and agricultural traditions held a

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[9] Ferniot, "Rapport," 16.

[10] Ferniot, "Rapport," 16.

significant—and hitherto underexploited—economic value of its own. He recalled that the "perfection" of French cuisine was not only the product of innovative chefs and technologies but was born of France's natural and cultural diversity found in the creations of artisans and homemakers. He argued that the French image of quality, luxury and *art de vivre* extended over the entire *filière culinaire*—the whole ensemble of food and dining related products and services from produce to restaurants to tableware. He wrote, "In these areas, which call up social and cultural connotations [of French quality], happily our image is one and indivisible. […] The profit potential of this largely unexploited demand is what should guide our planning and action."[11] In other words, traditional and artisanal products could and indeed needed to be more profitable assets in a diversified French food industry. To this end, Ferniot suggested a three-pronged mission for a new Centre National des Arts Culinaires (CNAC): "training, preservation, promotion."[12]

Ferniot's conception of cultural policy remained committed to a centralized, top-down conception of cultural democratization. He wrote,

> Just as haute couture 'pulls' behind it the ready-to-wear, textile, and fashion industries; so too could French *haute gastronomie* serve as the veritable 'locomotive' for a 'culinary train' including agriculture, distribution, hotels, tourism, tableware, and related industries.[13]

Thus, the focus of the CNAC would be supporting French gastronomic expertise through professional training and public enrichment. His two major proposals were the creation of an elite, international graduate school of culinary arts, and the establishment of an International Culinary Center that would be a museum and cultural center dedicated to French gastronomy. To

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[11] Ferniot, "Rapport," 18.

[12] Ferniot, "Rapport," 23.

[13] Ferniot, "Rapport," 19.

date, neither project has been successfully implemented, although the culinary school did briefly get off the ground and the museum project has recently been revived as the "Cité de la Gastronomie," one of the initiatives following UNESCO's recognition of French gastronomy as part of world heritage in 2010.[14]

Regardless of the success of these specific projects, Ferniot's report signaled an important shift in the ways that the French state approached policy initiatives related to food. Rather than merely seeking to balance the opposing forces of French gastronomic tradition and the demands of the global economy, what Ferniot and others began to understand was that traditional French gastronomy and globalization could not only coexist but could even develop a symbiotic relationship. If there was a negative perception of dietary homogenization, this also meant there was an unmet demand for unique, traditional foods. And while the domestic market, inundated with inexpensive industrial foods, might not be able to sustain the production costs of traditional and obscure products on its own, the demand for traditional French foods extended as far as France's international gastronomic reputation. In this way, France's image as a bastion of gastronomic tradition and quality became a marketable asset that could boost France's export economy. Trade, tourism, and migration became economically viable avenues for the preservation and promotion of France's proud gastronomic traditions. Thus rather than eroding France's distinctive food culture, globalization could actually help sustain the production of French wines, cheeses, kitchenware, and restaurants made available to the global market.

[14] Mission Française du Patrimoine et des Cultures Alimentaires, "Pour une Cité de la Gastronomie," IEHCA.EU, accessed on July 28, 2014, http://www.iehca.eu/IEHCA_v4/pdf/cite_de_la_gastronomie.pdf.

Gastro-tourism in Rural France

Tourism constitutes a major sector of the French economy. Not only is France the world's most visited foreign country, but French citizens typically enjoy more than a month of yearly vacation time, with millions descending en masse on France's coasts and rural areas each August. French gastronomy has long been intimately linked to tourism. As previously noted, foreign tourists were instrumental to the early history of the restaurant, especially in establishing it as quintessential embodiment of "Frenchness" in the early nineteenth century, while distinctive regional cuisines were elaborated by and for well-off city dwellers exploring the countryside, especially with the advent of automobile tourism in the early twentieth century.[15] In a concerted effort to marry nationalism and regional cuisines, and to promote both automobile tourism and its brand, Michelin began issuing restaurant guides as early as 1900.[16] When their famous Red Guide started issuing stars in 1931, they had in mind automobilists far from home: one star indicated a very good restaurant, two stars meant "worth a detour" while three stars meant "worth a trip." Indeed, a growing number of gastronomes did make pilgrimages to the prewar "temples of gastronomy." Conveniently, the greatest prewar three-star chefs, such as Fernand Point, Alexandre Dumaine, Mère Brazier, and André Pic—and later Paul Bocuse, the Troisgros Brothers, and Bernard Loiseau—all had restaurants located along the main highways (the famed Nationale 6, and Nationale 7) linking Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles. In the interwar years, bourgeois tourism was as the heart of the carefully orchestrated construction of the regional identity of Burgundy—a region transected by Nationale 7—around wine, folkloric traditions, and

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[15] For more on restaurants see Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 170-206. On regional cuisines, see Julia Csergo, "The Emergence of Regional Cuisines," in *Food: A Culinary History*, ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, ed. Albert Sonnenfeld [English edition], (New York: Penguin, 1999), 500-515.

[16] Stephen L. Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

the newly appreciated vinicultural countryside.[17] When Gault and Millau launched their magazine almost forty years later, in 1969, it was dedicated to the twin passions of food and travel.

Apart from a growing niche of gourmets, however, most French vacationers would not have counted gastronomy as tourist attraction in itself. Indeed, the overpriced, low-quality restaurants that plague roadsides and tourist destinations made dining away from home risky. Restaurant guidebooks like Michelin and Gault-Millau were as much about avoiding a bad meal while on vacation as finding one "worth the trip." A memorable scene in the 1976 comedy movie, *L'Aile ou la cuisse,* illustrates the potential horrors of dining on the road. Disguised as an American tourist complete with a cowboy hat so as not to be identified, the protagonist, a famous restaurant critic named Charles Duchemin, visits a rural French inn where he observes food being served after falling on the floor and having a cigarette dropped into it. He winces after sipping his glass of Beaujolais, exclaiming in French-accented English that it is "very, very *nouveau*!"[18]

Although, many of France's most famous winemaking regions today rank among the most picturesque, as Gilles Laferté notes, even the beauty of a vineyard is largely a twentieth-century construct.[19] At any rate, with the postwar explosion of mass tourism, aided by the advent of state-supported "social tourism," most European vacationers still preferred "sea, sex, and sun"

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[17] Gilles Laferté, "The Folklorization of French Farming: Marketing Luxury Wine in the Interwar Years," *French Historical Studies* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 679-712.

[18] The joke is a play on "Beaujolais Nouveau," a well-known type of red Beaujolais wine that is sold and consumed within weeks of being harvested. By 1976, this wine had become a major marketing and media event when it was released each November. However, as most wine is said to improve with aging, Beaujolais Nouveau does not have a particularly strong reputation for quality, and its annual fete has often been criticized as a marketing ploy designed to inflate the price while decreasing the costs associated with waiting for the wine to age properly. Thus for a sophisticated gastronome such as Duchemin, "very very *nouveau"* is surely a very backhanded complement, which, like Duchemin's poor English, the audience is expected to catch, while the provincial waiter does not.

[19] Laferté, "The Folklorization of French Farming," 710.

on the coast.[20] While one might have enjoyed a local wine while dining in Nice or Biarritz, writing from the Bordeaux wine region in 1978, Robert Courtine lamented tourists' general lack of appreciation for France's wine regions:

> Parisian, Belgian, and German vacationers would run red lights to get past the most prestigious vineyards in the world en route to the Basque Country or Spain. They would eat lunch on the go, ignoring the historic stones, the châteaux, the people. The illustrious wines were not forgotten but consumed elsewhere.[21]

He admitted that "abusive" prices had not helped in encouraging middle-class tourists to visit Bordeaux wineries. However, Courtine was happy to report that the Bordeaux tourist office had recently done a commendable job of improving the situation. Many vineyards now offered a friendly welcome and good food, and there were many events, tours, and itineraries for wine lovers. In addition, Courtine noted Bordeaux's "gourmet renaissance," which he attributed to the city's young chefs who had revived the "nuanced, 'discreet,' and very provincial, even insular" local cuisine. Courtine understood earlier than most that France's greatest assets in the globalizing future would be its unique traditions and products, concluding, "Cuisine has revealed itself to be Bordeaux's number one tourist attraction. […] Following Bordeaux's enchanting example, cuisine can be a profound link between nations, provinces and men."[22] With these final words, Courtine saw beyond the economic benefits of tourism, and anticipated the whole emerging worldview where national and regional cultures would be recognized for their unique, essential differences, which could have its own universalistic implications. If, for Courtine, this remained a conservative and traditionalist position, it was one that would prove increasingly

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[20] Originally the title of a song by Serge Gainsbourg, the expression "Sea, Sex, and Sun" (in English) is now something of a cliché in France. On mass tourism and "social tourism," see: Ellen Furlough, "Making Mass Vacations: Tourism and Consumer Culture in France, 1930s to 1970s," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 2 (April 1998): 247-286.

[21] La Renyière [Robert Courtine], "Essais gourmands au pays de Montaigne," *Le Monde*, October 14, 1978.

[22] La Renyière, "Essais gourmands au pays de Montaigne."

attractive across the political spectrum in the 1980s and 1990s, as seen throughout this dissertation.

What Courtine observed in Bordeaux actually reflected a concerted effort across France to both diversify tourism and inject capital into the depopulated countryside by encouraging new forms of "rural tourism" or "green tourism." By the late 1970s, many tourists, it seems, were growing tired of the banality and expense of the beach. The governmental and private bodies tasked with promoting tourism looked to France's rural heritage and diverse regional agricultural and culinary traditions as potential attractions in their own right. This took place both in the coastal hinterlands and, increasingly, even in many inland rural areas that had not traditionally been tourist destinations. As Matt Hodges notes,

> The plan was to mobilize the historic regional diversity of the French nation state just as it was popularly perceived to be threatened by the spectre of homogenisation. Regional ways of life, many transformed beyond recognition by the upheavals of the post-war period, could be preserved, museumified, and effectively commoditized; the idiosyncrasies of local produce refashioned and repackaged; the burgeoning narratives of local and more professional historians drawn upon to provide depth to the differentiation of identities that would render each region unique, distinctive, and it was hoped, attractive to consumers. What is more, money could be made in the process.[23]

When tourism policy came under the direct supervision of the Minister of Youth, Sports, and Leisure in 1978, the new Minster's stated goal was "a merging of youth, sports and tourism" to form "a general delegation for all leisure activities."[24] One of the new ministry's first initiatives called "Learn the *cuisine du terroir,*" did just that by organizing and promoting short-term residential gastronomy courses:

> Partake in farm life, select ingredients on site or from the market, get behind the stove with the lady of the house, dine with the family… this is what a number of

[23] Matt Hodges, "Food, Time, and Heritage Tourism in Languedoc, France," *History and Anthropology* 12, no. 2 (2001): 187.

[24] J.-M. Durand-Souffland, "Le tourisme peut-il se passer d'un patron à plein-temps?," *Le Monde,* April 15, 1978.

> country farms would like to offer you. They will be happy to share with you the secrets of their recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation and to teach you the art of living well that is our cherished tradition. […] Please note that the hosts usually speak only French, but language is hardly a barrier for these people for whom hospitality is an ancestral golden rule.[25]

It is important to note that rural food traditions were expected to appeal to French and foreign tourists alike. French young people raised on convenience food from urban supermarkets were encouraged to rediscover their birthright, via the "art of living well," which apparently meant agrarian manual labor. Conversely, foreigners were welcomed to learn and participate in French traditions and a culture that was not their own. Yet, while the local culture's relationship to each tourist's personal identity varied, in both cases the appeal of French gastronomy was the particularity and even exclusivity of its traditions. In a world perceived to be becoming more homogenous, cultural particularity, whether it was one's own someone else's, had become became a marketable attraction.

In the mid 1980s, another tourism initiative aimed at highlighting France's regional diversity was a program called "*Plat du Terroir*" (Dishes from the Terroir), that encouraged restaurants to offer more regional specialties to tourists. It aimed to "help both French and foreign tourists to discover the riches of French culinary arts and to offer reasonably priced dishes […that were] copious, good quality, and typical of the region."[26] The program was organized through the regional tourism offices. Only the Ile de France (Paris region) and France's overseas departments and territories do not appear to have participated significantly in the operation. Perhaps it should not be surprising that Paris, the old seat of empire, centralization,

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[25] Archives Nationales [Henceforth AN] 19930462/72.

[26] Ministère du Commerce, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme, Direction du Tourisme, "Protocole National d'Accord concernant l'opération 'Plat du Terroir.'" AN 19910167/33.

and modernization, and the former colonies did not fit well into a program intended to promote an image of France as a composite of regional traditions.

An article entitled "Plat du terroir against fast food" appeared in the weekly women's magazine *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* (*Women Today*) in August 1985.[27] The article's only mention of "fast food" was placing the polemical English expression conspicuously in the title. This situated the *Plat du Terroir* program on the front lines against fast food and Americanization, demonstrating how pervasive that debate was in the 1980s. Moreover, the article closely linked issues of "local" identity to France's international reputation and national identity. It described the primary goals of the *Plat du Terroir* program as "stimulating local farming" and to "reaffirming [France's gastronomic] reputation that has withered in recent years—in Great Britain there exists four thousand Chinese restaurants against only five hundred French—by valorizing the exceptional riches of our cuisine."[28] Somehow, the state of French agriculture and the number of French restaurants in Britain were directly related and both had something to do with promoting and protecting traditional French regional cuisines. In fact, these connections evidently required no further elucidation. It was assumed that the reader would already understand the national cuisine as a reified whole, built upon distinctive regional traditions, but set apart from, and always in competition against, other national cuisines.

Despite such efforts to promote regional traditions since the late 1970s, and more and more tourists finally exploring the French countryside, by the late 1980s many local economies

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[27] A copy of this article was found the Archives Nationales box 19910167/36, and gives the following publication information: "Grande Bouffe: Plat du Terroir contre Fast Food," *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, 12-18 August, 1985, p. 21. *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* is a French-language Belgian publication, but during the 1980s it merged with at least two women's magazines published in France, and likely had a large readership in France, which may help explain why the article is written with the implicit assumption that readers will identify with France and its regional dishes as "our cuisine."

[28] "Grande Bouffe: Plat du Terroir contre Fast Food," AN 19910167/36.

were still struggling. This prompted French officials to commission several studies devoted to developing tourism as source of revenue for rural communities. A 1988 study entitled "Valorisation du patrimoine culturel en milieu rural" (Valorization of cultural heritage in rural areas) found that rural "cultural heritage" remained "at best, under exploited, and more often unexploited," and was in dire need of more marketable tourism "products."[29] It noted that in the preceding decades most efforts had been directed at preservation, equipment and non-commercial promotion. By contrast, the report advocated:

> developing an audacious policy of marketing 'products' based on a 'cultural and patrimonial' frame. This program of valorization would seem to be the only measure capable of ensuring the maintenance of this 'patrimony.' Doing so will enable the development of new economic activity that expresses the 'essence of the rural world' and will stimulate an economic and sociological dynamism for this space.[30]

The study's proposed actions were primarily administrative, focusing on research, training and better communication and integration between the various private and public interests involved in tourism in each locale, with the ultimate goal of developing coherent marketing strategies around well-conceived tourism "products."

Importantly, the report argued that the *only* economically viable strategy for preserving and celebrating rural heritage was to commercialize and market it as tourism "products" for global "export." Preservation and documentation measures alone could not provide the influx of capital necessary to sustain the rural economy and way of life. "Spectacular incentives" would be required in order to exploit the latent "curiosity for 'cultural tourism'" and take full advantage of the way that "rural patrimony bears witness to history on site."[31] What is remarkable is the

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[29] Service d'Etudes et d'Aménagement Touristique de l"Espace Rural (SEATER), "La valorisation du patrimoine culturel en milieu rural" (1988). AN 19990364/2.

[30] SEATER, AN 19990364/2.

[31] SEATER, AN 19990364/2.

elision of the potential conflict between the commercial exploitation of local traditions and the need to maintain a rural way of life, as if rural people could want nothing more than to perform a "traditional" lifestyle for the amusement of tourists. I will return to this issue below.

This report also recommended an inventory of all the existing ethnological and oral history research on rural culture, as well as commissioning new studies. The report argued:

> […] The oral tradition is on the point of disappearing. The loss of such testimony would contribute to the impoverishment of a rich and unique heritage that bears witness to European history as well as to an important part of that of North American populations (United States and Canada)."[32]

While the intent was not to be exclusionary but more inclusive, it is important to note the racial assumptions underlying the expectation that (white) North Americans had a (biological) interest in European heritage that apparently was not shared by Africans or Asians despite their more recent and more intensive cultural relations with France. However, beyond general racism, there was also a specifically post-colonial imperative to erase the memory of colonialism and its universalist discourse and reassert ethnic and familial ties as the legitimate source of cultural identity.

Another study, in 1989, focused on the domestic market for rural tourism. It concluded that rural tourist destinations should not attempt to ape the offerings of the more popular seaside and mountain resorts, but instead should take advantage of the countryside's unique assets like "tradition, truth, purity, and 'roots.'"[33] Moreover, it said each destination should embrace the specificity of its region, rather than the generic appeal of "the countryside." Similarly, a 1990 report on the British market for rural and "green" tourism in France included a quantitative "discourse analysis" of fifteen British press articles about destinations in France. It found that

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[32] SEATER, AN 19990364/2.

[33] Détente, "Les touristes français en espace rural: Analyse qualitative," January 1989, 103-104. AN 19990364/3.

these articles emphasized the particularities of "France" or of certain regions, rather than "the countryside" in a general sense. This study also found that, "gastronomy," "wine," and "historical monuments and history" were determined to be the major themes most frequently associated with the French countryside in the British press. Regarding "gastronomy" in particular, the articles referenced "tradition," "locality," "freshness," and "trying"/"tasting" specialties of local "inns" (*auberges*).[34] Ultimately, the study found that British tourists in the French countryside did not want all-inclusive packages or to partake in festivities specially designed for tourists, they wanted to frequent the same restaurants and cafés as the local villagers.[35]

All of these studies indicated that among both French and of foreign tourists, there was an unmet demand for rural tourism, and for experiencing traditional local foods in particular. They blamed inadequate coordination and commercial promotion for failing to fully exploit the tourism potential of the French countryside. Yet, paradoxically, part of the difficulty was that these same potential tourists were on guard against all signs of commercialization. Each individual or family sought their own unspoiled hamlet where they could immerse themselves in the sights, smells, and flavors of a timeless traditional world. They wanted comfortable, modern accommodations, but no "touristy" distractions from their "authentic" experience. Gift shops, tacky restaurants, and tour busses served as reminders both of the modern world from which they were escaping and of the fact that they themselves were tourists and did not belong. The tourism industry, therefore, needed to walk a fine line, balancing visitors' voyeuristic fantasies with promoting attractions and accommodations that would ensure a comfortable and enjoyable

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[34] Détente, "Etude de la démand actuelle et potentielle du marché brittanique pour le tourisme rural en France," 1990, 9. AN 19990364/4.

[35] Détente, "Etude de la démand actuelle et potentielle du marché brittanique pour le tourisme rural en France," 117.

vacation. While tourists both foreign and French dreamed that every village in rural France was brimming with farmers markets, rustic taverns, and artisanal farms just waiting to be discovered, such traditional locations and activities, to the extent that they ever existed, were increasingly dependent on added revenue from tourism.

With an existing, and indeed growing, demand for agricultural and gastronomy themed tourist activities, and a mounting need for rural employment and economic output, coordinating supply with demand was inevitable. Soon, tourists were scouring the French countryside for idyllic villages and idiosyncratic local delicacies. Assisted by affordability and public investment, rural tourism took off in the 1990s, helping France to become, perennially, the most toured country in the world. Sociologist Jean-Pierre Poulain has argued that by the 1990s food and agriculture themed "green tourism" could play a "regulatory role" amidst a "convergence of interests," namely: farmers seeking a more economically and ecologically sustainable "mission"; tourists seeking relief from the "anomie" and "identity crisis" precipitated by industrialized food; and France's need to maintain national and regional identities under threat of "dilution" by European integration.[36] Whether these issues constituted real social breakdown or, as I have argued, were largely discursive arguments, either way Poulain's point is crucial: gastro-tourism became a major phenomenon in the 1990s because it served a variety of divergent interests, making it an important site for negotiating the reorientation of French national identity toward local and regional traditions and particularities. While Poulain focused on the European dimension, tourism made constructing France's gastronomic image a global process.

The U.S.-published *Fromer's France 2001* tourist guidebook, for example, began each chapter with a "regional cuisine" section describing the local gastronomic traditions, generally

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[36] Jean-Pierre Poulain, "Goût de Terrior et tourisme vert à l'heure de l'Europe," *Ethnologie française* 27, no. 1 (January-March 1997): 18-26.

praising the exceptional quality of fresh ingredients and the adherence to time-honored traditions.[37] Yet these descriptions also relish the chance to titillate American readers by detailing local culinary oddities, such as:

> "one of the [Languedoc-Roussillon] region's legendary dishes […] the tripe (intestines) of tuna mixed with white wine and herbs, accompanied by a glass of seawater, whose salt alleviates some of the unpleasantness."[38]

By comparison, the guide's authors seem underwhelmed by the French Rivera's "diluted" Provençal cuisine and its "high-toned bastions of French cuisine right alongside budget joints catering to the latest culinary fads, juxtaposed in sometimes-uncomfortable proximity."[39] No longer was the American tourist enticed by the modernism and elegance of haute cuisine, which could be had in New York or even Las Vegas. What brought her across the Atlantic was the chance to taste something truly traditional, "authentic," and bizarre. In examining the quest for the "genuine article" in gastro-tourism, Lisa Heldke explains that in experiencing an unfamiliar food, "flavor stands as an authentic marker of the "true nature" of the ethnic Other—and, therefore, the thing that separates one must fully from this other."[40] In other words, in tasting "authentic" French food, the American tourist constructs an essentialist, ethnic "Frenchness" around whatever is most different from her own tastes.

However, if the French state and tourism industry harnessed this growing demand for France's "authentic" rural agricultural and gastronomic traditions, to give a shot of economic activity into limping rural economies, the local natives were not always grateful. It has often

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[37] Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince, *Fromer's France 2001,* (Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide, Inc., 2001).

[38] Porter and Prince, 595-6.

[39] Porter and Prince, 506.

[40] Lisa Heldke, "But is it Authentic": Culinary Travel and the Search for the 'Genuine Article,'" in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (New York: Berg, 2007), 387. See also Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

been taken for granted that the countryside really is the remnants of a "traditional society," and that the people who live there would naturally prefer the comfort of traditional life to the "anomie" of modernity.[41] As Laferté notes,

> Much to the despair of historians, French sociologists and ethnologists long perceived the countryside as unchanging, as a place of tradition, the home of an ahistorical "peasant civilization" […] French ethnologists have extended this ahistorical perception to the present day by constructing a largely aesthetic countryside and associate it with a now "heritagized" past.

If this can be said of academics, it would appear to hold true for many policy makers and tourism professionals, as well. In fact, according to Susan Rogers, many involved in tourist enterprises, at least in Limousin, were educated city dwellers, known as "neo-rurals," who began repopulating the French countryside in the 1970s, for reasons not unlike those that attract tourists themselves.[42]

Rogers' and Hodges' ethnographic research in rural communities in the Limousin and Languedoc regions, respectively, has demonstrated ways that much of the local populations, particularly those identifying strongly with the local "indigenous" culture, resented those who sought to exploit local customs, cultural identity and, of course, traditional food. Even some of the people involved in tourist activities such as operating a farm bed-and-breakfast might resent the stereotyped expectations of their guests: "A lot of them have some kind of Marie Antoinette idea and expect a pretty barnyard with baby chicks running around and all."[43] Similarly, they might even find similar ignorance of modern rural life amongst tourism organizations, like Gîtes

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[41] On "gastro-anomie," see: Claude Fischler, "Gastro-nomie, gastro-anomie : sagesse du corps et crise bio-culturelle de l'alimentation" *Communication* 31 (1979): 189-210. On Fischler's thesis as it relates to gastro-tourism, see Poualin, "Goût de Terrior et tourisme vert à l'heure de l'Europe," 21-22.

[42] Susan Carol Rogers, "Which Heritage?: Nature, Culture, and Identity in French Rural Tourism," *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 475-503. See also: Susan Carol Rogers, *Shaping Modern Times in Rural France: The Transformation and Reproduction of a Aveyronnais Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[43] Rogers, "Which Heritage?," 493.

de France who administer farm stays, who pretend that on modern farms "we just [sit] around roasting chestnuts by an open fire every evening […] That Gîtes de France guy thinks we live in another century!"[44] In an imaginary century, in fact.

So, while Laferté explains how "tradition" is really product of modernity and often a "folklorization" or "fabrication" constructed to serve contemporary interests, Rogers and Hodges show that real identities and traditions do exist and matter to rural populations who may not wish to see these severed from their modern existence in order to be commodified. Therefore, while gastro-tourism and agritourism surely do help to preserve and promote "traditional" French food while also supporting rural economies, it is going too far to suggest that "real" traditions can be maintained with effective policies ensuring adequate marketing and management, inventory and protection.[45] Fortunately, it is the impossibility of recapturing a "traditional" society that never actually existed held in tension with the possibility of communing with real fragments of past ways of life that makes cultural tourism valuable. It is the expectation of "authenticity" that makes gastro-tourism so marketable and what prevents it from becoming too "Disneyfied." However, while tourism could provide some significant economic support to many rural areas, the disequilibrium of French agriculture would require more than a few tourists.

French Agriculture in the Age of CAP, GATT, and Maastricht

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the European Economic Community (EEC), first enacted in 1962, was intended to integrate the agricultural markets of the member states while maintaining high levels of state intervention to support farmers and control prices. Heavy

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[44] Rogers, "Which Heritage?," 493-494.

[45] Jacinthe Bessière, "Local Development and Heritage: Traditional Food and Cuisine as Tourist Attractions in Rural Areas," *Sociologia Ruralis* 38, no. 1 (1998): 21-34.

subsidization came primarily in the form of price guarantees that, according to the basic rules of supply and demand, encouraged maximum production. Without an accurate price mechanism to keep supply in check, subsidies were effectively awarded ad infinitum on a per unit basis. While this policy would obviously lead to disequilibrium and eventual surpluses, it was justified as necessary to support rural farmers' livelihoods and the agrarian way of life of rural communities.[46] Plus, following years of hunger and shortages from the 1930s through the early 1950s, self-sufficiency and large surpluses did not necessarily sound like such a bad idea.

During the economic miracle of the Trente Glorieuses, France pursued modernization as zealously in farming as in any other sector. While the widespread consolidation and industrialization of farms greatly boosted efficiency and production, this came at the detriment of the pastoral image of farming that many French citizens thought the CAP was meant to preserve. By subsidizing prices and encouraging maximum production, the policy surely ensured that the French countryside would continue to be farmed, but it favored large-scale, intensive industrial farming, and the production of cash-crop commodities over small farmers and local produce.

While efforts at reforming the CAP had been ongoing since the 1960s, French farmers, through their powerful national union, the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles (FNSEA), were highly effective in maintaining a system that rewarded their productivity and provided them financial stability. But by the 1980s the disequilibrium between supply and demand was becoming untenable as surpluses reached the point where even exports were being subsidized. This policy helped France become the world's second leading agricultural exporter, which naturally brought European agricultural policy to the urgent attention of the world's first leading agricultural exporter, the United States.

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[46] Clout, 206.

All of this came to a head in the early 1990s as the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations stalled on agricultural issues. The United States began threatening massive tariff hikes that would ignite a so-called trade war, unless Europe agreed to cut production, limit its subsidies, lower prices, and allow American goods into the European market, all of which necessitated overhauling the CAP. This only added to France's European partners' unwillingness to maintaining a system that increasingly appeared to serve only the interests of (mainly large-scale) French farmers. The task of restructuring the CAP was finally taken up by the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ray MacSharry, who also happened to be Europe's lead negotiator for the agricultural portions of the GATT. In May 1992, MacSharry managed to strike a deal among all of the agricultural ministers of the European Economic Community, that brought the most significant reforms to the CAP since its inception. These reforms were crucial to the subsequent successful GATT compromise reached with the United States later that year.

On June 24, 1992 the French Minister of Agriculture, Socialist Louis Mermaz, delivered a speech before the National Assembly defending the "MacSharry reforms" he had signed to the previous month.[47] Amidst frequent interruptions and heckling by the opposition, Mermaz insisted that the reforms would correct the structural dysfunctions and inequities while maintaining protection for French interests, particularly the level of financial support for farmers. The essential difference was that subsidies would no longer take the form of price guarantees, but rather would be direct payments made to farmers no longer tied directly to their yield. This was expected to allow prices to drop closer to their true equilibrium, decreasing total production,

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[47] Assemblée Nationale, "Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mercredi 24 Juin 1992," *Journal Officiel de la République Française* 53, no. 2 (1992): 2727-2745. http://archives.assemblee-nationale.fr/9/cri/9-1991-1992-ordinaire2.asp.

and would redistribute subsidies more equitably among farmers rather than disproportionately rewarding the largest producers. All of this, Mermaz argued, should not be seen as ceding domestic and foreign market share to the Americans, but rather as an effort to strengthen the competitiveness of European agriculture on the global market.

Mermaz's opponents to the right, however, rejected his claims, arguing that reducing prices and production would mean significant losses for farmers. Jean-Louis Debré called it a "nivellement par la bas" ("leveling downward"), while Jean-Paul Charié contended that the new system of direct financial support smacked of "socialist ideology."[48] Jacques Godfrain suggested cutting taxes as a superior solution. Interestingly, neither side was particularly willing to take a strong ideological stance. Mermaz denied accusations of socialism, instead arguing that the new policy would enable farmers to be more competitive entrepreneurs. But when Mermaz argued against a more comprehensive liberalization of agricultural trade as an alternative solution that would rely on classical liberal principles like "comparative advantage" and "individual responsibility," none on the right took the bait, with Charié responding, "Who was proposing that?"[49] In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and as the United State stood poised to achieve its neo-liberal world domination, it seems that both socialism and liberalism had become dirty words in France.

Despite all of his assurances that the new policy would improve French competitiveness and agricultural revenues, Mermaz also quietly shifted focus toward a new set of guiding principles for French agriculture that would replace unfettered "productivism." For example, he noted the importance of environmental concerns, acknowledging the toll taken on the

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[48] Assemblée Nationale, "Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mercredi 24 Juin 1992," 2732.

[49] Assemblée Nationale, "Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mercredi 24 Juin 1992," 2732.

environment by intensive, industrial agriculture. Moreover, Mermaz, as well as his Socialist colleague, Michel Dinet (among others), insisted upon the importance of supporting and maintaining rural areas and their way of life. While carefully avoiding the issue of reducing production, Mermaz hinted more than once that France might be better off focusing on quality rather than quantity:

> Farmers aren't looking for a hand-out [*assurance-vie*]. They just want to know the rules of the game that they can expect in coming years. Let them be reassured. The reform will not strip their responsibility. To the contrary, it is an incitation to production of the highest quality.[50]

Farmers, however, were not convinced. In fact, since hearing the news of the deal a month earlier, farmers' organizations had carried out numerous demonstrations, including some violent ones, against the reforms. One group even attempted a blockade of Paris in the days preceding Mermaz's speech. It was not simply a question of losing their price guarantees; farmers had made enormous efforts in the preceding three decades to modernize their operations and maximize production. They had been called upon to feed Europe and had risen to the challenge. Now they would be asked to limit production, or to retire early, and to accept an uncertain future, and naturally many were apprehensive about the consequences of this new policy. When their opposition to the MacSharry reforms proved unsuccessful, farmers redirected their ire toward the Maastricht Treaty: when the referendum supporting the treaty narrowly passed in September, most of the opposing "non" votes came from farmers and rural communities, as well as those facing economic hardship. In other words, the very people who Mermaz claimed the CAP reforms were meant to help and the working class voters who had

[50] Assemblée Nationale, "Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mercredi 24 Juin 1992," 2733.

helped elect Mitterrand twice had now turned their back on the President's European cause.[51] In November and December 1992, when the GATT agricultural negotiations finally reached an agreement, farmers and their unions took to the streets once again but failed to stop the additional cuts to European export subsidies demanded by the U.S. Finally, at the legislative elections in March 1993, Mitterrand's Socialists lost eighty percent of their seats in the National Assembly, one of the worst electoral defeats in French history.

Yet in targeting the Socialist Party, Brussels, and the United States, French farmers were arguably refusing to see the long-term structural causes of their predicament. The day after Mermaz's speech before the National Assembly, Eric Fottorino wrote in *Le Monde*,

> The peasants have lost. Had they been successful in their encirclement of Paris, it would have changed nothing. Their defeat had already been reaped long ago. […] They do not really know what they've become with their massive yields, their futuristic machines, their colossal debts. They do not really know what they are to become without the objective of production, without a mission to complete, without an ideal. Let's not forget: we asked them to feed the world, and they believed it.[52]

It was not the erosion of the farmers' support system that was to blame for France's agricultural crisis, he argued, but the very philosophy of the CAP itself and the farmers who bought into it: "the dominant productivist model, where identity is defined by tonnage, and parochialism is merely an excuse not to see the global market."[53] Fottorino proceeded to detail how the relentless pursuit of modernization and ever increasing production inherent in the CAP's original program had led not only to the structural imbalances in the European agricultural market, but also to the economic difficulties experienced by small farmers and rural areas unsuited to high-yield grain

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[51] "Les résultats de la référendum sur l'Union Eropéenne: Le 'non' de la France rurale et ouvrière," *Le Monde*, September 22, 1992.

[52] Eric Fottorino, "La paysannerie piègée: Le monde agricole s'est laissé enfermer das le productivisme et les aides de Bruxelles," *Le Monde,* June 25, 1992.

[53] Fottorino.

production. Fottorino's conclusions were condescendingly pessimistic, accusing farmers of lacking foresight and imagination and "enclosing their identity in a single action: produce."[54] Yet he did note at least some belated effort by the FNSEA to reimagine the future of French agriculture:

> It was only at the instigation of its latest president, M. Raymond Lacombe, a man from the heart of the Aveyron terroir, that [the FNSEA] initiated a decisive but belated shift, reluctantly admitting that agriculture might find its second wind in hosting visitors, land management, and prioritizing quality products.[55]

While Fottorino's urgency regarding the need for French farmers and policymakers to rethink France's fundamental agricultural philosophy was understandable, his pessimism and blanket criticism was less warranted. Some sectors of French agriculture had already begun exploiting some of the same innovations he credited to Lacombe. In fact, France already possessed a well-established and economically potent set of institutions that were poised to meet the challenge of promoting and protecting France's most renowned traditional food products and to take advantage of their rising profit potential. These were France's elaborate system of food certifications and labeling restrictions, especially the prestigious *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC).

Exporting and Expanding *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée*

On January 18, 1994, *Le Monde* featured a group of articles under the heading, "Perspectives on the Future of Agriculture." In sharp contrast to Eric Fottorino's pessimistic assessment a year and a half earlier, these essays focusing mainly on the cheese industry saw a bright future for French agriculture as global demand shifted toward quality over quantity:

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[54] Fottorino.

[55] Fottorino.

> Consumers have become more demanding: no more are they willing to pay high prices for banalities, yet they enthusiastically welcome true quality goods. France is well equipped to meet the needs of this evolution. […] AOC [products] that certify the authenticity of ingredients and provenance, are becoming more and more highly valued.[56]

One of the subsequent essays, entitled "the Gustatory Exception," explained how this new direction could overcome the problems of overproduction that had plagued France in the preceding decades:

> Today's most perspicacious farmers are taking up a new battle cry: 'Consumers, join us in creating quality agriculture that will need less subsidies because it will be more profitable for the producers. We farmers will not disappoint you. Quality not quantity, that will be our motto!'[57]

The author suggested that French products bearing the *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) label represented a viable alternative to the dominant agricultural model of standardized commodities:

> The AOC label is not, in itself, an indication of unparalleled quality. It is a sign that its carrier is the opposite of a standardized product, that it takes its specificity from time-tested production methods, limited yield, and a geographic—even geological—terroir that is scrupulously delineated down to the square meter.[58]

The *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) system for regulating the production and labeling of certain localized products, mainly wines and cheeses, dates back to the early twentieth century with antecedents going back hundreds of years. For example, developing regulations on the production and naming of both Camembert cheese and champagne began in the nineteenth century and was integral to these becoming two of France's most iconic "national"

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[56] "Perspectives l'avenir de l'agriculture: Retour aux terroirs," *Le Monde,* January 18, 1994.

[57] "Perspectives l'avenir de l'agriculture: L'exception gustative," *Le Monde,* January 18, 1994.

[58] "Perspectives l'avenir de l'agriculture: L'exception gustative."

food products both nationally and internationally.[59] While qualifying for a particular AOC means conforming to certain production methods and standards, the primary objectives have been to fix precise geographical boundaries for each appellation and to guarantee *typicité* (typicality) rather than quality per se.[60] As such, the system's guiding principle was the concept of "terroir"—the idea that the local physical and cultural environment determines the taste of agricultural and food products produced there. As geographer Daniel Gade writes, "The central role of place in defining the character and quality of agricultural products has emerged as a response to a world on the inexorable path of globalization."[61] This reaction was more than mere nostalgia; it was a real demand for product information in a world of uncertainty about food's provenance and production methods.

Throughout the 1980s, France had enjoyed a growing trade surplus in agricultural/food products. To be sure grains and other basic commodities supported by the CAP's export subsidies accounted for much of this, but by 1987 wine, not grain, had become France's leading food export.[62] Moreover, the agencies tasked with marketing French food and agricultural products abroad found that "transformed" goods with more added value like wine, cheese, pre-packaged foods had a greater profit potential, especially in Europe and other developed markets

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[59] Pierre Boisard, *Camembert: A National Myth,* trans. Richard Miller (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Kolleen M. Guy, *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[60] Claire Delfosse, ed., *La Mode de Terroir et les produits alimentaires* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2011), 101-117.

[61] Daniel Gade, "Tradition, Territory, and Terroir in French Viniculture: Cassis, France, and Appellation Contrôlée," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, No. 4 (Dec. 2004): 848.

[62] By the end of the century, however, French wine exports would encounter difficulties stemming from a variety of causes including stiff international competition, and possible inflexibility in the AOC system. On this and French wine culture, see: Marion Demossier, *Wine Drinking Culture in France: A National Myth or a Modern Passion?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010).

like the United States.[63] Unlike basic commodities which are anonymous and interchangeable, these types of products could take advantage of France's international reputation for traditional, high-quality craftsmanship, and a distinctive "goût de terroir,"—what Amy Trubek calls "the taste of place."[64] In this way, the AOC system was not only a protection against "unfair competition" from foreign imposters, it also served as a potential marketing tool since a product simply bearing *any* AOC label could be expected to have some verifiably "authentic" and presumably desirable quality, even by consumers unfamiliar with the specific product or place.

Reconciling these marketing and certification functions has not always been easy, however. Angela Tregear and Matthew Gorton have argued that AOCs are too rigid and obscure to be optimal as a branding scheme for French wine; with hundreds of different appellations, too much specialized geographical and vinicultural knowledge is required on the part of the consumer.[65] At the same time, Daniel Gade points out that the producers within an appellation generally write their own rules and can manipulate the system to such an extent that it calls into question the system's legitimacy as an objective certification.[66] Furthermore, Gade shows how even disinterested wine critics allow cultural associations and their imaginations to embellish their perceptions of the impact of terroir and agricultural practices on the quality and taste of the final product. For example, Gade notes the "sheer illusion" frequently propagated that AOC Cassis wine smells of the sea breeze and local flora, when in fact, "Cassis wine has no

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[63] These observations are based on reports issued by both SOPEXA and the *Direction des Produits Agro-alimentaires* (DPA), part of the *Centre Français du Commerce Exterieur* (CFCE). AN 19920469/1 and 19920469/20-22.

[64] Amy Trubeck, *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[65] Angela Tregear and Matthew Gorton, "Geographic Origin as a Branding Tool for Agri-food Producers," *Society and Economy* 27, No. 3 (2005): 399-414.

[66] Gade.

identifiable aromatic character, partly because of the kinds of grapes used, but mainly because the act of blending neutralizes it."[67] However, as Elizabeth Barham has argued, applying Karl Polanyi's concept of "embeddedness," it is precisely the incorporation of subjective social and cultural "non-market values," which sustains and legitimizes the market values of AOC products.[68] In this way, the tensions between objective and subjective standards, cultural and environmental influences, artisanal traditions and brand recognition, effectively represent the process of negotiation between consumers, farmers, chefs, food critics and others that determines the total value and meaning ascribed to AOC goods.

Although the term "terroir" had long been used as a technical term in French viticulture, until recently it mainly referred to soil conditions and possibly extended to climate and the natural environment. According to Barham, the expansion of the definition of terroir beyond environmental and geological factors to emphasize historical and cultural "human" factors became commonly accepted only in the late twentieth century.[69] Moreover, Marion Demossier argues that the shift to a more cultural notion of terroir in the Burgundy wine industry is a direct local response to globalization.[70] The term's expansion in meaning and usage was one part of the rise of traditionalism and localism as national gastronomic ideals discussed throughout this dissertation. Consequently, AOC products could become the ideal ambassadors for the rebranded French gastronomy and hold a significance that went far beyond economics. The domestic

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[67] Gade, 855.

[68] Elizabeth Barnham, 130–132.

[69] Barnham, 133.

[70] Marion Demossier, "Beyond *terroir:* territorial construction, hegemonic discourses, and French wine culture," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17 (2011): 685-705.

production and consumption of these products fostered a sense of sharing in and preserving the national heritage, while exporting them promoted this national image abroad.

However, while the significance of terroir in French AOC products would appear to derive from the local cultural traditions' relation to the local environment, I would argue that, as commercial goods, their ultimate meaning and value are negotiated and defined through a global dialogue with consumers. The "Frenchness" of a product is constructed as much by its purchaser as its producer. For example, American cheeses are typically identified according to generic varieties or brand names while French cheeses are identified by place of origin. This would seem to be evidence of two different national cultures that value cheese in different ways. On closer inspection, it would be more accurate to say that there are two categories of cheese (American and French) that the global market values differently. It does not indicate that American and French consumers necessarily have fundamentally different views on cheese. American supermarkets carry a range of imported cheeses such as AOC Roquefort or AOC Gruyere that cost several times the price of generic, American-made "blue" or "Swiss" cheese. In fact, Americans place a higher value (price) on "authentic" terroir-based French cheeses than even French consumers do. And one must only witness the great quantities of cheap, pre-shredded, industrial "Emmental" dominating the cheese section of French supermarkets to see that French consumers, like Americans, love to cover everything in bland melted cheese![71] The stereotypical images of sophisticate French palates and crass American banality, then, are projected onto each national population by their products as much as the other way around. On a broader level, it follows that the close association of French gastronomy with terroir, rather than being the

[71] There are also pricey artisanal types of Emmental, including an AOC in Switzerland where there is a region called Emmental, but in France, "Emmental" is a generic term for what Americans would call "Swiss" cheese. Its quality and price vary widely, but most of it very inexpensive. This also demonstrates that even in France place names may be appropriated as generic names for foods.

product of a uniquely French worldview, is actually produced by the way the world views France. French people and the French state remain the most actively and personally invested participants in this process, but they are hardly the only interested parties.

In the 1990s, the French state was very active in pursing international recognition for its place-based product labeling schemes like AOC, in order to promote and protect valuable French exports from foreign competition. In order to accomplish this, of course, other countries' products would have to be allowed similar protections. France relished the opportunity to share its conceptual and institutional model upon which the proud success of its AOC products depended. What was initially a pursuit of protectionism and an assertion of cultural particularism, also became an opportunity to reignite French cultural *rayonnement* and enlighten the world about the pleasures of terroir. It also meant regaining some French influence in shaping the global economy to better suit French exports and to stem the tide of globalization's homogenizing tendencies. Thus, France began to pursue the development of integrated international systems of protections for geographical indications along the lines of its own AOC model.

France's first success in this endeavor came during the 1992 renegotiation of the CAP. Not only had the old CAP long disproportionately favored large farms over small ones, it had similarly failed to provide much support to areas that were ill-suited to large-scale industrial farming. In his speech before the National Assembly, Louis Mermaz briefly noted, "the CAP reforms include a set of important 'accompanying' measures concerning quality, recognition of AOCs, labels, and origin certificates, essential assets for French agriculture."[72] A few minutes later, he explained further:

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[72] Assemblée Nationale, "Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mercredi 24 Juin 1992," 2734.

> The recognition at the [European] Community level of quality certifications [*signes de qualité*], notably AOCs and geographic indications of provenance, ought to ensure both protection and a shot of dynamism for agricultural production in disadvantaged areas: cheeses of course, but also quality meats.[73]

Less than three weeks after Mermaz's speech, the European Communities officially adopted Council Regulation 2081/92 providing the legal framework for an integrated European system regulating the use of geographic indications for food products that would work in concert with existing national systems such as AOC in France.[74]

As a welcome opportunity to divert attention from its perceived failure in the CAP negotiations, Mermaz's ministry issued a press release touting the new Council Regulation as the "fruit of France's repeated appeals," and said it would "protect and promote the quality of traditional products" against "unfair competition."[75] Not only would this prohibit foreign competitors from appropriating protected place names and raise the profile of many local French products, it was also an opportunity for France to provide leadership and promote French gastronomic ideals. The press release concluded,

> The objective of this regulation that guarantees our gastronomic and agricultural heritage [patrimoine agro-alimentaire] is not to homogenize products within the [European] Community, but to valorize and privilege different agricultural specificities and practices in each country. Moreover, it represents a logic of agricultural production that refuses to base competitiveness only on productivism.[76]

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[73] Assemblée Nationale, "Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mercredi 24 Juin 1992," 2737.

[74] "Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 of 14 July 1992 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs," *Official Journal of the European Communities* L 208, (July 24, 1992), 1-8.

[75] "Communiqué de Presse: le conseil de ministres de l'agriculture de la communauté reconnait les politiques de la qualité," July 15, 1992. AN 19930194/1. For an analysis of competing interpretations of the meaning of "distortion of competition" in European law, see: Francis Snyder, "Ideologies of Competition in European Community Law," *The Modern Law Review* 52, no. 2 (March 1989): 149-178.

[76] "Communiqué de Presse: le conseil de ministres de l'agriculture de la communauté reconnait les politiques de la qualité," July 15, 1992. AN 19930194/1.

France understood that the race toward ever-greater productivity was not only dangerous, but had become a losing battle for many French farmers. However, France saw that it could thrive in a global market where the objectives were no longer efficiency and standardization but quality, diversity, and tradition. In this way, France reinvented its *rayonnement*. It was still pursuing the international adoption of French ideals, but the ideals themselves had changed. They were no longer universal standards of taste and civilization but were universalist only in the sense of mutual respect for cultural differences, localized traditions, and diversity.

Following the successful implementation of a European system protecting geographical indications, the European Union (no doubt at the behest of France) began consistently lobbying for a similar global registry of protecting such place-oriented products. During the GATT and later WTO negotiations, the United States has been the leading opponent of giving such a registry any binding authority. Powerful interests in the U.S.—for instance, the makers of "California Champagne"—have pressured policymakers to resist any further restrictions on geographical indications. Moreover, U.S. law, which has traditionally dealt with geographical indications in terms of privately held trademarks, has been another obstacle. However, American consumers and some parts of American the food industry have increasingly come to see the value of protecting and regulating the use of geographical indications. In recent years, the U.S. has proven willing to accept some stricter restrictions, such as on labeling on wine and spirits. France's reinvented gastronomic *rayonnement* shines on.[77]

As AOC products have proven more and more lucrative for France in both domestic and foreign markets, the number and variety of AOC products has expanded dramatically, to include

[77] For an Economic analysis of the contemporary international debate over geographic indications, see: Tim Josling, "The War on *Terroir*: Geographical Indications as a Transatlantic Trade Conflict," *Journal of Agricultural Economics* 57, no. 3 (2006): 337-363. On the potential influence of AOC in the United States, see: Amy B. Trubek and Sarah Bowen, "Creating the Taste of Place in the United States: can we learn from the French?," *GeoJournal* 73 (2008): 23-30.

not just wine and cheese, but olive oil, lentils, even lavender. But because AOC products have to meet strict standards and present "objective" evidence proving their historical, agricultural, and geographical legitimacy as truly local and traditional, it can be difficult to identify qualifying foods and substantiate their local permanence and specificity. What was needed was a scientifically rigorous inventory of all of the traditional foods of France.

The *Inventaire du Patrimoine Culinaire*

In 1990, the Conseil National des Arts Culinaires (CNAC) was founded at the behest of the Minster of Culture, Jack Lang. The renowned chef, Alain Senderens, would serve as CNAC's first president.[78] During its decade-long existence, CNAC undertook a variety of projects such as the still-running "Semaine du goût" ("Taste Week") that, each year, organizes a national week of gastronomic activities mostly for school children.[79] One of the CNAC's most ambitious projects was commissioned by Lang in 1989; the *Inventaire du Patrimoine Culinaire* was a region-by-region inventory of all of the traditional food products of France.

A similar project had just been carried out between 1987 and 1989 for the Southern Alps area.[80] That project had been explicitly oriented toward economic development more than the preservation of cultural heritage. Still, the authors were ambivalent about modernization:

> Especially in the past twenty years, the evolution of agricultural production, the industrialization of food processing, the development mass consumption, and the transformation of consumer behavior has led to the standardization of products

[78] An organization known as the *Centre* National des Arts Culinaires (CNAC) lead by Jean Ferniot was established around 1986, although I have not been able to determine the exact relationship between that CNAC and the *Conseil* National des Arts Culinaire (also CNAC) that managed the *Inventaire* project.

[79] See the event's current website: www.legout.com

[80] Jean François Robert, Christine Escallier, and Gilles Desjardins, "Inventaire du Patrimoine Culinaire des Alps du Sud," CETTAL, 1989. For a brief summary, see: "Inventaire du Patrimoine Culinaire des Alps du Sud," PortEthno, accessed November 5, 2014, http://www.culture.gouv.fr/mpe/carto/fiches/232.htm.

> and the disappearance of diversity in numerous sectors including, notably, those of cuisine and cheeses.[81]

In its effort to "reconcile the cultural and the economic," the project operated under the assumption that preserving tradition had an important cultural value, but was fundamentally at odds with economic sustainability and profitability which depended on industrial efficiency. [82] The way this project sought to respond to this dilemma was to develop ways of adapting modern industrial techniques to the production of traditional products. What had not yet become readily apparent was that consumers might be willing to pay more for inefficiently produced traditional goods if their authenticity could be verified.

When the nation-wide *Inventaire* got underway in the early 1990s, however, it took a more traditionalistic stance, focusing on the need to protect artisanal products and traditional dishes *from* modernization and industrialization. Because it was helmed by anthropologists and historians, the project took a more academic approach. The end product was a book series: one volume for each of France's regions detailing all of the food products therein that were verifiably authentic, local and traditional. The first volume issued was for France's northernmost region, Nord pas de Calais, in 1992, while the last (to date) appeared in 2012, and was for the Centre region. As of 2013, only the island of Réunion (and Mayotte which was only established as region in 2011) is still awaiting its inventory—an omission that did not prevent the author of the preface to the Région Centre edition from celebrating "the privilege of bringing to a close this collection of all the culinary treasures of metropolitan France."[83]

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[81] Robert, Escallier, and Desjardins, 1

[82] Robert, Escallier, and Desjardins, 2.

[83] Francis Chevrier, preface to *Région Centre: Produits du terroir et recettes traditionnelles*, (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 2012), 9.

In order for a food product to be included in the inventory, it had to meet six criteria.[84] First of all had to be sold commercially in some quantity, however small. Secondly, it required a verifiable history going back at least fifty years.[85] Third, it had to have an established association with its place of production. Fourth, the product needed to have some level of notoriety, even if limited. Fifth, it needed to adhere to (mostly) unchanging traditional production methods passed down from earlier generations. Lastly, it had to be the product of a unique local *savoir-faire*. While these criteria did allow for some variation and evolution over time, the objective was clearly the documentation and preservation of traditional products and means of production and the valorization of continuity with the distant past. In this way, it bore the influence of contemporary sociological assumptions that pre-modern, "traditional" cultures were essentially isolated, static, and integrated as a self-contained social system. By this logic, if researchers could only peel back the layers of contamination by modernization—how many decades or centuries was a matter of considerable debate—they could access the "authentic" local traditions.

Despite the collection's decidedly cultural and academic focus and lack of interest in modernizing production methods, the inventory's economic potential did not go unnoticed by the Ministry of Agriculture. In an internal memo to Louis Mermaz, the "General Director of Alimentation," Jean-François Guthmann, acknowledged the cultural importance of preserving gastronomic traditions that were being eroded by "perpetual innovation and the standardization of consumption habits."[86] However, Guthmann understood the Ministry of Agriculture's interest in the project to be primarily economic. He wrote,

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[84] "La Method," in *Pays-de-la-Loire: Produits du terroir et recettes traditionnelles* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 27-29.

[85] Loïc Bienassis, "Quelle carte pour quel territoire? Impossibles et nécessaires : les inventaires du patrimoine alimentaire," *Food & History* 9, no. 2 (2011): 143.

[86] Jean-François Guthmann, "Note pour le Ministre." AN 19930194/14.

> The inventory will constitute a point of departure for operations aimed at developing and valorizing our production. It will enable a range of actors to better select products meeting the criteria of authenticity and typicality that consumers are taking into account more and more. In each region, a pro-active policy of information and promotion could be enacted to revive and develop the manufacture of the products inventoried by encouraging collective actions such as forming producer cooperatives, creating collective brands and logos, and creating platforms for commercialization […][87]

Guthmann explicitly placed the *Inventaire* in the same context as the contemporaneous effort to develop the European system of protections for geographical indications discussed above, and clearly envisioned the potential development of more AOC products as one of the major benefits of the inventory.

Like the authors of the Southern Alps' inventory, Guthmann emphasized integrating traditional products into the modern, global market in order to ensure their economic viability. However, the key difference in his approach was his emphasis on modernizing not production but marketing, both in France and abroad. Rather than attempting to forge an unholy alliance between modern industrial technology and artisanal traditions, the new approach capitalized on consumers' dissatisfaction with industrial food production and instead proposed marketing truly artisanal products that could be authenticated by the *Inventaire*.

However, if part of the impetus for the *Inventaire* was to celebrate, indeed to sell, traditional French culinary heritage on the global market, the project's authors left little doubt about the ownership of this heritage. If the word *patrimoine* now refers to a sort of collective cultural inheritance that might even extend beyond the nation—as in UNESCO's "world heritage"—it should be recalled that the original literal meaning of the word is "inheritance from one's father." This notion of ownership by right of blood still lurks beneath the surface of the discourse of *patrimoine*. As the President of the Regional Council of Pays de Loire, Olivier

[87] Guthmann.

Guichard, recalled, "In the word "*patrimoine*," there is that capital idea of heritage: *patrimoine* is that common inheritance from our ancestors."[88] But how far did the inclusiveness of this collective "our" really extend? At the most local level, the project celebrated each region's unique identity. The series' title also suggested a certain amount of shared national ownership in all of France's gastronomic traditions. The phrase "inventaire du patrimoine culinaire *de la* France" (as opposed to "*de* France") implies possession rather the merely origin. Foreigners were welcome and encouraged to appreciate and enjoy the culinary treasures of France through tourism or importation, but they could never possess or identify with them as a French person could. Such implications were more than academic, since establishing the historical authenticity and reputation of French products was a necessary first step in prohibiting other countries from (re)producing them, as Guthmann noted in connecting the *Inventaire* to developing AOC products.

Despite the possessive and protective attitude toward particular French culinary traditions implicit in the inventory, the architects of the project welcomed the opportunity to carry out France's universalizing mission of *rayonnement* by exporting the French model for others to follow in cataloguing their own traditions. Once the inventories of the French provinces were underway, the CNAC members then helped spearhead a Europe-wide inventory. The organization that oversaw that project, called Euro-Terroirs, just happened to be based in Paris and overseen by Alexandre Lazareff, the director of the CNAC. While only a few countries'

[88] Olivier Guichard, preface to *Pays-de-la-Loire: Produits du terroir et recettes traditionnelles* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 7.

inventories were ever published commercially, in 1996 a three-volume complete inventory of all twelve original members of the EU was produced.[89]

The European inventory closely followed the methodology established by the French inventory, using the same six criteria (described using nearly identical language) for determining whether to include a given a food product. On a more ideological level, Europe also embraced the paradoxical unity-through-diversity model of cultural identity that the French inventory had championed. One of the explicit goals of the European inventory stated by Lazareff was to "show that there exists a European taste identity." Retreating from but not necessarily negating the possible Eurocentric or even racial implications of that statement, Lazareff quickly limited the common "European" trait to "a willingness in each member state to preserve its roots, its heritage, and above all its differences, along with the general European dietary proclivity for typical, meaningful products."[90] Much like France's own rebranded national identity composed of many diverse regional cultures united by a common appreciation of tradition and gastronomy, the point was not to establish a common European identity through shared customs or origins, so much as through a shared commitment to celebrating Europe's diverse array of food cultures. Yet such values were not necessarily benign. In favoring conformity to local traditions, constructing this "European taste identity" also necessarily meant suppressing innovation, hybridity, and individuality.

Although France's *Inventaire* was not the first such project attempted, even in France, it did kick off a wave of similar projects, not only in Europe but around the world. The historian (and director of France's most recent regional inventory), Loïc Bienassis, has explored some of

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[89] GEIE Euroterroirs, *Inventaire des produits alimentaires traditionnels des régions de l'Union Européenne,* Tome 1-3 (Unpublished, 1996).

[90] Alexandre Lazareff, "Avant-Propos" in GEIE Euroterroirs, *Inventaire des produits alimentaires traditionnels des régions de l'Union Européenne,* Tome 1 (Unpublished, 1996).

the problems inherent in all food inventories. First of all, food practices are not only intangible but are ever changing and endlessly varied, even when they are understood to be "authentic" and "traditional." Indeed, even the very definitions of "authenticity" and "tradition" are themselves historical constructs. On the other hand, by imposing more rigorously objective universal criteria defined by the researchers, an inventory may undermine its own purpose of keeping traditions alive by instead petrifying them and removing local participation from defining its own culture. Moreover, he notes the potential complications and interference resulting from the economic and governmental interests at stake in choosing certain products over others as "authentic" parts of the local "heritage." Ultimately, however, Bienassis—who oversaw the inventory for the Centre region in 2012—argues that each inventory must acknowledge these limitations, and proceed with a certain measure of flexibility, modesty, and self-conscious subjectivity in their "impossible yet necessary" effort to catalogue elusive culinary traditions.[91]

Yet if Bienassis admits the impossibility of capturing and enumerating fluid and subjective traditions as a problem that makes the inventory projects difficult, he does not fully address the more fundamental assumptions motivating the inventories in the first place. For example, Bienassis examines the problem of who has the most legitimate claim to defining heritage: the local population, the researchers, or global consumers and tourists. Yet by neglecting to question the categories of "local" and "outsider" themselves is a significant oversight in countries like France where mobility and migration have long been the norm. Would a Parisian "returning" to the village of her grandparents or a child born in that same village to Vietnamese immigrant parents constitute part of the "local" population? If neither fit the ideal, are their cultural traditions and experiences to be disregarded as inauthentic and unworthy of

[91] Bienassis, 146.

being documented? Bienassis tackles the "impossibility" of determining objectively whether one traditional product or another is actually "traditional" and "local." But he treats these as primarily methodological problems without addressing what is at stake when the state chooses to valorize specific types of "traditional" and "local" culture over other kinds of cultural practices and identities. What are the implications of treating innovation, individuality, hybridity, and universality as inconvenient obstacles rather than legitimate cultural values in their own right?

On clue to understanding why each of these inventories privileged the local and the traditional over other values is in how they framed their objectives in relation to a broader historical context. On the back cover of each volume of France's regional inventories, the project was positioned as an act of resistance in "the age of the banalization of taste."[92] The stated goal of most of these inventories was to preserve the memory and even the practice of a traditional way of life from the "homogenizing" forces of modern industry and globalization. This context did not only shape cultural perceptions and values in the present, but also helped construct a romanticized vision of the past that reinforced the contemporary gastronomic ideals. For, even if in the past there might have been a greater diversity of food from one region to the next, it hardly follows that cuisine was any less "banal" for the people living in that time. Prior to the twentieth century, the limitations of trade and travel would have meant that only a privileged few could actually experience that diversity. What else if not the banality of traditional local food drove French cooks to import spices or invent new recipes in the first place?

Still, my intention here is not to deny claims about "heritage" as false or hypocritical, but indeed to examine how such constructs are meaningful and useful in the service of social and political interests. This does not, in itself, mean that such claims are nefarious less "genuine" for

[92] The phrase "l'heure de la banalisation du goût" appeared on the back cover of each edition of the French inventory (see citations above), as well as in the foreword to the European inventory.

the people who make them or believe them. "Tradition" and "identity" are *always* constructed for a purpose in a certain context, but attempts to strip away all such bias and contingency either to reveal the essential kernel of "a culture" or else to prove its fallacy, miss a great deal about what makes culture meaningful.

Conclusion

In his first column of 1993—his forty-first and final year at *Le Monde*—Robert Courtine wrote, "Have we reached the end for traditional regional specialties? Because of the new [European regulations on geographical indications] intended to protect our gourmet terroirs, perhaps not."[93] Finally Courtine's lifelong battle against modernists and cosmopolitans in the name of France's diverse and rustic *cuisine de terroir* was bearing fruit. With an air of ironic vindication, he noted that the dish served by a renowned French chef at a recent European gastronomic summit was a humble coq au vin. Courtine happily concluded, "Let us celebrate the European Union of casseroles [*l'Europe des casseroles*]—not that of states but of terroirs."[94]

In the twenty-first century, France continues to be one of the world's leading producers of basic agricultural commodities and to pursue available protections, subsidies, and advantages for these sectors in trade negotiations. But the partial shift in focus toward quality and distinctiveness in French food products ensured a significant diversification of France's agricultural portfolio. No longer did France have "all of its eggs in one basket," as Fottorino had put it.[95] Seeking out ways to promote, protect and utilize more traditional local products was important especially in remote areas with difficult terrain unsuited to conventional, large-scale

[93] La Reynière [Robert Courtine], "L'Europe des casseroles," *Le Monde,* January 30, 1993.

[94] La Reynière, "L'Europe des casseroles."

[95] Fottorino.

farming. The unconventional production methods once necessitated by harsh conditions became highly valued by consumers who increasingly prized their uniqueness, authenticity, and sheer spectacle.

Each of the different initiatives discussed in this chapter found new ways of taking advantage of France's redefined gastronomic identity at the end of the twentieth century. Whether the profits were economic, cultural, or both, each of these projects was successful in enriching French food and agriculture. At the same time they directed French policy in a new direction, avoiding some of the pitfalls and obsolescence of former policies built on the pillars of modernization and universalism. Yet in emphasizing French traditionalism and particularity, these policies also raise troubling questions that have yet to be answered.

First of all, in emphasizing the value of adherence to artisanal traditions and timeless flavors, there is a relative disincentive to develop new innovations in production or product offerings. In actual practice, as with AOC wines, producers have been allowed to utilize certain industrial methods and product innovations, so long as they do not upset the traditional essence of a given product. Ideally, this flexibility is a potential way of maximizing both quality and efficiency. However, considering the proven malleability of the notion of tradition and the general lack of knowledge of wine production among consumers, producers could potentially exploit the AOC label as an ostensibly objective marker of tradition, while utilizing industrial innovations to cut corners in order to maximize profits. Moreover, there is little incentive to develop innovative methods and products that would actually *improve* quality, and thus one wonders whether casting modernization as the "banalization of taste" is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Another question has to do with the potential power dynamics produced by the valorization of locality, tradition, and heritage as markers of difference and identity. While it would be a premature and unfair leap to take these ideals as warning signs of a return to the violent racial and ethnic essentialism of the first half of the twentieth century, the ascension of any set of ideals to dominance has the potential for inequity. How does this gastronomic worldview make room for individuals and communities whose identities and cultural traditions have been shaped by migration, hybridity, creativity or cosmopolitanism?

Finally, it bears asking whether twenty-first century diners really want to "return" to their own roots or if what they really want is to be able to experience everyone else's. As discussed above in relation to tourism, it is often apparent that many people are uncomfortable with their heritage and identity being exploited for others' amusement. Diversity, after all, only exists if is experienced through mobility and cross-cultural interaction, processes that necessarily involve relations of power and economic interest. Moreover, each unique gastronomic culture only exists as part of shared transnational or global experience. But at the same time, contemporary notions of culinary "authenticity" rely on cultural essentialisms that deny the influence of those same transcultural interactions. How this apparent paradox is navigated in the future will shape far more than what we eat.

CHAPTER FIVE:

"Couscous Républicain": Food in Post-colonial Identity Politics[1]

'No mama, we are the ones who need the French. They are known around the world for their gastronomy!'
'Who says so?'
'They do.'
'But they don't even know the difference between a takneta… *and a* sellou!'
-Fatéma Hal[2]

In 1998, the three elderly Breton women known as *les Bigoudènes* (see Chapter Three) returned with a new television commercial for the Tipiak brand of prepackaged foods. The scene opens with two of the women blindfolded and seated at a large table in the dining room of an old country house with exposed stone walls and wooden beams, with one asking, "What are you playing at, Berthe?" Berthe appears, placing before them a large bowl piled high with a steaming, golden mound of food, saying "Taste this for me and guess what it is." Taking a bite, the first woman smiles and says "Mmm, that's not from our neck of the woods. There are spices in it!" The other exclaims, "It tastes good, it really spices things up! [*Ça ravigote!*]" Berthe

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[1] In this chapter, the term "couscous" will be used to refer to both the product itself and complete dishes in which it is the central ingredient. Technically speaking, in French, English, and Arabic, the term "couscous" primarily refers to the grain-like staple made of tiny balls of semolina dough. However, in everyday French "couscous" is more often used for a complete dish that includes couscous along with a stew of meats and/or vegetables, and a spicy broth. Often, to distinguish the actual couscous itself from the overall dish the terms *semoule* (semolina) or *graine* (seed/grain) are used, even though it is technically neither. The cookbook author and restaurateur, Fatéma Hal, chides her French readers: "Europeans know next to nothing about couscous. They confuse couscous with semolina. Just try cooking semolina as you would couscous. You could eat the resulting cake, but it certainly will not be couscous!" Similarly, the American columnist and best-selling cookbook writer, Mark Bittman, reminds his readers that "couscous is not actually [an intact] grain but a form of pasta," which, while being rather Eurocentric, is probably the best way to explain couscous to American readers. Traditionally, North-African couscous was produced by a complex process of wetting semolina flour and rolling small balls by hand. Today, the vast majority of couscous is produced in large factories, hence Bittman's de facto description of couscous as "pasta." Industrially produced raw couscous can be prepared much like the traditional home-made couscous, by steaming it several times. However, the couscous most commonly available today in Europe and the United States is a precooked, "instant" variety that can be made simply by adding hot water. In France, couscous is even sold in cans, fully cooked and hydrated and ready to eat. Fatéma Hal, *Les Saveurs et les gestes: Cuisines et traditions du Maroc* (Paris: Editions Stock, 1996), 117; Mark Bittman, *The Best Recipes in the World: More Than 1,000 International Dishes to Cook at Home* (New York: Broadway Books, 2005), 526.

[2] Fatéma Hal, *Fille des frontières* (Paris: Philippe Rey, 2011), 276.

replies, "It's a good recipe, eh?" and her friend exclaims, "And for once, we are not the ones they've stolen it from!" Finally, the product is revealed to be "couscous flavored with spices of the world."[3] Rather than embodying French culinary authority as they had in previous commercials, here the *Bigoudènes* represent a good-natured provincial naiveté. Unlike crepes or scallops, the appeal of couscous is not meant to be its traditional familiarity but its exotic foreignness.

And yet, France and North Africa (also called the Maghreb) had been intertwined in an intimate history of colonialism, war, and immigration for the better part of two centuries, and by 1998, couscous was anything but unfamiliar to most French consumers.[4] Besides the numerous North-African restaurants dotting France's urban landscape, couscous had achieved the quotidian banality of the school cafeteria and the supermarket canned-food aisle. Couscous's place near the top of polls measuring France's favorite foods became an oft-repeated trope in French in even foreign popular media.[5] As early as 1970, an article in *Le Monde* called couscous a French "national dish."[6] In fact in 1997, a year prior to the Tipiak commercial, the French Minister of

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[3] "Graines de couscous parfumé aux épices du monde," Tipiak, October 12, 1998, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB973830023/graines-de-couscous-parfumee-aux-epices-du-monde-couscous-video.html.

[4] Throughout this chapter I will use the terms "North Africa" and "Maghreb" interchangeably as they are used colloquially in France to refer to the northwestern region of Africa corresponding primarily to the countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

[5] The accuracy and methodology of such *sondages* (opinion polls) is less important the way that the prominence of couscous in favorite-food polls became a much repeated trope laden with political significance from the 1980s onward. For the American example of this favorite-dish-poll trope, see: Charlotte Puckette and Olivia Kiang-Snaije, *The Ethnic Paris Cookbook* (New York: DK Publishing, 2007), 12-13. For examples of references to a poll placing couscous among the favorite French dishes, see: Enrico Macias' New Year's Eve wish for 1985, "Réveillon aux Champs Elysées," December 31, 1984 episode of *Champs Elysées* (FR3). Jean-Claude Ribaut, "Le couscous des familles," *Le Monde*, January 18, 1995; Veroinique Cauhape, "La couscoussière et la "gsâa" d'Abdi," *Le Monde*, September 25, 1999; Fatéma Hal, *Le Livre du Couscous* (Paris: Editions Stock, 2000), 18. See also: Pascal Ory, *L'identité passe à table* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013), 74-75.

[6] J.A., "Bibliographie," *Le Monde,* 12 October 1970.

the Interior, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, touted couscous as a "French dish" in order to argue for a more "republican" immigration policy:

> I believe that France must live on. But I do not have a rigid conception: couscous, to my eyes, has become a French dish. Unlike assimilation, which implies the abandonment of all one's roots and references, integration proceeds through a succession of [immigrants'] contributions that enrich [the country]. French identity is progressive.[7]

While both Chevènement and Tipiak were attempting to "sell" couscous to the French people, they employed ostensibly opposite images of the dish as "French" and "foreign," respectively. However, Chevènement's argument would have little political significance if couscous were not generally known to be foreign. And Tipiak's evocation of couscous' exotic unfamiliarity is premised on an implicit valorization of French openness and curiosity.

This chapter seeks to understand the relationship between such different notions of couscous and its place in (or outside) French culture, particularly in relation to debates about immigration and the legacy of colonialism. It argues that couscous became such a powerful and contested political symbol precisely *because of* its ambiguous dual status as simultaneously one of the most well-known and beloved foods in France and one of the most celebrated emblems of a foreign North African culture. Couscous became what anthropologist Joëlle Bahloul has called a "boundary keeper." It allowed for dialogue and affinity across cultures while reinforcing the very distinctions that its "foreign" appeal bridged.[8] Couscous is thus an ideal site for observing

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[7] Philippe Bernard and Nathaniel Herzberg, "M. Chevènement: pour une 'politique républicain' de l'immigration," *Le Monde,* June 26, 1997.

[8] Bahloul used this term to describe the role of beef in the diet of Jews in colonial Algeria, "allowing the protection of the religious order while reforming it and permitting cultural dialogue with the entity on the other side of the boundary—in this case French cuisine and culture." Joëlle Bahloul, On "Cabbages and Kings": The Politics of Jewish Identity in Post-Colonial French Society and Cuisine," in *Food in Global History,* ed. Raymond Grew (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 98.

how food functions historically not only as a space of cultural domination and resistance but also of negotiation and compromise.

Many "exotic" foods have become popular in France in the late twentieth century, including Asian and Caribbean cuisines brought to France through colonialism and post-colonial immigration to France. Each of these carries a particular symbolic weight, marked both by broad racial and ethnic stereotypes and the specific history of relations between France and these regions. Vietnamese food has a different "foreignness" than Antillean food because Vietnam was violently severed from France's national narrative while Martinique and Guadeloupe were official absorbed as departments of France, though they too usually remain "exotic" in the eyes of the metropole.[9] Yet while any "foreign" or "exotic" food may become imbued with political significance, couscous stands apart as *the* archetypical culinary embodiment of France's post-colonial multicultural predicament. Its duality as both national and foreign is unparalleled in both its familiarity as an "exotic" food and as a symbol of France's most intimate and controversial immigrant population. Perhaps only the attention garnered by curry as a symbol British multiculturalism can compare, yet arguably, republican France has struggled even more with the idea of a multicultural nation than Britain, especially when it comes to North Africa where France's failed investment in universalism remains painful.[10]

Both Chevènement's republican universalism and Tipiak's ethnic particularism as myths of French national identity are really, as Paul Silverstein, puts it, "two sides of the same euro.

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[9] On representations of "exotic" foods in the French media, see: Faustine Régnier, *L'exotisme culinaire: Essai sur les saveurs de l'Autre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004); Faustine Régnier, "Spicing Up the Imagination: Culinary Exoticism in France and Germany, 1930-1990," *Food & Foodways* 11 (2003): 189-214.

[10] On curry: Janet Mitchell, "Food acceptance and acculturation," *Journal of Foodservice* 17 (2006): 77-83.

Each implies the existence of the other within the historical construction of the nation-state."[11] As Silverstein argues, scholars must resist viewing universalism, multiculturalism, and ethnic essentialism as either separate ideological choices or as a hierarchy with one subsuming the others.[12] Nor should post-colonial attitudes be reduced to either a continuation or break with colonialism. Rather, universalism and multiculturalism, ethno-nationalism and imperialism should be understood as competing arguments engaged a perpetual dialogue within a field of power relations reaching across national borders and historical periodizations. Yet it is because of this historical and geographical ambiguity that these debates become sites for the construction and reification of myths of national identity that try to make sense of the world.

Constructing new identities and narratives may entail erasing past ones. Ernest Renan said, "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of the nation […since] deeds of violence […] took place at the origin of all political formations."[13] Few "deeds of violence" have been so forcefully suppressed during the post-colonial period as those of colonization, colonialism, revolution, and decolonization in Algeria. Both the Tipiak commercial and Chevènement's comments implied that couscous was newly arrived on French soil from a distant foreign land. They ignored the fact that for more than one hundred years, as François Mitterrand said, Algeria *was* France. As Todd Shepard argues,

> By forgetting that Algeria was France, critics have ignored what the history of French Algeria and the Algerian Revolution reveals about French republicanism

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[11] Paul Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 34.

[12] Silverstein, 32. See also: Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992), 5.

[13] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" trans. Martin Thom, in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 45.

> and liberal citizenship. This has made it easier to ignore that modern colonialism was a republican project.[14]

As this chapter will show, this selective remembering and forgetting did more than whitewash French history or rehabilitate French republicanism, it was also essential to both controlling "immigrants" and recasting French culture as bounded and unique in the global age. Yet the construction of national identities and narratives is never entirely top-down, it involves the agency of a variety different people and interests carving out their own "subjectivities" within the evolving cultural context.[15]

This chapter examines representations of couscous across a range of French media. It begins by surveying different myths about the cultural and geographic origins of couscous that served different interests and ideologies in the colonial and post-colonial contexts. Next, it traces the evolution of representations of couscous in television commercials from the 1970s through the 1990s in relation to the tumultuous history of immigration and post-colonial identity politics in this period. However, as instructive as it can be to examine such elements of a "dominant culture," it is important to avoid the trap of inadvertently reinforcing the "national interest" as a reified historical actor. Thus, the second half of this chapter focuses on the agency of four individuals who all could be considered immigrants: one was a French colonist in Morocco, while the others, a Moroccan Arab, an Algerian Berber (Kabyle), and an Algerian Jewish *pied-noir*, all came to France from North Africa.[16] Despite their differing careers—cookbook authors,

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[14] Todd Shepard, *Then Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 271.

[15] Silverstein, 5-8.

[16] These terms are each historically constructed "ethnic" identities necessarily fraught with complications. With that said, most Arabic-speaking (the majority population) in North Africa generally identify as "Arabs." By contrast, those who speak a Berber language usually identify as "Berbers" who are considered the "indigenous" people of North Africa. "Kabyles" are a specific group of Berbers who live in a part of Algeria known as Kabylie. Both groups mostly practice Islam. "*Pieds-noirs*" were the "European" population of colonial North Africa, of which only

restaurateurs, and a pop singer—each participated in constructing, contesting, and negotiating national myths, collective identities, and the meaning of couscous in post-colonial France. However, while they each demonstrate the power of individual agency, their struggles also reveal how national myths and identities tend to concentrate power and serve its interests at the expense of those constrained by or excluded from the established order.

Origin Myths

Couscous has been known in France, however vaguely, at least since François Rabelais wrote of "coscotons à la moresque" (Moorish couscous) in the sixteenth century.[17] However, sustained French interest in the dish really began during the colonial period of 1830-1962. Couscous restaurants first appeared in France after the First World War, serving mostly North African men who had come to France to work.[18] But couscous really became widely popular in metropolitan France with the dramatic reversal of the flow of migrations across the Mediterranean following decolonization. Millions of former residents of French North Africa, often entire families, permanently relocated to France. Those who were considered "Muslim" (and whose first language was usually Arabic or Berber) were categorized as "immigrants" or "refugees" even if they had previously held French citizenship.[19] By contrast, the former

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a minority were from France and the rest were generally settlers from Southern Europe and Jews who had come to North Africa at various times since antiquity.

[17] Mohamed Oubahli, "Une histoire de pâte en Méditerrannée occidental. Des pâtes arabo-berbères et de leur diffusion en Europe latine au Moyen Âge (Partie II): La France et le monde italique," *Horizons Maghrébin – le droit a la mémoire* 59 (2008): 14-29. See also: François Rabelais, *The Complete Works of François* Rabelais, trans. Donald M. Frame (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 564, 658.

[18] Hal, *Le Livre du couscous*, 16.

[19] Todd Shepard, "Excluding the *Harkis* from Repatriate Status, Excluding Muslim Algerians from French Identity," in in *Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World,* ed. Hafid Gafaïti, Patricia M. E. Lorcin, and David Troyansky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 94-114. See also: William B. Cohen, "The *Harkis*:

"European" population of colonial North Africa that included not only French colonists but most Christians and Jews regardless of ancestry, became known as *pieds-noirs* and were accepted as French citizens "returning home" but received an icy welcome as they were perceived to embody the moral and racial degeneracy of colonialism.[20]

The production of couscous had already been commercialized and industrialized in colonial Algeria by companies such as Ferrero and Ricci. After 1962, these *pied-noir*-owned companies relocated to France, and began selling their product to the European market.[21] In the post-colonial period, virtually all the couscous eaten in North Africa as well as Europe has been industrially produced. In fact, eventually most of the couscous available in Europe and North America was an instant variety that did not even require steaming. Yet Western cookbooks routinely included detailed descriptions of how to roll couscous by hand and steam it several times over the course several hours, even though such information was increasingly obsolete for modern preparations.[22] As seen throughout this dissertation, however, in the face of modernization and globalization, such "authentic" traditional culinary practices linked to specific locations or terroirs became increasingly more valued as a source of ethnic and national identity. Furthermore, during both the colonial and post-colonial periods, defining and categorizing the cultural origins and ethnic composition of North Africa was deeply implicated in maintaining the

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History and Memory," in *Algeria and France: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. Patricia M. Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 164-180.

[20] Todd Shepard, "*Pieds-Noirs, Bêtes Noires*: Anti-"European of Algeria" Racism and the Close of the French Empire," in *Algeria and France: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. Patricia M. Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 150-163.

[21] Henri Grange and Florence Barriol, "Le marché de la graine de couscous en Europe," in *Couscous, boulgour et polenta: Transformer et consommer les céréales dans le monde*, ed. Hélène Franconie, Monique Chastanet, and François Sigaut (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2010), 83-92.

[22] For example: Claudine Roden, *Arabesque: A Taste of Morocco, Turkey, and Lebanon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 24-28.

social order on both sides of the Mediterranean.[23] This investigation of the meaning and power of couscous in the post-colonial world therefore must begin by examining the popular accounts of the dish's the origins. Due to a paucity of specific historical evidence of the dish's "invention," this topic has sustained much speculation.

One theory suggests that couscous has Latin origins dating back to the Roman era when, after the fall of Carthage, parts of present-day Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya became the Roman province of Africa. Such an idea was particularly attractive to French colonialists who saw France as the inheritor of the Roman Empire and the rightful rulers of the Mediterranean. According to Peter Dunwoodie, the colonial novelist Louis Bertrand counted couscous among the many influences North Africa supposedly owed to the cultural legacy of Roman colonization two millennia earlier.[24] Drawing on Dunwoodie's analysis, Philip Dine has argued that, for Bertrand, this myth of an eternal "Latin" Mediterranean invalidated the Arab/Islamic influences in North Africa and justified the presence of "a distinct and distinctive settler race entitled to dominate the colonized territory [of North Africa] now and in future years because of its privileged status as the "natural" heirs to the glory that was Rome."[25]

This theory of couscous's "Latin" origins continued to attract adherents even after French colonialism had been largely renounced. In his 1994 cookbook *The Great Book of Couscous*, the world-traveler and food-writer, Copeland Marks, wrote:

> I find it difficult to believe that the semi-nomadic Berbers living under the Roman Empire would have learned to take wheat berries (in the desert!), crack them, save the protein-rich siftings, convert them to paste and steam them. No, I am skeptical.

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[23] Silverstein, especially Chapter 2 "Colonization and the production of Identity," 35-75.

[24] Peter Dunwoodie, *Writing French Algeria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 100-101.

[25] Philip Dine, "The French Colonial Myth of a Pan-Mediterranean Civilization," in *Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World,*11. See also: Silverstein, 60-67, 222-228.

> In my opinion the Romans are the answer and much later, the Sicilians who emigrated to the Maghreb. It was the Romans who turned Tunisia into the breadbasket for the Empire by large-scale production of wheat. With the knowledge of the preparation of pasta, from Marco Polo onward, and the explanation that couscous grains are pasta, does this not bend the theory more to Italy/Sicily than to the Berbers?[26]

Marks's Eurocentric bias is betrayed by the obvious contradictions in his story such as describing North Africa as both a "desert" and a "breadbasket," or crediting the Italians with an innate "knowledge of the preparation of pasta" in the same breath as referencing the legend of Marco Polo's discovery of this knowledge… in China. While the idea of couscous and pasta sharing a common origin seems plausible, it would have been the other way around, since pasta was introduced to Italy by Arabs in the Middle Ages at the height of Islamic hegemony over most of the Mediterranean.[27] It is perhaps no coincidence that Copeland Marks once served in the U.S. Foreign Service—the latest in a long line of self-appointed heirs to the Roman Empire and defenders of Western Civilization. In the age of the putative "clash of civilizations" between the West and the Islamic world, seemingly innocuous myths such as that of couscous's "Latin" origins may well continue to serve the interests and reproduce the cultural violence of Western imperialism.[28]

Another account of couscous's origins is precisely the one Copeland Marks dismissed: that couscous was developed by ancient Berbers and is thusly "indigenous" to North Africa. Rather than enforcing a Eurocentric/imperialistic worldview, this narrative supports a nationalistic one that idealizes the congruence of ethnicities, "their" traditions, and "their"

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[26] Copeland Marks, *The Great Book of Couscous: Classic Cuisines of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1994), 215.

[27] Massimo Montanari, "Introduction: Food Models and Cultural Identity," in *Food: A Culinary History*, ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, ed. Albert Sonnenfeld [English edition], (New York: Penguin, 1999), 191.

[28] Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

homelands. Such ethnic essentialism had played a role in French imperialism since the nineteenth century, but during the interwar years it became more prevalent in both the metropole and the colonies.[29] At the same time as Curnonsky was documenting the supposedly timeless and sedentary regional cuisines of rural France, Prosper Montagne's *Larousse Gastronomique* (1938) defined couscous thusly: "Couscous or Couscousou – Culinary specialty prepared in North Africa where it traces its origins back to the most distant past."[30]

This was also the view taken by the well-known American food writer, Paula Wolfert, whose *Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco* (1973) would, in later editions, proclaim itself "the classic work" on Moroccan cuisine. She wrote, "The one fact that no one denies is that the dish itself is Berber."[31] While not a unanimous view, the Berber myth did hold greater sway in the post-colonial period. Hadjira Mouhoub and Claudine Rabaa's *Les Aventures du couscous* (2003) is representative of the era's growing enchantment with terroir, roots, and identity:

> In the beginning there was the steppe, and upon these fertile highlands the soul of the Maghreb took shape. Maghrebi cuisine has stayed true to this primal identity [*identité première*] as it has glided unobstructed for millennia from one generation of mothers to the next. […] It speaks to us of durum wheat crushed into dry, tough semolina […] that is transformed by a ballet of hands that is at once patient and agile, into dreamily light flakes. It roots daily gestures in ancestral rites that call upon the earth, water, fire and air to achieve an alchemical transmutation. […Maghrebi] cuisine is a *cuisine de mémoire*. The aromas of even the simplest dishes bear the shadows of these nurturing women who could both preserve ancient secrets and retain the impact of cuisines that came from elsewhere to ally, for a time, with the ancient terrestrial Berber cuisine [32]

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[29] Silverstein, 35-75; Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930.*

[30] Prosper Montagné, ed., *Larousse Gastronomique* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1938), 363.

[31] Paula Wolfert, *Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco* (New York: Perennial Library, 1987), 131.

[32] Hadjira Mouhoub and Claudine Rabaa, *Les Aventures du couscous* (Paris and Arles: Actes Sud, 2003), 9-10.

Note the parallels with the similar descriptions of the regional cooking of provincial French women discussed in Chapter 2. However, while Maïté's intimate relationship with her local terroir confirmed her authentic Frenchness, the localized authenticity of North African women separated them from French culture. While this ethnocentric narrative restored and celebrated the North African cultural sovereignty that had been denied under colonial rule, it also placed North African immigrants to France in an impossible position as permanent outsiders. Moreover, while this account embraced the "indigenous" Berber traditions of the Maghreb, it downplayed the region's "Arab" identity—a politically significant implication in a time of mounting antagonisms between the West and Islam and between those identifying as Berbers and those as Arabs.

A third origin myth avoided naming any one definitive cultural origin, instead emphasizing the perpetual cultural exchange characterizing the cosmopolitan "melting pot" of the Mediterranean world.[33] Even Mouhoub and Rabaa's account of terroir and tradition above acknowledged outside influences. Since ancient times, North Africa has absorbed a succession of Phoenician, Roman, Arab, Ottoman, and French colonizers as well as waves of immigrants such as the Andalusian Moors and Sephardic Jews expelled from Iberia or the Southern European settlers that arrived with French colonization. Consequently, the glory of dishes like couscous supposedly derives from this richly diverse local heritage. Alongside the "Latin" myth discussed above, Philip Dine associates this "melting pot" with a second, "Hellenist" myth of a pan-Mediterranean civilization favored by "liberal humanist" *pied-noir* intellectuals, like Albert Camus.[34] While renouncing any racial claims of "Latin" superiority, this version portrayed an

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[33] It is noteworthy that the "melting pot" image was also adopted by the historian Gérard Noiriel for the title of his seminal work on immigration in France, *Le creuset français* (*The French Melting Pot*). Noiriel argued that metropolitan France itself had long been a cultural melting pot, but the numerous contributions of immigrants to the national culture had mostly gone unrecognized. Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

[34] Dine, 9, 14-20; Silverstein, 65-66, 226-228.

eternal Mediterranean world—exemplified by French colonial North Africa—in which different groups peacefully coexisted.

This historical outlook has informed accounts of couscous's origins found in many *pied-noir* cookbooks. For example, Aline Benayoun begins her *Casablanca Cuisine: French North African Cooking* by describing the significance of French, Spanish, Arab, and Sephardic influences on Moroccan food and especially *pied-noir* food. She does not mention Berbers at all, referring to the "native hosts" only as "Arabs," who she describes thusly: "The Arabs, of course, had been the world's leading spice merchants long before we [*pieds-noirs*] arrived in North Africa and it was they who taught us how to flavour our food."[35] This "melting pot" image simultaneously conceals the inequalities and exploitation inherent in colonial society even as it enables *pieds-noirs* to claim couscous as their "own." Consequently, Benayoun can write, "Couscous is the most traditional of all *pied-noir* dishes. Borrowed from the Arabs, it has become so much a part of our heritage that you might say that couscous is to the *pieds-noirs* what pasta is to the Italians or rice to the Chinese."[36] Benayoun freely celebrates the hybrid nature of *pied-noir* cuisine and the strong influence of their "native hosts." But by characterizing the local population as globetrotting, mercantile Arabs rather than sedentary, agrarian Berbers, Benayoun undermines their indigenous sovereignty and legitimates the *pieds-noirs* as simply the latest occupants of a fluid cultural space.

Consequently, the *pieds-noirs* have understood their evacuation of North Africa after decolonization as a deeply unjust exile. Dine explains, "Recounting the settler experience of diaspora post-1962 can all too easily turn into an Algerian colonial variation on the theme of

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[35] Aline Benayoun, *Casablanca Cuisine: French North African Cooking* (London: Serif, 1998), 14.

[36] Benayoun, 110.

Paradise Lost."[37] For example, Chantal Clabrough, a first-generation Canadian descendent of Jewish *pied-noir* immigrants, writes in her book, *A Pied Noir Cookbook: French Sephardic Cuisine From Algeria*:

> My Grandparents truly believed they were only leaving for one or two years, yet they were never able to return to Algiers. Violence, terrorist activities and a closed door to the West continue to isolate this country. Only old newspaper clippings and photos remind us of what once was: a Mediterranean paradise, if just on the surface. […] They were able to keep their identity through our customs and cuisine. They lost everything else.[38]

Clabrough situates her family's "exodus" out of Algeria within a very long Jewish history of forced migrations, yet she celebrates the culinary assets that Sephardic Jews transmitted as they were shuttled around the Mediterranean: "Sephardic cooking continues to leave its mark on Algeria. Despite the exodus of 1962, our cuisine has become part of the national cuisine."[39] Although she indicates that couscous was one of the foods existing in the Maghreb even before the Phoenicians arrived in the first century BCE, it is clear that for her the true essence of the dish derives from the full scope of its richly multicultural genealogy.[40]

It is tempting to map couscous's differing origin myths onto specific ideologies: the "Latin" myth as assimilationist (read: imperialist) universalism, the "melting pot" as "integration" or multiculturalism, the Berber myth as ethnic essentialism/nationalism. Yet it is equally important to see how each myth depends on the others. For example, the "Latin" myth resorts to the ethnic essentialism of a "Mediterranean man" in order to discredit 1500 years of Arab/Islamic "occupation" even as it champions the ancient "melting pot" of the Roman Empire.

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[37] Dine, 17.

[38] Chantal Clabrough, *A Pied Noir Cookbook: French Sephardic Cuisine From Algeria* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2005), 19-20.

[39] Clabrough, 27.

[40] Clabrough, 26.

Moreover, there are other variations besides the three myths discussed here, notably one that places the Arabs as the central protagonists in the story of couscous. This will be discussed more later in the chapter. Ultimately, each of these accounts undoubtedly bears some truth that is usually difficult to separate from fiction. But the purpose here has been to examine how three of couscous's origin myths have operated in popular discourse in relation to colonial and post-colonial cultural politics.[41]

It is equally important to consider what has been ignored or suppressed in the popular narratives of couscous. While there has been much speculation and myth-making surrounding the dish's prehistoric origins and pre-modern development, little attention has been paid to the industrialization and commercialization that actually created the modern couscous eaten everywhere in the post-colonial era. Of course, this is true of all types of food in the industrialized, modern world. For all the reasons discussed in the preceding chapters, factories, chemical formulations, and global distribution are simply not as appetizing as homemade, traditional, and local food. Yet, in the case of couscous, downplaying the influence of industrial modernity on North African food also works to obscure the history of colonialism. Industrialized couscous first emerged as a product of colonial society. The post-colonial national narratives constructed for both France and the countries of North Africa have little interest recalling the colonial past, especially in regard to this beloved "national dish." Ironically, this denial of couscous' modern production has even been the case in advertisements for highly industrialized canned and frozen couscous in post-colonial France.

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[41] One recent ethnological theory has made a strong case for couscous's local development by the indigenous people of North Africa: Marceau Gast, "Une hypothèse sur l'origine historique et culturelle du couscous," in *Couscous, boulgour et polenta*, ed. Hélène Francoine, Monique Chastanet and François Sigaut (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2010), 67-81. See also Fatéma Hal, *Le Livre du couscous,* 15-22.

Couscous in Television Commercials

Nationally broadcast television commercials seek to appeal to as broad a (national) audience as possible, while at the same time they must also meet the approval of government, business, and media elites. Consequently, they can be a useful measure of a country's "dominant" or "mainstream" culture. Obviously, commercials have a strong bias in favor of their product, but in many ways this facilitates a more clear analysis of the tone and context in which the product presented. Furthermore, commercials do not only reflect how advertisers perceive the audience, they influence and inform public attitudes as well. Thus a survey of French television ads for couscous spanning from 1970 to 1995 can provide a rich, if partial, picture of changing notions of couscous, as well as North Africa, immigration, and national identity more broadly.[42]

The rise in popularity of couscous in France coincided with the postwar explosion of canned and later frozen foods lining supermarket aisles. Already in 1962 the Garbit brand introduced the first canned couscous.[43] Within two years of the authorization of television advertising in 1968, the first commercial for "Couscous Garbit" appeared on French TV screens. The ad was simply a young man standing in the kitchen of a modern apartment standing next to a tagine and speaking to the camera with a slight North-African accent. The man claims that the couscous he makes is even better than his own mother's. Then he is interrupted by a young woman, who says, "Oh sure! He talks big, but its just Garbit! Its all in [the can]!" And finally a voice-over announcer tells us, "In just a few minutes time, you too can make couscous just like *là-bas* [down there]!" While the presence of the (unnecessary) clay tagine casts couscous as

[42] This survey is based on viewing more than fifty television videos which represent all French commercials held at the *INAthèque* audio-visual archives in Paris (Also publicly available on INA.fr website) whose catalogue entry included the word "couscous." It is worth noting that since commercials were often revised, reused, or shortened the number of unique commercials is much fewer. Reliant as it is on the indexing and completeness of INA's collection, this sample may not be comprehensive, but it is sufficiently representative for the qualitative purposes here.

[43] "L'histoire du Garbit," garbit.fr, accessed 5 June 2014, http://www.garbit.fr/notre-histoire/histoire-de-garbit/.

exotic and traditional, the young couple's modern apartment, Western attire, and charming accents suggest these immigrants are happy, well integrated, and unthreatening.[44]

Two of Garbit's competitors soon followed with their own ads for canned couscous. Beginning in late 1970, the Saupiquet brand ran a whole series of commercials that made no reference to exoticism or immigrants, instead situating couscous within modern, everyday life in France. In the first ad, a man is seated at a table decorated with flowers to eat a generic can of "Super-extra" couscous. But the announcer warns that promises on the label cannot prove it will not taste like cafeteria food. With that, the image transforms and the man is now wearing a work uniform seated before a tray of food. The announcer then describes how Saupiquet's is a "true North African couscous," and explains their innovative two-compartment can that keeps the cooked couscous separate from the stew.[45] Two more Saupiquet ads from 1971 and 1972 depicted a woman in a supermarket talking with the butcher who recommends Saupiquet's couscous, which has more meat and all the vegetables for an authentic Moroccan feast. After she tries it, he asks, "So what will your husband think of that?!"[46] By 1971, a third brand, Buitoni, was advertising its own canned couscous. Their ad featured a (European) couple singing and dancing and made no reference to North Africa.[47]

Taken together, this first generation of couscous commercials generally avoided strong exoticism and foreign stereotypes and sometimes even ignored the dish's North African roots all

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[44] "GARBIT: couscous préparé," February 19, 1970, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3212121036/garbit-couscous-prepare-video.html.

[45] "SAUPIQUET: couscous en boîte," November 30, 1970, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3212114077/saupiquet-couscous-en-boite-video.html.

[46] "SAUPIQUET: couscous en boîte," May 21, 1971; "Saupiquet: couscous en boîte," September 19, 1972, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3212579057/saupiquet-couscous-en-boite-video.html.

[47] "BUITONI: couscous," February 23, 1971, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3212133099/buitoni-couscous-video.html.

together. They preferred to present couscous as a modern, familiar, and commonplace dish that could be as easily appreciated by a supermarket butcher as ruined by a workplace cafeteria. Less than ten years after the fall of the colonial empire, these banal depictions of couscous suggest an enduring imperialistic confidence in France's capacity to absorb foreign and immigrant foods and modernize them for the world of supermarkets and canned meals. However, attitudes began to change with the prolonged economic hardship following the 1974 oil crisis. At the same time as the modernism of both nouvelle cuisine and industrial food came under heavy criticism, rising unemployment led many to question the growing presence of immigrants in France.[48] North Africans and their religion, language, and culture were targeted as incompatible with the same republican values that, ironically, had once served to justify French colonialism.

Although couscous continued on its course of conquering the hearts, minds, and stomachs of French consumers, after 1975, depictions of couscous in television commercials took a hard turn toward the exotic, the primitive, and the fantastical. A new Saupiquet commercial in 1975 claimed that can's two compartments preserved the "sacrosanct" separation of the grain from the stew, implying this was as much a matter of ritualistic tradition as a practical solution. Then a dark-skinned, shirtless warrior wearing a turban and baggy silk pants violently slices the can in half with a scimitar to reveal the two compartments.[49] The ad exploited common negative stereotypes of Africa and Islam while implicitly relishing their gastronomic effect. Another Saupiquet ad pictured a lavish palace where a group of bearded men wearing stereotypical North African robes and headwear are eating couscous. One of the men, speaking what sounds like Arabic (with French subtitles), turns to the camera and invites the viewer to share their Saupiquet

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[48] For a case study of the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment, see: Françoise Gaspard, *A Small City in France: A Socialist Mayor Confronts Neofascism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[49] "SAUPIQUET : Plats cuisinés : couscous," May 26, 1975, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3212616011/saupiquet-plats-cuisines-couscous-video.html.

couscous.[50] Another commercial featured a singing and dancing sultan, surrounded by scantily clad women and bearded men (one riding a camel) who sing about Saupiquet couscous in comically heavy accents.[51]

In 1979, Garbit introduced an ad in which, by eating couscous, a blond-haired, European man is transformed into a "lord of the desert."[52] Not only is the man's western suit replaced with stereotypical North African garb, but his straight blond hair becomes black and wavy suggesting a physiological racial distinction. This commercial also introduced what would become an iconic slogan, "Couscous Garbit: c'est bon comme là-bas, dis!" ("Garbit Couscous: good like it is down there, eh!"). The use of the interjection "dis!" in particular evoked a stereotypically North African accent. In another Garbit commercial, a middle-class, French woman steps out of her dining room directly into the desert. There she steals a platter of couscous from a nomadic family and brings it back to her guests waiting at the table.[53] In another ad, a man declares to the woman who has just served him (Garbit) couscous, that she must have a Moroccan cook in the kitchen.[54]

Every one of these couscous commercials launched between 1975 and 1984 exploited stereotypes and caricatured images of North Africa and its people, often for comedic effect. The Maghreb was depicted as distant and exotic, not as a place with which France was intimately familiar. In contrast with the early seventies, there were no more sympathetic portrayals of North

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[50] "SAUPIQUET : Plat cuisiné en boîte : couscous," July 18, 1979, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3254153042/saupiquet-plat-cuisine-en-boite-couscous-video.html.

[51] "SAUPIQUET Couscous : Les 1001 nuits," September 21, 1980, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3249402018/saupiquet-couscous-les-1001-nuits-video.html.

[52] "GARBIT : Plat cuisiné en boite : couscous" July 14, 1979, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3254153036/garbit-plats-cuisine-en-boite-couscous-video.html.

[53] "GARBIT (PANZANI MILLAT FRERES) : COUSCOUS," May 1, 1984, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784032153/garbit-panzani-millat-freres-couscous-video.html.

[54] "Garbit : couscous," January 1, 1983, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784032173/garbit-couscous-video.html.

African immigrants. Despite its growing popularity, there were fewer depictions of couscous as a common everyday food. Even though the commercials implied that authentic couscous could be captured conveniently in a can, they situated "real" couscous among ancient customs and fantastical settings based on Orientalist clichés. This shift correlated with growing French antagonisms toward North African immigrants in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but that does not necessarily explain *why* advertisers would choose to associate their product with negative stereotypes. One plausible explanation is that by recasting couscous as an exotic import from a strange culture that cosmopolitan French consumers could sample from a distance, these commercials tried to disassociate couscous from the "immigration problem." However, this approach could not be sustained indefinitely.

After 1985, television commercials for couscous saw much greater diversity of brands, products, and advertising techniques. Two brands, Bolino and Knorr, introduced couscous as part of their lines of "just-add-water" dried dishes. Neither ad campaign made any reference to North Africa. Bolino's couscous ad was kitschy with colorful graphics and a retro sixties-style jingle.[55] Knorr's ad depicted a white, middle-class family in their suburban home. Knorr couscous proves to be so easy to make that even the teenage daughter wearing headphones can make it, to her father's astonishment.[56] Another Knorr ad featured a middle-aged man alone, pretending to be a waiter suggesting tonight's dinner options: "*Hachis Parmentiers* [shepherd's pie]? Paella?

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[55] "BOLINO / MAGGI / SOPAD NESTLE : COUSCOUS DESHYDRATE," May 1, 1985, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784042088/bolino-maggi-sopad-nestle-couscous-deshydrate-video.html.

[56] "EN CAS / KNORR / LES PRODUITS DU MAIS : PLAT CUISINE COUSCOUS HACHISPARMENTIER," September 1, 1985, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784052027/en-cas-knorr-les-produits-du-mais-plat-cuisine-couscous-hachisparmentier-video.html

Couscous?"[57] A 1989 ad featuring an attractive blond woman promoted "couscous with chicken and five vegetables" as one of Findus's low-calorie, frozen dinners.[58] Meanwhile, Véritable Petit Navire challenged the confinement of couscous to North African cuisine, by showing their *semoule* (plain couscous grains only) accompanying typically European dishes, declaring: "Petit Navire is inventing modern couscous!"[59] The implication being that North-African-style couscous was not modern. In all of these commercials, couscous was mentioned alongside French, Spanish, and Italian dishes as all equally familiar and commonplace to the average French consumer.

Meanwhile, a Garbit commercial that aired in the late eighties and early nineties returned to the theme of Garbit's very first commercial: the happy, well-adjusted immigrant.[60] This ad depicted a dinner party where a young blond woman is serving couscous to her guests including her darker-featured husband and his mother. Speaking with an apparent accent, the mother-in-law beams, "What marvelous couscous! What light grains [*semoule*]! What meat and vegetables! She's a good one, my daughter-in-law!" The young couple explains to her that it was Garbit couscous, and the mother-in-law exclaims, "Who is this Garbit?!" This ad was a significant break with the orientalist stereotypes that characterized Garbit's ads during the preceding ten years. By depicting these apparent immigrants in Western clothing, drinking wine, and accepting

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[57] "KNORR / LES EN CAS : PLAT CUISINE DESHYDRATE COUSCOUS PAELLA HACHIS PARMENTIER," October 1, 1986, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784056161/knorr-les-en-cas-plat-cuisine-deshydrate-couscous-paella-hachis-parmentier-video.html.

[58] "FINDUS CUISINE LEGERE : PLAT CUISINE COUSCOUS SURGELE," January 1, 1989, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784131021/findus-cuisine-legere-plat-cuisine-couscous-surgele-video.html.

[59] "VERITABLE PETIT NAVIRE : SEMOULE COUSCOUS," June 1, 1987, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784081126/veritable-petit-navire-semoule-couscous-video.html; "VERITABLE PETIT NAVIRE : SEMOULE GRAIN COUSCOUS," March 1, 1988, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784100062/veritable-petit-navire-semoule-grain-couscous-video.html.

[60] "GARBIT : COUSCOUS," June 1, 1987, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784085049/garbit-couscous-video.html.

a blond Frenchwoman into the family but still eating couscous, it evoked a modern republican France that welcomed non-threatening elements of immigrant cultures like food. However, in 1991, Garbit did return to exoticism, depicting a woman for whom couscous inspires fantasies about dancing seductively to Arabian-sounding music for a group of men in nomadic attire.[61]

A similar touristic theme underpinned another series of commercials for Buitoni's "Saveurs du Monde" (Flavors of the World) line of canned goods.[62] Rather than using antiquated and exotic images toward comedic effect, these ads adopted a travel documentary style that suggested a glimpse into the authentic, traditional Morocco, still unspoiled by modernity. The first commercial pictured North Africans wearing ragged traditional clothing, riding donkeys, and dying cloth in a medina devoid of any signs of modernity. As each figure notices the camera (the Western tourist), they turn away, cover their face, or disappear into the shadows. The narrator invites the viewer to visit "the country of couscous," warns that that it isn't so easy to discover its hidden secrets. "However," he continues, "with Buitoni Couscous, its all there."[63]

When Maggi took over the Saveurs du Monde line from Buitoni, a new ad adopted a similar documentary-like style.[64] A group of North African women, young and old, are pictured

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[61] "GARBIT COUSCOUS : PLAT CUISINE COUSCOUS CONSERVE," September 16, 1991, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784176105/garbit-couscous-plat-cuisine-couscous-conserve-video.html.

[62] Prior to the ad campaigns discussed here, the Saveurs du Monde brand released a commercial in 1987 in which a French chef literally tries on different hats that are stereotypical representations of the different countries whose food he is describing (a fez with couscous, a turban with curry, etc.). "BUITONI SAVEURS DU MONDE; PLAT CUISINE CONSERVE," October 1, 1987, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784085112/buitoni-saveurs-du-monde-plat-cuisine-conserve-video.html.

[63] "BUITONI SAVEURS DU MONDE COUSCOUS; COUSCOUS EN BOITE," May 1, 1989, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784115047/buitoni-saveurs-du-monde-couscous-couscous-en-boite-video.html. A second version suggested Buitoni could save you the trouble of traveling at all, saying, "Morocco has its secrets, but for you Buitoni has uncovered all the little secrets to making good couscous." "BUITONI SAVEURS DU MONDE : PLAT CUISINE COUSCOUS," February 1, 1990, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784124182/buitoni-saveurs-du-monde-plat-cuisine-couscous-video.html.

[64] Both the Buitoni and Maggi name brands are owned by Nestle.

in the courtyard of an old Moroccan stone building.[65] The women are wearing traditional clothing including headscarves, carrying hand-woven baskets on their heads, and are happily making couscous by hand using wooden and clay utensils. A female narrator lists the names of these "Moroccan friends" who have taught her how to prepare the grain, meat, and vegetables and select spices, concluding, "As Zakia [the youngest of the women] would say, one does well what one knows well." Although these images neither sexualize nor poke fun at the women, they nevertheless profoundly and literally objectify them. As in the earlier Buitoni ad, many of the camera shots are from a distance or odd angles, giving the viewer the voyeuristic impression of secretly observing a private, exclusively feminine space. The women never speak or look at the camera. All of this works to situate them in a pre-modern, isolated world, in which authentic cultural expression is unchanging and untouched. It is the colonial gaze all over again, but with the opposite objective. No longer does the West wish to modernize and civilize, instead it yearns to preserve—indeed, bottle and sell—the seemingly timeless and primitive cultures of the non-Western world.

The diversity of advertising strategies and representations of couscous from the mid-1980s onward reflects both the greater number of manufacturers and the overall growth of television advertisement. However, it is probably no coincidence that this period also saw a prolonged debate and fragmenting public opinion about immigration and the cultural composition of French society. Following the explosion of anti-immigrant nationalism and President Mitterrand's brief foray into multiculturalism in the early eighties, a range of ethno-nationalist, assimilationist, anti-racist, feminist, and immigrant advocacy groups all battled over the meaning of French national identity and republican citizenship as tensions flared around

[65] "MAGGI SAVEURS DU MONDE : PLAT CUISINE CONSERVE COUSCOUS," October 11, 1991, http://www.ina.fr/video/PUB3784176146/maggi-saveurs-du-monde-plat-cuisine-conserve-couscous-video.html.

issues such as the "headscarf affair."[66] Yet this apparent splintering of the nation into opposing camps and ethnic communities eventually caused many to return to a militantly centrist "republicanism."[67] It is hardly surprising that in this volatile political context, advertisers were willing to try a wide range of strategies to sell couscous, a symbol of the most prominent and controversial community of immigrants in France.

Over the entire period from 1970 to 1995, it is possible to tentatively sketch a general evolution of depictions of couscous in TV commercials. During the first five years, when immigration was not yet a major controversy, couscous was treated as a common, everyday food. Then in the next ten years, from the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s when anti-immigrant sentiment was high, couscous was depicted as part of a fantastical, exotic culture. In the ten years after 1985, depictions became much more diverse, reflecting the fragmenting politics of immigration and identity of this period.

And yet, common threads can be seen across the whole period as well. For instance, although the legacy of colonialism has a powerful influence, these ads made virtually no overt reference to France's colonial involvement in the Maghreb. Similarly, none include any images of a modern technologies or Western culture within North Africa. Couscous is only ever represented as modern in a Western context, and the same goes for representations of North African people. In the few instances that a specific North African nation is even acknowledged, it is always Morocco, never Algeria. Algeria entered and exited French rule through brutal wars, in between which it was officially part of France from 1848 to 1962. By comparison, France's

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[66] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[67] Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 115-142; Emile Chabal, "*La République postcoloniale?* Making the Nation in Late Twentieth-Century France," in *France's Lost Empires: Fragmentation Nostalgia, and* La Fracture Coloniale, ed. Kate Marsh and Nicola Frith (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 137-152.

colonial relations with Morocco and Tunisia, while hardly benign, were significantly less intensive or violent—Morocco was a French protectorate from 1912 until 1956. Although there were large immigrant populations from all three countries in France, Algeria's was the largest (especially if *pieds-noirs* are included). Additionally, ongoing political, religious and ethnic conflicts in post-colonial Algeria—erupting in Civil War in 1991—reverberated in France as well. By contrast, as a popular destination for French tourists, Morocco is more distinctly "foreign" and separate from France. Most often, however, commercials favored Orientalist caricatures that bore little resemblance to any contemporary North African country. Advertisers knew that when marketing any "traditional" food to French consumers, folklore, fantasy, and iconic imagery were more enticing than historical, political, or ethnographic accuracy.

Perhaps unwittingly, television commercials for couscous tended to reinforce the stereotypes and hierarchies from colonial North Africa in post-colonial France. However, the effect was no longer to validate imperialism but rather to affirm and reify national differences and to erase colonialism from memory. Yet by accepting the national sovereignty of its former colonies and the error of colonialism, France was relieved of any obligations toward its former subjects (in some cases, citizens) to make good on the "universality" of its culture. It became the immigrants' responsibility to assimilate into the local way of life. Consequently, integrating even the most innocuous elements of immigrant culture into French life—like couscous—could appear as an act of magnanimous cosmopolitanism and tolerance. Such evidence of "reasonable" good will, in turn enabled France to exclude other foreign cultural practices deemed more detrimental to the republic (like language and religion) without appearing xenophobic.

Presumably, none of the advertisers surveyed here intended to pursue a political agenda or influence French attitudes about colonialism or immigration, except insofar as it related to

selling their product. And yet, they could not avoid becoming involved in both reproducing and influencing the debate. This is precisely the way that "hegemonic" discourses are constructed, reproduced, and transformed in popular culture through the interplay between the rational interests and existing discursive structures. Yet discourses do not operate or change on their own, rather, they are the product of human agency, of constant negotiations between various individuals and groups.

The rest of this chapter will examine four individuals who influenced ideas about couscous in France. Each of these people represents a different "ethnic" group or identity—French, Arab, Kabyle, and *pied-noir*. However, each one also confounds these categories and the common assumptions about them in important, sometimes deliberate ways. In this way, they are neither exceptional, nor representative in relation to their group identities. Rather, like most people, they are complex individuals that cannot be reduced to their nationality, ethnicity, gender, or any other group they may be counted among. Still, even as discursive constructs that never fully or objectively capture the people they represent, group identities were still crucial to the cultural and political participation of each of these individuals. While the first half of this chapter has observed representations of couscous very broadly across time and space, these four cases will offer the opportunity to examine very closely how individuals experience and participate in negotiating the meaning of cultural objects like couscous as well as national and ethnic identities.

Madame Guinaudeau's Gastro-ethnography of Couscous

In his preface to Zette Guinaudeau-Franc's 1981 book, *Les Secrets des Cuisines en Terre Marocaine* (*Secrets of the Cuisines of the Moroccan Lands*), the Moroccan Minister of Tourism, Moulay Ahmed Alaoui, wrote with patriotic enthusiasm that:

> Great cuisine is the prerogative of great civilizations, just as are literature, music or painting. In this regard, Moroccan cuisine bears witness to the munificence of our civilization, since it is rightly considered the greatest Arab cuisine and one of the greatest in the world.[68]

In particular, he singled out couscous's global renown, writing, "One cannot even mention couscous without thinking of Morocco."[69] Yet Alaoui had some difficulty pinning down the essence of this national cuisine, resorting to multiculturalist clichés like "mosaic," "crossroads," and (indirectly) the "melting pot":

> There is not one Moroccan cuisine, but many, as rightly noted in this book's title, "the cuisines of the Moroccan land." Each region, each great city has its own cuisine. Morocco owes this extraordinary gastronomic mosaic […to being] a crossroads where Andalusian, Berber, Arab, African, and European influences have met and melted together. […] Moroccan cuisine derives its wealth not only from regional or social diversity, but also ethnic diversity. Morocco is one of the few countries with an authentic Jewish cuisine.[70]

It is noteworthy that Alaoui reverted to "Moroccan cuisine" (singular) for the rest of his text, even after emphasizing its plurality. From the confident point of view of a statesman for whom his nation was a real, permanent object, Alaoui could see all of these complexities and contradictions as contributing to the richness of Moroccan heritage, rather than as potential challenges deconstructing its coherence or integrity. In this way, the "melting pot" metaphor is a useful image, beyond simply the mixing of influences. Rather, the pot itself, as a rigid container,

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[68] Moulay Ahmed Alaoui, preface to *Les Secretes des Cuisines en Terre Marocaine,* by Zette Guinaudeau-Franc (Paris: Jean-Pierre Taillandier, 1981), 6.

[69] Alaoui, 6.

[70] Alaoui, 6.

captures the way the category of the nation may be reified and imagined as a vessel whose existence precedes and does not depend upon its variable cultural contents.

Zette Guinaudeau-Franc was a French woman who had lived in Morocco for more than fifty years, having moved to Fes in the 1920s with her husband who was a doctor. In fact, certain passages in *Les Secrets de Cuisines en Terre Marocaine* dated as far back as 1930, and a significant portion of it had been published in Morocco in 1958 as *Fes vu par sa cuisine* (literally "Fez seen through its cuisine")[71]—one of the first modern works on Moroccan cuisine.

The dedication of the 1981 book, "To my Moroccan friends who taught me how to know, understand, and love their colorful and fragrant cuisine," reads as if it might have been the inspiration for Saveurs du Monde commercial discussed above in which the narrator described the "Moroccan friends" who taught her to make authentic couscous.[72] The large-format book was richly illustrated with numerous drawings and photographs of outdoor food markets, women in traditional dress cooking over fires, and antique dishes and utensils, but like the documentary-style commercials, almost no signs of the modern world. And yet, modernity loomed over the book.

The very first sentence of Guinaudeau's mission statement, reprinted from the 1958 book, read: "The time has come to freeze [*fixer*] the tradition of cooking in Fez before it becomes too Europeanized."[73] Like Alaoui she celebrated the diversity and the global genealogy of the multiple cuisines of Morocco. But for her, it seems, the melting pot was full, and the time had come for its contents to be cooled and hardened against the threat of Western modernity.

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[71] The most recent English translation of *Fes vu par sa cuisine*: Madame Guinaudeau, *Traditional Moroccan Cooking: Recipes from Fez*, trans. J. E. Harris (London: Serif, 1994), 19.

[72] Guinaudeau-Franc*,* 4.

[73] Guinaudeau-Franc*,* 8.

Guinaudeau's purpose for this book that she had spent most of her life researching and writing was "to surpass a simple book of recipes and reveal a way of life [*art de vivre*]."[74] In this way, her undertaking was a kind of amateur ethnography—albeit of the outdated sort fixated on documenting the supposedly uncontaminated "traditional" cultures of the non-Western world.

By 1981, she knew that it was too late to stop the forward march of modernization, but she still saw the value of preserving tradition:

> My greatest concern is to capture a way of life, for the young women of Morocco, Muslim or Jewish, that their mothers passed on from generation to generation. These are customs that they cannot integrate into their lifestyles in this *fin de siècle* but that are still their duty to preserve carefully in recipes as a national heritage. […] Always bear in mind that this book only contains old recipes and customs from fifty years ago, still unspoiled [*vierges*] by any European contamination.[75]

It is notable that this description of a disappearing feminine tradition closely parallels similar lamentations about disappearing French regional cuisines by contemporaries such as Robert Courtine.[76] Moreover, Guinaudeau's perception of culinary modernization as a threat from the outside (Europe) similarly recalls contemporary French fears of "American" fast food.

Unlike Alaoui, Guinaudeau distinguished "European contamination," from earlier positive influences:

> This tradition, arriving from the Orient with the conquerors, impregnated via Tétouan and Algiers with the sweet and insipid aromas of Constantinople. It brought back wisdom from Andalusia and took from the Berbers simple hearty dishes.[77]

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[74] Guinaudeau-Franc, dust jacket.

[75] Guinaudeau-Franc, 10.

[76] Robert Courtine, *La Gastronomie* (Paris: Presses Univérsitaires de France, 1970), 70-73.

[77] Guinaudeau-Franc, 8.

It is notable that Constantinople and Andalusia were both important centers of Islamic civilization wrested away from Christendom. She explicitly attributes core of the tradition to the conquering Arabs, over even the indigenous Berbers. Indeed, this account is similar to the "Latin" myth discussed above, except that it replaces the Romans with Arabs. Coming from a French woman who lived in Morocco for most of the period of French rule, this might seem surprising. However, this portion of the text had appeared in the 1958 Moroccan publication. That was just two years after Morocco regained independence and at the very moment that the Algerian War was bringing down the French Fourth Republic. Even if she had supported colonialism, this was hardly the moment for a French woman still living in Morocco to sing the praises of the French influence in a book published there. But diminishing France's influence in Morocco was equally present in the 1981 text published in France, where she continued to evoke "customs and recipes hardly changed in centuries."[78] In fact, this image of the greatness of Moroccan cuisine(s) owing nothing to French influence not only reinforced Morocco's national identity, it helped to reform post-colonial French identity as well. Diminishing the significance of French influence distanced France's own national narrative from the blight of colonialism as a misguided historical anomaly.

Guinaudeau began her chapter on couscous, which she called Morocco's "national dish," by combining humor with sensuality to highlight how foreign the authentic dish would be to her French readers:

> Take in the palm of your hand a raisin or a chickpea and a handful of couscous, press it softly into a ball, and place it gingerly in your mouth. Or rather, as I fear you'll only succeed in making a greasy mess of yourself, ask for a spoon. But do learn to savor the contrast of the sweetness of the raisin against the brutality of the grain spiced with hot sauce.[79]

[78] Guinaudeau-Franc, 9.

[79] Guinaudeau-Franc, 65.

She then went on to describe in abundant detail how to make the couscous grain from scratch—including directions for having your wheat milled—even though she hardly expected any of her French readers to take the time to roll their own couscous. As she noted, it required a great deal of skill and practice to do correctly, and the French could barely even *eat* couscous with their hands. All of this had the effect of distancing Morocco from France, as an unfamiliar, foreign place. Yet this image was in constant tension with the threat of "European contamination," extending across the colonial and post-colonial periods. However, both discourses—that of exotic foreignness and that of cultural decimation—worked together to reinforce and reify the French and Moroccan nations as distinctly separate cultures whose beauty and value depends as much on their mutual exclusion as their mutual appreciation.

In the early 1980s, Guinaudeau was not alone in perceiving North African cuisine as having been forged over centuries through many influences and now being threatened by (Western) modernity. In her 1983 cookbook, *La cuisine d'Algérie*, Salima Hadjiat described the origins of Algerian cuisine:

> Situated at the crossroads of civilizations since the most ancient of times, Algerian cuisine bears traces of all the different peoples who have passed through: Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Ottomans, […] as well as the close relations with neighboring countries in Southern Europe, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa. It was able to soak up these influences without losing any of its originality or authenticity. It marvelously unites the simplicity of Berber cuisine—still found today among the mountain-dwelling and rural populations—with the refinement of the Romans, the aromas of the Orient, and the good taste of Andalusia.[80]

Like Alaoui did with Moroccan cuisine, Hadjiat treats Algerian cuisine nation as an eternal container into which influences flow without undermining its essential "originality or authenticity." Omitting any French colonial influence is even more conspicuous here considering the duration and intensity of the French colonization of Algeria. However, in the wake of the

[80] Salima Hadjiat, *La Cuisine d'Algerie* (Paris: Publisud, 1990 [1983]), 3.

Algerian War, it is hardly surprising. Instead, like Guinaudeau, Hadjiat focused on the dangers posed to Algerian cuisine by (Western) modernity:

> Colorants have replaced saffron; peanut oil has replaced olive oil; sugar has replaced honey. Many essential spices […] are rarely used any more. […] True Algerian cuisine is losing ground, making room for a composite cuisine. […] Modernism should be enriching and not, under any circumstances, harm the essential characteristics, the originality or the authenticity of a cuisine. This book attempts precisely to protect the originality, […] ancestral traditions […] and true character of Algerian cuisine, while taking advantage of modern conveniences.[81]

Guinaudeau and Hadjiat each reinforced and legitimated the post-colonial nation-states of Morocco and Algeria, respectively, by constructing national histories that retroactively imposed a territorial continuity reaching back to antiquity. This enabled the categories of "Moroccan" and "Algerian" cuisines to become reified across history, maintaining a core indigenous essence even as they prudently and enterprisingly adopted influences from the various traders, conquerors and immigrants who pass through. Establishing these coherent national cuisines across time built a platform from which to reject colonial/Western "modernization" and to substantiate "Algerian" and "Moroccan" national identities in the Maghreb. However, constructing these North African national cuisines became just as important for immigrants seeking to define their identity and place in French society.

Fatéma Hal: "*Intello du couscous*"[82]

Madame Guinaudeau wrote about Moroccan cuisine based on her experience as a French woman living in colonial Morocco. It is perhaps fitting considering the post-colonial reversal of

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[81] Hadjiat, 3.

[82] A character in Hal's autobiography refers to her mockingly as an "intello du couscous" meaning "couscous nerd." Fatéma Hal, *fille des frontières*, 17.

trans-Mediterranean migrations that, the leading "ambassador of Moroccan cuisine" in France, after opening her restaurant, Mansouria, in Paris in 1984, was an immigrant named Fatéma Hal.

Hal was born near the Algerian border in the Moroccan town of Oujda. Her childhood was atypical, particularly for Morocco, as she was raised by a single mother who was raised by an aunt who was also single. Having these independent women as role models left a strong impression on Hal whose commitment to feminism would be one of the driving forces in her adult life. Of her great aunt, Yamina Kalti, who had raised her mother, she wrote:

> Kalti never went to school, but her life experience was worth all the philosophies in the world. She hadn't read Derrida, Sartre or Foucault, but she had an incredible modernity in the way that she emancipated herself from the place that traditional society had assigned her.[83]

Her mother too, had led an unconventional life, refusing to succumb to the misfortunes, humiliations, and disadvantages she was dealt, saying, "Shame lies not in falling but in not picking yourself back up."[84] Hal's life and convictions would reflect this same tenacious refusal to be condemned to the role or the judgments society imposed on her.

Hal immigrated to France via an arranged marriage to the son of a family friend. Living in the Paris suburbs, the couple had three children together. However, Hal grew restless and bored as a housewife and soon enrolled in courses at the Université de Vincennes—the "experimental" open admissions university launched in the wake of May 1968 that, when Hal enrolled in 1975, remained a notorious hotbed of radical leftwing politics among the students and the faculty. Soon, Hal divorced her husband with whom she had less and less in common, and decided to continue her studies in ethnography with a thesis on North African prostitutes in Paris. At the same time she held a number of positions in governmental and other organizations

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[83] Hal, *Fille des frontières,* 52.

[84] Hal, *Fille des frontières*, 38.

working with immigrant women, including a post at the Ministry of Women's Rights and a stint with the immigrant-oriented television program "Mosaïque." Hal describes the latter operation as being mainly a public relations scheme.[85] However, Hal aspired to own her own business and began to focus her attention on opening a Moroccan Restaurant in Paris.[86]

Frequently utilizing her connections with politicians and journalists, Hal aggressively promoted her restaurant by hosting or catering high-profile dinners and other functions. After a few difficult years, Mansouria (named after Hal's mother) became one of the best-known North African restaurants in France. Meanwhile, Hal was also becoming well known in France and internationally as an expert on North African cuisine. In time, she became know as, according to one American cookbook, "the queen of Moroccan cooking."[87] In this role, Hal travelled all around the world giving lectures and participating in discussions and debates. Meanwhile, she maintained her commitment to feminism, founding an organization that provided culinary training to immigrant women, called *Espace Femmes* (Women's Space).

In many ways, Hal represented a poster-child for the French "integrationist" immigration policy, which claims to celebrate and make room for the cultural diversity of all those who wish to become French citizens. While she retained, celebrated, and capitalized on her Moroccan culture, she has also found her place within French society and great success by mastering its economic and governmental structures. Such an example proved that integration really worked to the mutual benefit of both France and its immigrants. The proof was in the couscous. Rather than demanding assimilation to French tastes by compromising the integrity or authenticity of

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[85] Hal, *Fille des frontières,* 234. For a critique of "Mosaïque," see Alec G. Hargreaves, "Gatekeepers and Gateways: Post-colonial Minorities and French Television," in *Post-colonial Cultures in France*, ed. Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (New York: Routledge, 1997), 85-86.

[86] This biographical information is based on Hal's autobiography, *Fille des frontières.*

[87] Puckette and Kiang-Snaije, 13.

couscous, Hal's success seemingly proved that by staying true to one's "roots" and maintaining the authenticity of her cuisine, one could find success in France's cosmopolitan society.

Hal's first book appeared in 1996 and was called *Les saveurs et les gestes: cuisines et traditions du Maroc* (*Flavors and motions: the cuisines and traditions of Morocco*). Writing the preface for this work was the celebrated Moroccan Francophone writer Tahar Ben Jalloun. He wrote:

> Moroccan cuisine no longer needs fierce defenders. [… It] has taken its place next to the two cuisines [French and Chinese] that are the inheritance of all humanity. […But] does a cuisine travel? Certainly, if we are only talking about its different dishes, all cuisines travel and may be exported. […] But then there is the importance of water, the particular quality and flavor of vegetables, the origin of spices, and then there is the hands—the hands of *dadas* [black women cooks] who couldn't create with the same energy or love if they were removed from their element.[88]

Similarly, in Hal's own introduction she wrote:

> Its aromas transport us back to a turbulent epic, a melting pot of civilizations where passions bubble as caravans depart for far-off lands. And among the ceaseless but halting movements of this history, Moroccan cuisine knew how to give and take, how to become unique.[89]

In addition to being exportable but never fully reproducible, then, Moroccan cuisine also owes its genesis to exotic discoveries and foreign invasions all the while never relinquishing control. Conquest, trade and travel are relegated to "external" factors influencing the content without challenging the category. And yet Hal, like Guinaudeau, worried about the power of modernity to wipe out Moroccan culinary traditions, writing: "Will the pressure-cooker generation erase the era of clay tagines?"[90] By the 1990s, Hal understood that her French readers who were already

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[88] Tahar Ben Jelloun, preface to *Les saveurs et les gestes: cuisines et traditions du Maroc*, by Fatéma Hal (Paris: Editions Stock, 1996), 8.

[89] Fatéma Hal, *Les saveurs et les gestes,* 13-14.

[90] Hal, *Les saveurs et les gestes,* 15.

deeply concerned about the fate of their "own" regional cuisines in the face of modernization would readily side with the tagine in solidarity for tradition before ever identifying with the pressure-cooker's Western modernism.

In fact, Hal could even safely take aim at French chauvinistic, Eurocentric, and imperialistic prejudices, since the French audience for a cookbook about Moroccan cuisine would likely welcome the opportunity to scoff at their more narrow-minded countrymen, in order to distance themselves from such ignorance. Rather than avoiding the history of the French colonial influence in the Maghreb, Hal made a point of discrediting, almost mocking, such foolish ideas:

> Just a few months ago, a tourist guide pedantically explained that the *pieds-noirs* had imported couscous to Morocco by "bringing durum wheat from France." At Fouquet's [restaurant on the Champs-Elysées], among journalists and gastronomic critics convened to award the Marco Polo Prize, an "expert" claimed that couscous came to us from Auvergne! […] Why is it necessary to search "elsewhere" for the origins of Morocco's national dish, when couscous […] is the most ancient and precious of Berber traditions?[91]

Hal was confident enough to write, "Couscous's prestige is recognized everywhere, and yet Europeans know next to nothing about it."[92] She then described in detail couscous's origins among ancient Berber populations.

The flipside to the integrationist model, however, is that in addition to immigrants sharing their own cultural knowledge and practices, they must accept certain, basic French values deemed universal and essential to ensuring each citizen's rights. In this sense as well, Hal was exemplary. Her social activism, feminism, and individualism could all be seen as signs of assimilating Western progressive values. To be sure, her hard-won success and commitment to

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[91] Hal, *Les saveurs et les gestes,* 117.

[92] Hal, *Les saveurs et les gestes,* 117.

activism on behalf of women and immigrants required formidable dedication and significant risks. However, one must consider whether she would have found as much success and support in the French government, academia, or media, had she been wearing a headscarf. In her autobiography, Hal writes openly and matter-of-factly about a number of her non-marital love affairs. While hardly shocking behavior for a twenty-first century "French" woman, it is far from the stereotype of a North African immigrant woman. What, then, could be a more clear demonstration of adopting modern "French" values—and rejecting supposedly oppressive Muslim/Arab ones—than embracing her independence and sexuality as liberated woman, feminist, and entrepreneur? Thus, taken together, Hal's liberated feminism combined with her reverence for (culinary) tradition represented the ideal balance of assimilation and multiculturalism envisioned by the "republican" or "integrationist" model of French immigration.

However, Hal was keenly aware of this dynamic, and frequently resisted the discourse of "integration" or allowing that narrative to be imposed on her personal successes. In fact, she used the final pages of her autobiography to explicitly critique integration: "People sometimes ask me how I have become so well 'integrated.' I don't like that word. I have continued to be myself, with my story, and I am proud of my origins."[93] Elsewhere in the book, she makes it clear that her feminism took inspired not from the French but the strong, independent women who were her role models in Morocco. Reacting to the prominent role of young women in the political protests known as the "Arab Spring" that were taking place in 2011 as she wrote her autobiography, Hal wrote,

[93] Hal, *Fille des frontières*, 318.

> "While they incessantly denounce the inferiority of women in the Arab world, the images [of the protests] show, on the contrary, that women are on the front lines of the struggle to return dignity to the people."[94]

Although Hal "found her place in the world" with her restaurant in Paris, she clearly continued to identify strongly with "Moroccan cuisine" and "Arab civilization," rather than with French culture and values. Throughout her writing, she paints a progressive image of Arab/Islamic civilization that makes room for women seducing men with couscous, Abu Nuwas's poems about alcohol and homosexuality, and "Jews, Christians, and Muslims living in harmony."[95]

Hal has even called the current state of couscous in France a "counter-example of integration." She describes how, despite its great popularity, couscous has sadly been reduced, for most French diners, to a single, mediocre dish, the well-known "petit couscous," popularized with the "return" of the *pieds-noirs*:

> Couscous has become an inexpensive, wholesome dish that is eaten regularly among friends or colleagues at the neighborhood Maghrebi restaurant […] Too often, one is served couscous with hard chickpeas, mushy vegetables, drenched in a full tureen of bland broth, all covered in overrated harissa sauce straight from the tube. You are offered a standard couscous where only the meat varies.[96]

Then there is the (in)famous *couscous royal* that includes an indiscriminate sampling of all the boiled and grilled meats at once. By contrast, Hal described at length the vast array of different couscous dishes eaten in Morocco, from sweet deserts to elaborate main courses to simple regional peasant and fisherman dishes. She lamented the lack of French knowledge of different couscous dishes as "a failed culinary rendezvous between two great gastronomic cultures."[97] However, with her restaurant and her cookbooks, Hal was working to rectify this problem. Her

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[94] Hal, *Fille des frontières*, 312.

[95] Hal, *Le livre du couscous,* 10-14; Hal, *Fille des frontières,* 284-285, 300.

[96] Hal, *Les saveurs et les gestes,* 121-122.

[97] Hal, *Les saveurs et les gestes,* 125.

second book, *Le livre du couscous,* described in great detail the variety of different types of couscous and dishes made with couscous not only in North Africa, but throughout history and around the world.

At first glance, many of Hal's arguments seem contradictory or to be splitting hairs. In the final chapter of her autobiography, she describes cuisine as a *creuset de civilization* ("a melting pot of civilization") while, on the next page, noting her "distrust of fusion [cuisines]" as too neglectful of cultural origins, but also finding the concept of "terroir" too "reductive of gastronomic complexities."[98] Yet, Hal's refusal to acquiesce to one prescribed discourse or another can also be read as an act of defiance, a wholesale rejection of the terms of the debate. It is not Hal's responsibility to reconcile her positions according to the logic of the existing cultural and political discourses that have, so far, proven incapable of resolving their own contradictions. Hal knows that denying difference as irrelevant can be just as damaging to cultural diversity as reifying and essentializing it. Rather, she calls her gastronomic philosophy, "La cuisine du lien" (roughly "bonding cuisine"), in which both difference and exchange are part of the same network of culinary relationships that simultaneously bind all humans together and diversify gastronomic traditions.[99]

Monsieur Guéddou's Free Couscous

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a curious phenomenon began appearing around Paris. Many restaurants and cafés began to offer couscous free of charge on certain nights of the week, both as gesture of generosity and as a way of attracting customers. Apparently, this

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[98] Hal, *Fille des frontières,* 312-13.

[99] Hal, *Fille des frontières,* 293-300.

idea originated with a man named Guéddou, whose first name remains a mystery. After his son survived a three-story fall with barely a scratch, his mother suggested he do something to thank God for this miracle. Since Guéddou was a non-practicing believer, she suggested that he make couscous for his elderly neighbors each Friday. The story of how this act of charity evolved into a veritable Parisian phenomenon is the central narrative of his aptly titled memoire, *Le couscous de ma mère* (*My mother's couscous*).

Guéddou was born and raised in a village in Kabylie, the mountainous region of Algeria inhabited primarily by a Berber-speaking population known as Kabyles. His father, who died when Guéddou was only six years old, like many Kabyle men of the twentieth century, had worked most of his adult life as a laborer in France, sending money home to his family. Guéddou was born just before the outbreak of the Algerian War. As a teenager in the immediate aftermath of the war he worked as a shepherd and woodcutter before becoming a door-to-door salesman as a young husband and father. As was often the case among Kabyles, Arabic was neither his first nor his second language (which were Kabyle and French respectively), and he resented the imposition of Arabic in public life after Algerian independence. By the late 1970s, Guéddou became fed up with the ever-increasing Arabization of Algeria, particularly in schools, where instruction in Kabyle and French was marginalized, if not eliminated. "For my children, I saw in this a waste of time and above all a renunciation of a whole part of the culture," he comments. "For better or worse, the French language anchors people in the modern world, in progress."[100]

So Guéddou emigrated to Paris, and his wife, children, and mother soon followed. When he first arrived in France, he worked upwards of 15 hours a day as a parking attendant, a construction worker, and notably as a janitor in a school of restaurant and hotel management. He

[100] Guéddou, *Le Couscous de ma mère* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 71.

saw France as his land of opportunity, and he took pride in his work ethic and success as an immigrant, embracing Western modernity whole-heartedly: "Everything was going well. I deposited my first real paycheck in the bank where I had opened an account which seemed to me to be an additional mark of citizenship."[101] When a group of bearded conservative Muslims moved into his building and encouraged him to let them educate his children in Arabic, he replied with disdain:

> "If my children wish to learn Arabic, there are schools for that, even in France, but for the moment I want them to learn French and all that goes with it. […] If I had wanted them to learn Arabic, we would still be in the *bled* [a term meaning both "rural Algeria" but also "backwater"]!"[102]

This response did not please the bearded men, and eventually their mutual animosity would come to blows.

When Guéddou took over the management of a failing hotel/café, his work ethic and knowledge of the field paid off. However, the innovation that really helped his business take off was his mother's idea of offering free couscous. Looking for a way to attract customers and improve the establishment's reputation, he decided that his act of charity, which had begun a private effort to feed hungry friends and neighbors, could be just what the business needed. Not only did this unprecedented business model of offering free food one night a week accomplish his goal of attracting the curiosity and good will of customers who would return as paying customers other nights. Even on the free-couscous nights, he earned enough revenue from drink sales to sustain the expense of offering a "real" couscous with plenty of meat and vegetables for free, and still earn a profit. Not only was this a true act of charity, it was good for business.

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[101] Guéddou, 81.

[102] Guéddou, 108-109.

Nevertheless, Guéddou insists repeatedly in his memoire that profits were never his primary motivation. Rather he makes the moral of his story abundantly clear through a series of episodes in which he suffered misfortunes perpetrated by dishonest people motivated by greed. His narrative shows that, by staying true to his generosity and good faith, his fortune ultimately improved with each of these tests. For example, when the proprietor of his restaurant saw how successful it had become under Guéddou's management, he dismissed Guéddou—who had been expecting to buy the business—and forced him into a contract prohibiting him from opening a competing establishment in the neighborhood. However, this became an opportunity for Guéddou to open a larger restaurant in the center of Paris where his weekend couscous nights become legendary all-night affairs with music and dancing. Similarly, other restaurateurs took notice of Guéddou's success and borrowed his "formula" (which he claims did not mind) and tried to take credit for the idea (which he did resent). Yet Guéddou found poetic justice in the fact that newspapers frequently actually credited him with the success of establishments that he had nothing to do with.[103] An article in *Liberation* about Guéddou and his restaurant praised his ability to turn the other cheek when one of those who took his idea dismissed it a cheap marketing ploy: "A knife in the back of Guéddou—who doesn't give a damn. He'd rather savor the thanks and smiles of his guests. Guéddou promises: he will keep making free couscous as long as he lives."[104] This could be a long time, since, as Guéddou writes in a short poem on the back cover of his book: "If I do good, I will live forever." For him, couscous could be both an act of integration, as he welcomes anyone and everyone to share in the fun and food, and at the same time a positive statement of his distinctly Kabyle generosity, hospitality, and cuisine.

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[103] Guéddou, 174-175.

[104] Arnaud Didier, "Chez M. Guéddou, le couscous à l'oeil. Gratuit les vendredis et samdis, le restaurant boulverse les habitudes," *Libération*, April 23, 1999, accessed March 25, 2013, http://www.liberation.fr/societe/0101278521-chez-m-gueddou-le-couscous-a-l-oeil-gratuit-les-vendredis-et-samedis-le-restaurant-bouleverse-les-habitudes.

Like Fatéma Hal, Guéddou represents the ideal immigrant who embraces France, its language, and its capitalist and republican ideologies and expects nothing in return except fair treatment and an opportunity to work hard. Like Hal, Guéddou maintained his cultural roots only in ways that appeared positive and unthreatening to French society. Throughout his memoire he frequently refers back to the Kabyle values of hard work and generosity. Yet, Guéddou goes even further than Hal in his allegiance to France and French ideals. He rarely misses an opportunity to blast religious extremists and overzealous Arabs. Furthermore, Guéddou frequently criticizes Algeria's failed policies since winning its independence, particularly those he finds detrimental to Kabylie, such as suppressing the Kabyle language and imposing Arabic or the destruction of most of Kabylie's vineyards. By contrast, Guéddou displays far less resentment toward France and its colonial regime. When a French woman dining in his restaurant sheepishly mentioned how France had mistreated Algerians, he simply replied, "I was too young. And its best to forget about bad things. […] He who holds grudges is very small."[105] Just as Renan had said, people can forget extraordinary "deeds of violence" for the sake of national identity.

Guéddou never goes so far as to defend colonialism or question Algerian independence. But he describes colonial Algeria as a place that was making progress and modernizing and explains how this came to a halt after independence. It is crucial to note that Guéddou's concern in his writing is more for Kabylie than Algeria as a whole. Indeed, it is Kabylie that he identifies as his homeland as opposed to Algeria. Describing how a man pretending to be Kabyle had once swindled him, he writes, "[When] he told me his true name, which was hardly Kabyle, it indicated that he was a descendent of one of those numerous conquerors who had oppressed

[105] Guéddou, 16.

Kabylie for centuries."[106] His apparent animosity toward Arabs coupled with a comparatively positive attitude toward France is surely not shared by all Kabyles, but it can be explained historically. French colonizers had deliberately divided the population of Algeria into ethno-linguistic categories, and had often shown preference for the Kabyles whose customs and beliefs were seen to be more compatible with the French civilizing mission.[107] Conversely, following independence, the Arab majority sought to forge a new, primarily Arab, national identity by introducing policies that marginalized Kabyles and especially their language.[108]

In fact, more than once in his memoire, Guéddou encountered *pieds-noirs* with whom he shared a kind of nostalgia for colonial Algeria. For example, he mentions that he welcomed *pied-noir* customers who came to his restaurant to recapture something of the country they once called home. When he traveled to Thailand, he met a number of *pied-noir* expatriates, many of whom immigrated there directly from Algeria without ever "returning" to France. He writes,

> Thailand reminded them of Algeria from before, where the communities lived in harmony, and that is how I saw it as well. Algeria could have been like Thailand; its beaches were as beautiful, its population as welcoming. History had wished otherwise."[109]

Despite having had opposing interests within the colonial society—crucially, a society that Guéddou had never known first hand as an adult—Guéddou could feel a kind of solidarity with the *pieds-noirs* who, like him, had been forced out of their homes in Algeria by the Arabs. They both had been casualties of the tide of history.

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[106] Guéddou, 165.

[107] Paul Silverstein has traced this "Kabyle Myth" back to Tocqueville's writing on Algeria. Silverstein, 45-58.

[108] Richard L. Derderian, "Broadcasting from the Margins," in *Post-Colonial Cultures in France,* eds. Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (New York: Routledge, 1997), 104.

[109] Guéddou, 161.

Enrico Macias: *pied-noir* singer, couscous aficionado

On a New Year's Eve 1984 television special, the Jewish *pied-noir* pop singer Enrico Macias expressed his wish for the coming year: "I wish that couscous will be added to the great cannon of French gastronomy, because I learned in a recent poll that couscous is France's second-place national dish!" This comment elicited a chuckle from another of the program's celebrity guests, Christian Millau, who was there to announce the top young French chefs of 1984. [110] A viewer unaware of Macias's background might have interpreted this comment as a general statement of pro-immigrant multiculturalism, a popular left-wing cause in France at that time. But for Macias, couscous's bona fides as a part of "French" cuisine went much deeper than the recent influx of North African immigrants. For him, couscous represented the culture of French Algeria that defined his *pied-noir* heritage and identity but had been largely shunned in post-colonial France. Thus for Macias, the recent explosion of couscous's popularity in France was an opportunity to regain recognition of a Franco-Algerian cultural connection that had been painfully severed and suppressed for more than twenty years. However, throughout his career, Macias had frequently relied on the positive image of couscous in order to address two post-colonial problems faced by *pieds-noirs*: their condemnation as colonizers and their lack of a legitimate French terroir to call their own.

The post-colonial repudiation of "French Algeria" as an unholy marriage born in colonial exploitation was swift and merciless. Both the French and Algerian post-colonial nation-states and their majority populations were eager to denounce colonialism and move on. They sought to remove the colonial project from their national narratives by laying all of the responsibility for colonial exploitation at the feet of the *pied-noir* "colonizers" themselves. The prevailing logic of

[110] "Réveillon aux Champs Elysées."

decolonization held that the eternal national sovereignty of "France" and "Algeria" invalidated any possibility of a "French Algerian" culture or identity. For example, in trying to explain the disappointing blandness and lack of variety of French couscous compared with the "real thing" in Morocco, Fatéma Hal casually implicated the *pieds-noirs*:

> With the first wave of Algerian migrants, couscous stayed within the confidential circle of the little restaurants where a mother would prepare a feast for family and friends. It was only with the arrival of the *pieds-noirs* that couscous reached its cruising speed and became the "*petit couscous*" familiar in France.[111]

While Hal may not have meant to insult *pieds-noirs*, she, like most of her French readers, simply took it for granted that *pieds-noirs* necessarily would have an incomplete and inauthentic understanding of couscous. The possibility of an authentic *pied-noir* gastronomy was precluded by the post-colonial logic of national self-determination. This exclusion from the very terminology of legitimate cultural identity, left many *pieds-noirs* struggling to communicate both the pain of their cultural dislocation, and their seemingly perverse nostalgia for a colonial culture that, for them, had been a flawed but exciting attempt at intercultural coexistence and exchange. These conflicting emotions and politics, the deep sense of loss, and the impossibility of communicating either, is what some including Jacques Derrida—himself an Algerian Jewish *pied-noir*—have called "Nostalgeria."[112]

Enrico Macias was born by the name Gaston Ghrenassia in Constantine, Algeria in 1938. Dramatically perched on the edge cliff, above a deep ravine, about 80 km from the Mediterranean coast, Constantine is the largest city and cultural capital of Eastern Algeria. Ghrenassia came from a Jewish family of musicians who played traditional Arabo-Andalousian

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[111] Hal, *Les Saveurs et les gestes,* 121.

[112] Lynn Huffer, "Derrida's Nostalgeria," in *Algeria & France: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia,* ed. Patricia Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006); Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

music called *malouf*. In fact the father-in-law of "Little Enrico" (as he was nicknamed) was the renowned Algerian Jewish musician Cheikh Raymond who would be assassinated during the Algerian War. Jews had been living in Algeria for hundreds of years—some even longer than the Arabs. Having been marginalized by European and Islamic societies alike for millennia, Algerian Jews gained French citizenship with the 1870 Crémieux Decree and gradually assimilated to the colonial "European" population thereafter. In this way, Algerian Jews were more genuinely invested in the colonial myth of French universalism than the *colons*, because for them it was more than an abstract justification for colonial rule, it was the real basis for their social acceptance and citizenship. Consequently, after 1962, many Algerian Jews felt a profound sense of exile from their homeland and maintained a romanticized memory of colonial Algeria, as seen, for example, in the films of Alexandre Arcady.[113] By the same token, because they could not be easily categorized as colonizers and because Europe could not be called their ancestral "home," Algerian Jews like Macias and Arcady were often permitted to give voice to the plight of the *pieds-noirs* where former *colons* would not have attracted much sympathy. Yet sympathy did not equal understanding.

Anthropologist Joëlle Bahloul has studied extensively the cuisine and table practices of Algerian-Jewish immigrants in France.[114] She argues that while living in North Africa, culinary practices were one way for Jews to navigate their integration into a "French culture [that] was part of a European generic category which in fact constituted a pan-Mediterranean fusion of

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[113] Sophie Watt, "Alexandre Arcady and the Rewriting of French Colonial History in Algeria," in *France's Lost Empires: Fragmentation, Nostalgia, and* la fracture coloniale, ed. Kate Marsh and Nicola Frith (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 69-80.

[114] Joëlle Bahloul, *Le culte de la Table Dressée: Rites et traditions de la table juive algérienne* (Paris: Editions A. -M. Métailié, 1983).

diverse food cultures."[115] In other words, this was the colonial "melting pot." Algerian Jews used food to assimilate European norms while remaining Jewish and distancing themselves from the "ultimate natives," the Muslims. But once relocated to post-colonial metropolitan France, North African Jewish cuisine became "included in the category of ethnic cuisines as opposed to French cuisines of the terroir."[116] Paradoxically, however:

> The new situation, though, holds that these Jews are completely integrated into French society inasmuch as French society is now aware of its post-colonial multicultural nature. The French no longer represent a colonial power to struggle against privately and a socio-cultural world to integrate into. The immigrants are definitely integrated, and their children and grandchildren do not even regard Frenchness as a goal to pursue, since they have already achieved it.[117]

Still, as Bahloul's comment implies, this population could only be integrated in France as "Algerian Jews," meaning "immigrants" from a foreign culture and a religious minority who had to find their place within both metropolitan France and the Jewish community.[118] Yet, as "pieds-noirs" or "Français d'Algérie" ("French from Algeria") they had already been French in a colonial "melting pot" where *pied-noir* cuisine *was* French cuisine.

In 1969, Macias wrote the preface to a cookbook called *Le Livre de la Cuisine Pied-Noir* (*The Book of Pied-Noir Cuisine*) in which the book's authors, Irène and Lucienne Karsenty, elucidated the "melting pot" of colonial cuisine:

> It is a cosmopolitan cuisine. The provisions come from many horizons, which we may identify. The Arabs haven't stopped improving couscous, which began as a very rustic dish made from barley or corn. The Turks introduced […] the coffee that still bears their name, *méchoui*, and honey pastries. The Spaniards left meat and fish and rice dishes that are still called by Spanish names: "paella," "caldero,"

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[115] Bahloul, "On Cabbages and Kings," 95.

[116] Bahloul, "On Cabbages and Kings," 95.

[117] Bahloul, "On Cabbages and Kings," 101.

[118] On these struggles to define Algerian Jewish identity through food see: Sara Sussman, "Jews from Algeria and French Jewish Identity," in *Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World*, 217-242, especially 226-231.

> "scabetch" sauce. […] The Jewish dishes that cook all Friday night long […] Moroccan *tajines* […] Tunisia exported to Algiers fish couscous and the *brik.* For its part, the cuisine brought in the nineteenth century by the *colons* has not lost its individuality: béchamel sauce has always maintained *droit de cité* in Algeria.[119]

It is interesting to note that even as they describe the fluid and hybrid culture of North Africa, the authors must resort to reifying modern nations (Turks, Spaniards, Tunisians) backward through history. Along with these diverse and far-flung influences, internal variations and distinctions also emerged. For example: "Each household has its very own version—always the best—of couscous, a dish that permits an infinite number of variations."[120] Yet despite this diversity of origins and variations, the Karsentys argued that a cohesive and distinctive *pied-noir* cuisine did exist in a real "country" that was colonial Algeria. The authors concluded, "May '*pied-noir*' cuisine contribute to the perpetuation of the civilization of a country that hasn't been forgotten by those who loved it, and may it make those who never knew this civilization love it too."[121]

However, while reviving the "melting pot" image helped to legitimate *pied-noir* cuisine to a certain extent, the post-colonial obsession with "roots" and "terroir" called it into question once again. Without explicitly using the word "terroir," Macias evoked the concept in describing how, for *pieds-noirs,* cuisine was a link to the soil from which they had been uprooted:

> We have lost everything in leaving our country. The one thing that remains for us, always alive in our hearts, is memory. Nothing keeps this memory more alive today than our cuisine, that warm and colorful tradition that reconnects us with all that we loved. It brings back a little of the flavor of our land, and wherever we go, we resolve never to prepare any other dishes than "our own." […] *Pied-Noir* cuisine is not an ensemble of "specialties," it is the indispensible fertile ground in which a whole people continue to nourish their roots.[122]

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[119] Irène and Lucienne Karsenty, *Le Livre de la Cuisine Pied-Noir* (Paris: Editions Planète, 1969), 11.

[120] Karsenty, 12.

[121] Ibid, 12.

[122] Enrico Macias, preface to *Le Livre de la Cuisine Pied-Noir,* by Irène and Lucienne Karsenty (Paris: Editions Planète, 1969), 9.

In fact, when *Le Livre de la Cuisine Pied-Noir* was republished by Denoël beginning in 1974 as *La cuisine Pied-Noir*, it was issued as part of a series called "*cuisines du terroir*."[123]

A year after writing the preface to *Le Livre de la Cuisine Pied-Noir*, Macias recorded the song "Dix ans déjà" ("Ten Years Already"), which chronicles the suffering of the *pieds-noirs*, forced to leave their home in search of any port that would have them. It then describes their warm welcome in France, and their integration into French society, where "in every neighborhood you can smell thyme and chilies." The song concludes with a resolution to leave the past behind, "We have made our choice, ten years already, there is no more defeat, we have left and gone for always." [124] Yet a certain melancholic uneasiness in these lines suggests it that the *pieds-noirs* were still trying to convince themselves of this. After all, it is an acceptance of permanent exile, rather than "returning" home after a long adventure abroad, as the dominant French narrative would have it. Even if the *pieds-noirs* can bring their "chilies and thyme" with them, their food cannot be French because their terroir is not French. As Todd Shepard argues,

> In the midst of the exodus, as French Algeria not only ended, but also seemed to abruptly disappear, new definitions and understandings of who was French became important. […] It emerged as obvious, seeming common sense, that some people from Algeria—the "Europeans"—were a priori French, whereas others—Arab and Berber "Muslims"—were Algerians. […] For *pieds-noirs* this meant that they were included within the family of France, at least officially. The place where they were born, however, was not simply no longer part of France, but a place that had never been France.[125]

Ironically, then, it was as a result of the imposition of a post-colonial model of national identity by which national cultures ought to be congruent with and sovereign over their "own" territory, that *pieds-noirs* were denied this same possibility. Following Algerian independence, France and

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[123] Irène and Lucienne Karsenty, *La cuisine Pied-Noir* (Paris, Editions Denoël, 1974).

[124] Enrico Macias, "Dix ans déjà," 1970.

[125] Shepard, "*Pieds-Noirs, Bêtes Noires*," 162.

Algeria became mutually exclusive categories and any challenge to this absolute separation could only be considered an apology for colonialism. Yet, for Macias, being both French and Algerian was as simple and natural as being both French and Gascon.

In 2003 Macias appeared along with Maïté on an episode of a game show called *Douce France*.[126] At one point the host, Christine Bravo, brings up one of Enrico's more "ridiculous" songs, singing the first few words, "I lost 25 kilos…" Macias, feigning hurt, explains that, with great difficulty, he really did lose 25 kilograms once. The song, "J'ai perdu 25 kilos," had been actually been the B-side to "Dix ans déjà," over thirty years earlier. The lyrics humorously describe his difficulties dieting:

> I lost 25 kilos
> Yes, madame, I have proof
> Just now, someone told me
> *"You look like Françoise Hardy!"*
> […]
> Whenever I dine with friends
> Every time it is torture
> While they all eat *Méchoui*
> I devour boiled rice
> It's bad, it's bad
> *"But it's very good for your figure"*
> I dream about merguez
> In front of a bowl of strawberry yogurt
> […]
> "*Ay, ay, ay, that was so hard*
> *You suffered and suffer still*
> *Enrico, we all love you*
> *We're going to make you couscous*"
>
> Couscous! Couscous!
> Every time I sit down to eat
> Couscous! Couscous!
> I lost 25 kilos
> But soon enough I'll find them again![127]

[126] "Enrico Macias," February 22, 2003 episode of *Douce France* (France 2).

[127] Enrico Macias, "J'ai perdu 25 kilos," 1970.

Among the many tempting foods—both North African dishes like *merguez* and *méchoui* and others like paella—only couscous has the power over him to sabotage his diet. However when he sang a portion of the song on *Douce France,* he made a slight revision for Maïté, who he says he "likes to hear [her] talk about food. It makes [his] mouth water." This time, he sang "Couscous, foie gras! I lost 25 kilos, but I'll find them again soon." He included foie gras alongside couscous as singularly irresistible as a nod to Maïté's southwestern cuisine. Yet, by listing these two iconic foods together, he also implicitly placed couscous alongside foie gras in the canon of French cuisine.

Macias was a frequent guest on morning and daytime television talk shows where his favorite food, couscous, was a perennial topic of conversation. At least six times between 1987 and 1997, Macias was joined for television appearances by one or both of his Tunisian friends, Ninette and Raymond Haddad. They ran a couscous restaurant in Paris called La Boule Rouge where, according to Raymond, Macias spent upwards of ten or fifteen thousand francs per month dining with friends.[128] For Macias, these television appearances were an opportunity to naturalize couscous as a French dish like any other regional specialty by investing it with familiar French tropes like maintenance of tradition, *cuisine de femmes,* and the importance of fresh, local, quality ingredients. For instance, in 1989, Ninette Haddad appeared with Macias on the program *Télé Caroline* to demonstrate how to make a *couscous royal*. They had already appeared together a year earlier to make a fish couscous, but Macias defends the decision to make couscous again rather than something new, emphasizing the importance of maintaining traditions. He explains

[128] "Enrico Macias," March 15, 1993 episode of *Combien ça coûte?* (TF1).

that when he dines at Haddad's restaurant, it is a way to "get back to his roots" and that "staying true to one's traditions makes life even more amazing."[129]

Next, they discussed how North African cooking was a women's tradition, passed down "from mother to daughter." The show's hosts treat this tradition as something mysterious and exotic, with one asking, "Can someone learn the *coups de main* [the tricks of the hands] without being a…" and trailing off, perhaps unsure of how to finish the question appropriately. Ninette seems to understand, but seeks to reduce the distancing and othering implied by the host's question: "Of course you can. If you really want to learn, you will succeed. There is no mystery to it. You could learn to do it as well as a girl from that country."[130] Macias admits that he doesn't know how to cook, and in his family it is the role of women to cook, but he insists that women are not denigrated but respected for their important role in the kitchen. Even Macias' backhanded sexism recalled French regional cuisine tropes.

Haddad and Macias also sought to emphasize how, like other French regional cuisines, variations in North African cuisine were rooted in its intimate relationship with the local customs and terrain. Haddad cites the importance of fresh, quality ingredients, and notes that Tunisian couscous, in particular, usually has a lot of different vegetables with it. A few moments later, she mentions Tunisian pastries, but Macias interjects that these kinds of pastries are found throughout North Africa. He explains how North African cuisine is in many ways consistent across the whole region, and but at the same time there are differences between the different countries, as well as regional and local variations. Although Macias neglects to expound further on this point, he is clearly resistant to privileging national differences over other categories.

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[129] "Enrico Macias," May 26, 1989 episode of *Télé Caroline* (Channel 3).

[130] In her ethnographic study of Algerian Jewish cuisine, Joëlle Bahloul similarly describes the importance of the oral tradition in teaching the "*coup de main*"—the manual skill of rolling and separating and testing the couscous when making it by hand. Joëlle Bahloul, *Le Culte de la Table Dressée,* 154.

Implicitly he favors the melting-pot image of a Mediterranean cultural sphere composed of a fluid array of both commonalities and differences along regional, national, ethnic, religious, local or family lines.[131] Yet as the hosts' exoticism and even Haddad's repeated favoring of national distinctions attests, Macias was now living in a post-colonial world of separate nation-states, with separate, distinct national cultures and cuisines. The colonial melting pot of his childhood had been renounced and relegated to the dustbin of history, and no one knew better than Macias the pain and humiliation of trying to dig out his favorite food.

The incapacity of the dominant metropolitan culture to grasp the significance of the Frenchness of colonial Algeria was evident in a 1989 television appearance where Macias discussed his 1980 song, "La France de mon enfance" ("The France of my childhood"). Early in the interview, Macias explains,

> I left Algeria and I respect its independence. I am French, above all, and for me Algeria was a French land, [but] history decided that now it should be another country—which I respect because it did become independent. […But] hearts do not change because a flag changes or because borders are drawn anew.

However, the host appears not to be paying attention, and somehow misses this clear expression of Macias's attachment to the Frenchness of colonial Algeria. A few moments later the host claims to love Macias' song, "La France de mon enfance," but has no comprehension that it is really about Algeria. This is particularly ironic, considering the final lines of the song: "The France of my childhood. I still cry for its absence. It was French, but it is forgotten, the France where I was born."[132] Right after a video clip of Macias singing the song, the host's confusion leads to an awkward exchange:

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[131] "Enrico Macias," May 26, 1989 episode of *Télé Caroline* (Channel 3).

[132] Enrico Macias, "La France de mon enfance," 1980.

Host: What a beautiful homage to France—the France that welcomed you? Is that how you'd put it?

Macias: In 'La France de mon enfance'?! I was thinking of Algeria…

Host: Ah, Algeria rather?

Macias: Yes, because it's a song about my country... Algeria.

Host (changing the subject): What interests me today…

Macias (breaking in): That was France too, for me.[133]

Many have criticized *pieds-noirs* like Macias for being apologists for colonialism whose "nostalgeria" reflects their inability or unwillingness to recognize their own culpability in colonial violence, exploitation, and injustice. As the 2005 law requiring the teaching of the "positive aspects of colonialism" proves, there is still considerable pro-colonialist sentiment in France motivating nostalgia and revisionism, making this critique a valid and very important one. But reducing everything to a question of colonialism vs. national independence also reduces history to the national narratives of France and Algeria, thus validating Macias's protestations about being erased from history. This makes it not only impossible to understand what Macias is saying but also impossible to understand how colonialism has shaped and continues to shape the contemporary world.

Conclusion: "*Couscous Républicain*"

On April 26, 2002, five days after Jean-Marie Le Pen shocked the world by taking second place and advancing to a run-off against Jacques Chirac in the French presidential elections, the

[133] "Paul Amar et Enrico Macias," April 28, 1989 episode of *Matin Bonheur* (Channel 2).

organization SOS Racisme held a rally billed as a "Republican Couscous [Dinner]."[134] The purpose of the rally was to oppose Le Pen and his far-right National Front party. A week later the moderate conservative Chirac, for whom even the Communists mustered their support, won more than 80% of the vote in a second round election that had effectively become a referendum on Le Pen's racist ethno-nationalism.

SOS Racisme, closely linked to the Socialist Party, had long stood for a left-wing republicanism that maintained a strict separation of culture/ethnicity from political citizenship. The president of SOS Racisme in 2002 was the Kabyle-born, Malek Boutih, who once stated,

> If we start speaking Arabic or Mandingo, Breton or Corsican, we will destroy the national community. France is baguettes, wine, cheese and now couscous, plus "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Two hundred years ago […] we created a political national identity, not an ethnic one.[135]

Yet even in this supposed statement of a purely political national identity, Boutih could not help but acknowledge food's significance to French national identity. Similarly, at the critical moment during the 2002 election when it came time for the nation to close ranks and refuse ethnic distinctions in defining the political nation, SOS Racisme paradoxically chose an ethno-cultural symbol, couscous. Moreover, what made couscous an effective, meaningful political symbol of French national unity was that everyone immediately recognized it to be *foreign*. In other words, French republicans can only prove their openness, paradoxically, by reaffirming the foreignness of those they wish to welcome. Yet despite these apparent contradictions, the political statement intended by the "republican couscous" rally was obvious: xenophobic, racist ethno-nationalism had no place in republican France.

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[134] "Plateau brève: SOS racisme organise un couscous républicain," April 26, 2002 episode of *20 heures le journal* (Channel 2).

[135] Malik Boutih, "Mon Parcours," accessed 15 June 2014, http://www.boutih.fr/mon-parcours/.

The reason that couscous was such an effective political symbol in this particular historical moment was not because it represented either a purely republican or purely multiculturalist stance, but because it momentarily found the right balance between culture and politics within an irreconcilable dialectic that was central to French Republic itself. Republican, multiculturalist, and ethno-nationalist conceptions of national identity cannot exist independently of one another. A republican refusal to recognize cultural differences tacitly endorses the dominant (white, middle-class) national cultural. Conversely, legitimizing the political interests of ethno-cultural identities might not only diminish both individual and universal interests, but also further marginalize those cultural identities that confound the dominant categories (*pieds-noirs*, pro-Arab feminists, pro-French Kabyles, to name a few). It is therefore *because* "couscous républicain" is a contradiction in terms that it could forge a momentary alliance between republican universalism, multiculturalism, and ethnic essentialism that actually united the Republic against racism and xenophobia. On a simpler level, however, couscous has come to represent a kind of moderate multiculturalism that most French republicans can accept. Linguistic pluralism? *Impossible!* Gastronomic pluralism? *S'il vous plaît!*

Of course the recent debates about halal meat in France prove that even when it comes to food, striking the right balance between multicultural tolerance and republican conformity remains exceedingly difficult. In these debates, high principles like religious freedom and animal rights barely conceal the bitter racial, ethnic, religious and political conflicts below the surface.[136] Without the threat of a common enemy—whether that is Le Pen or Al-Qaeda—consensus quickly falls apart. Indeed, where exactly to strike the balance between the rights and interests of cultural groups and the needs of the republic for a universal national culture is a

[136] Emma Teitel, "Bigotry in Animal Rights Clothing," *Maclean's* 125, no. 12 (April 2, 2012): 12.

question that is persistently debated, renegotiated, and resisted. What I have tried to show in this chapter is that such questions are rarely settled and even compromise and consensus may be contested. In the post-colonial period, the French and North African nation-states and their majority populations came to agree that colonialism was a mistake and that their nations are fundamentally different, separate, and sovereign. But how much and in what ways these national cultures are different and incompatible has remained central to debates over immigration, assimilation, and minority rights. Furthermore, even the mutual rejection of colonialism and affirmation of national identities have been contested by others such as *pieds-noirs* and Kabyles who feel that their own cultures and identities are being erased by the tide of history. Couscous repeatedly appeared at the heart of these debates because it cannot be reduced to a statement of either unity or difference, compromise or resistance. Rather it is because of its unique position as both a marker of foreignness and of Frenchness that couscous has been, and will likely continue to be, such a powerful cultural-political symbol in post-colonial France.

CONCLUSION:

"Le Repas Gastronomique des Français"

"I have launched an initiative for France to be the first country to apply, in 2009, for UNESCO recognition of our gastronomic heritage. We have the best gastronomy in the world—well, from our point of view, and we welcome any comparisons—and we want it to be recognized as world heritage."

-Nicolas Sarkozy, 45th Annual Agricultural Salon, 2008[1]

Nicolas Sarkozy's comments about gastronomic diversity cited at the outset of this dissertation were part of a 2008 speech given at the inauguration of France's 45th Annual Agriculture Salon. Sarkozy had taken this opportunity to announce a project to request that "French gastronomy" be recognized by UNESCO as part of world heritage. Sarkozy's claim that France has "best gastronomy in the world" elicited criticisms about French arrogance. Some on the team that were preparing the UNESCO dossier worried that this gaff could sink the project before it even got started.[2] But in 2010, the "Gastronomic Meal of the French" was added to the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*.[3] The official description this "element" read:

> The gastronomic meal of the French is a customary social practice for celebrating important moments in the lives of individuals and groups, such as births, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, achievements and reunions. It is a festive meal

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[1] Nicolas Sarkozy, "Inauguration du 45e Salon international de l'agriculture," February 23, 2008, accessed on March 16, 2014, http://www.veronis.fr/discours/transcript/2008-02-23/Sarkozy.

[2] Julia Csergo, "Le « Repas gastronomique des Français » à l'Unesco : éléments d'une inscription au patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'humanité," www.lemangeur-ocha.com, 19 September 2011, 4, accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.lemangeur-ocha.com/le-repas-gastronomique-des-francais-inscrit-au-patrimoine-culturel-immateriel-de-lunesco/.

[3] For a detailed discussion and defense of this project by its primary organizer, see Francis Chevrier, *Notre Gastronomie est une culture: Le repas gastronomique des Français au patrimoine de l'humanité* (Paris: François Bourin Editeur, 2011). For a more critical analysis, see Jean-Louis Tornatore, "Anthropology's Payback: 'The Gastronomic Meal of the French': The Ethnographic Elements of a Heritage Distinction," trans. Marie Deer, in *Heritage Regimes and the State*, ed. Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2012), 341-365, accessed on July 17, 2014, http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/univerlag/2012/GSCP6_Bendix.pdf.

> bringing people together for an occasion to enjoy the art of good eating and drinking. The gastronomic meal emphasizes togetherness, the pleasure of taste, and the balance between human beings and the products of nature. Important elements include the careful selection of dishes from a constantly growing repertoire of recipes; the purchase of good, preferably local products whose flavours go well together; the pairing of food with wine; the setting of a beautiful table; and specific actions during consumption, such as smelling and tasting items at the table. The gastronomic meal should respect a fixed structure, commencing with an apéritif (drinks before the meal) and ending with liqueurs, containing in between at least four successive courses, namely a starter, fish and/or meat with vegetables, cheese and dessert. Individuals called gastronomes who possess deep knowledge of the tradition and preserve its memory watch over the living practice of the rites, thus contributing to their oral and/or written transmission, in particular to younger generations. The gastronomic meal draws circles of family and friends closer together and, more generally, strengthens social ties.[4]

There is a vacillation in the text between universalizing claims about the balance between humans and nature and particularistic claims about pairing food and wine, or the fixed structure of the meal. This ambivalence may reflect the evolution of the actual "element" to be listed by UNESCO from the abstract "French gastronomy" as originally conceived by the project to a concrete cultural practice, "the gastronomic meal of the French." This shows how universalistic, philosophical conceptions of French gastronomy may still run deep, but the post-colonial global context demands a more circumscribed French gastronomic identity characterized by particular traditional practices. In short, UNESCO would recognize France's idiosyncratic five-hour dinners as world heritage but was less willing to entertain French claims to special knowledge of some universal art of eating and drinking.

UNESCO's website dubiously asserts that "Intangible cultural heritage does not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture."[5] However, this claim is contradicted by the very next sentence stating that intangible heritage encourages a "sense of

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[4] "The Gastronomic meal of the French," UNESCO, Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, accessed on July 17, 2014, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00437.

[5] "What is Intangible Heritage," UNESCO, accessed on July 20, 2014, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002.

identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities."[6] And, like the "Gastronomic meal *of the French,*" the titles of nearly every "element" on the list identify a particular nationality or ethnicity.[7] Even as UNESCO claims these elements for the "inheritance of humanity," recognizing cultural particularisms-cum-essentialisms would appear to be the whole point of the list. In this way, UNESCO enshrines the post-colonial ethos of "unity through diversity" which claims particular cultural traditions for some universal "world heritage," thus inverting the central contradiction of French colonialism that had staked a particular claim to universal civilization.

This reconfigured tension between the universal and the particular is evident in a press release issued by the organizers of "Gastronomic meal of the French" campaign following UNESCO's decision to list it:

> This distinction honors the history of our gastronomy, **an essential dimension of the culture and heritage of the French, which is our responsibility to better valorize and transmit to future generations.** For the first time, UNESCO has judged a cuisine worthy of standing among the great creations of human genius such as dance, theatre, music and architecture.
>
> […] The "Gastronomic meal of the French," an **intrinsic element of French culture**, is defined, first of all, **as a social practice common to all to which the French are attached and in which they recognize one another.**
>
> It is also **the place where the wealth, creativity, and diversity of our gastronomy are deployed.** [Bold in original][8]

The point is clear: the French have an "intrinsic," "essential" appreciation of a good meal that has rightly earned them the recognition of the whole world. Despite the careful delineation of a particular dining practice in UNESCO's official description, the organizers now casually

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[6] "What is Intangible Heritage."

[7] "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," UNESCO, accessed on July 20, 2014, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00559.

[8] MFPCA and IEHCA, "Information presse: 'Le repas gastronomique des français' entre au patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'UNESCO," accessed on July 20, 2014, http://www.repasgastronomiquedesfrancais.org/pdf/CommuniquedePresse16nov2010.pdf.

extended this recognition to French gastronomy in general, and even to French cuisine (cooking), which had been specifically excluded.[9] The project's director, Francis Chevrier, has argued that this recognition was a democratic victory for "a popular culture, to which all French people are attached" as opposed to the high culture of elites that had traditionally represented French national culture.[10] Yet this relocation of culture from the museum to the "people" also carries the essentialist implication that culture and identity represent an innate national character. Consequently, maintaining this supposedly essential element of Frenchness would require the participation of the entire population, as noted in the press release:

> The principle impetus for the candidacy—and the first result expected from its success—is a **greater consciousness among the ensemble of French people of the importance and wealth of their gastronomic heritage.** [Bold in original][11]

This need for "greater consciousness among the ensemble of French people," would seem to contradict the earlier claim that this "social practice common to all" was already an "intrinsic element of French culture." And yet, from the point of view of the organizers, this contradiction does not represent faulty logic but actually an existential crisis, since failing to maintain this consciousness would threaten the very essence of Frenchness. This demonstrates clearly how, as throughout the preceding chapters, it is perceived vulnerability, indeed the very transience, of French national identity that has motivated assertions that it is innate, eternal, and essential. What conceals this contradiction and holds it together in productive tension is the post-colonial geopolitical framework that depends on the reified nation. Indeed, it is the very international bodies like UNESCO and the UN, formed to counter-balance overt nationalism, which

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[9] On the exclusion of cuisine, see: Pascal Ory, *L'identité passe à table*, 16.

[10] Francis Chevrier, *Notre gastronomie est une culture: Le repas gastronomique des Français au patrimoine de l'humanité* (Paris: François Bourin Editeur, 2011), 13. See also: Pascal Ory, *L'identité passe à table* (Paris: Presses Universitaires Français, 2013), 9-17.

[11] Ory, *L'identité passé à table,* 16.

continually celebrate national differences and recognizes the nation-state as the legitimate basic unit of sovereignty.

This episode invites us to rethink the fate of the "nation" in the age of globalization. Scholars have generally assumed that national identities are remnants of a more culturally isolated past—either the era of the emergence of modern nation-states or even earlier—and thus view contemporary globalization as a new challenge. Some argue that nations are ultimately doomed in the face of the coming "McWorld."[12] Others hold that the nation constitutes an authentic cultural unit that will persevere through process like "glocalization" that incorporate national particularities into the global economy, such as when McDonald's adapts its menu to local tastes.[13] Both arguments presume that national identities emanate from the insular cultural traditions and internal social structures of national communities, and the debate is limited to whether these can survive the global onslaught of transcultural interference.

This dissertation contends that it is precisely because globalization and nationalism are diametrically (or rather, dialectically) opposing forces that the advancement of the former nourishes the latter. The increased interactions between people, goods, and ideas from far off lands promised by globalization provide more opportunities for national identification. As Immanuel Wallerstein has argued, the nation was preceded and produced by "the world-system"

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[12] Benjamin R. Barber *Jihad vs. McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy* (New York: Ballentine Books, 2001).

[13] For the resilience of national cultures, see: Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995). The term "glocalization" first appeared as a business and marketing buzzword in the 1980s and 1990s, but has also inspired social theorization. Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 25-44. For a good survey of more arguments about the relationship between nationalism and globalization, see Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, *Theorizing Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 169-198.

in the first place.[14] My work suggests that national identities, and their culinary incarnations, are not merely surviving, but are actually constituted by transnational challenges and are likely to thrive as these challenges multiply. It is the uncertainty about who belongs created by interactions with "others" that precipitates the process of identifying essential traits, reifying national categories, and finally defending and preserving national identity from external threats.

In order to understand the specific changes in constructions of Frenchness observed in this dissertation, I have shown that it is necessary to look at how France's global challenges, opportunities, and interests changed in the post-colonial period. In the 1970s, following the postwar wave of modernization and the revolutionary spirit of 1968, nouvelle cuisine was an attempt to revitalize French cuisine and retain some of the international influence France had been hemorrhaging since decolonization and the rise of the Cold-War superpowers. Inventive and worldly chefs like Paul Bocuse inspired popular enthusiasm for a time. But modernization and international hegemony were becoming associated more with "American" threats like fast food than "French" virtues. By the 1980s, the earthy traditionalism of *cuisine de terroir* and Maïté's rustic regional cuisine had emerged as more relevant representations of France's embattled national heritage. Ironically, this ostensibly defensive stance also proved lucrative and influential on the global stage. Global demand grew for French artisanal food products and for gastronomic and agricultural tourist attractions. Concepts such as "terroir" and origin label regulations even revitalized French leadership and *rayonnement,* as other countries took note of the viability of these French models for navigating globalization. Yet this redefinition of French gastronomy rooted in local heritage remained incomplete and unsettled by France's large

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[14] Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities,* ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (New York: Verso, 1991), 71-85; Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

immigrant communities, republican legacy, and colonial past, as seen in the final chapter of this dissertation in the many diverse representations of couscous as both "French" and "foreign."

What is the future of French gastronomy? Nearly every history of French cuisine concludes with an obligatory discussion of the supposed "decline" of French cuisine. This is also the perennial question asked in the media every time there is some "bad" news: a McDonald's being opened inside the Louvre; the lack of French restaurants on international top ten lists; the industrialization of "traditional" cafés and bistros; the declining frequency and length of family meals, and so on.[15] Historian Alain Drouard notes the "fatal" blow dealt by industrialization to the "French Gastronomic Myth," but argues for taking this opportunity to "invent a new gastronomy for our times and for everyone."[16] My work has shown that this reinvention has been underway since the 1970s, but this "new" French gastronomy has appeared as a return to tradition. Patrick Rambourg argues, however, that French cuisine cannot be saved by taking refuge in "grandma's cooking" and "terroir," because these concepts are all too easily exploited by food industry marketing.[17] Rambourg may have legitimate concerns about the quality and authenticity of such food, but surely commercial viability is one measure suggesting many consumers are satisfied with commercialized "traditional" foods. Moreover, as my work has argued, the fact that gastronomic traditions are myths that may be easily manipulated and exploited has actually made them more relevant, useful, and valuable markers of national identity.

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[15] For a non-academic discussion on the "decline" of French cuisine, see: Michael Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010).

[16] Alain Drouard, *Le mythe gastronomique français* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2010), 144.

[17] Patrick Rambourg, *Histoire de la cuisine et la gastronomie françaises*: *Du Moyen Age au XXe siècle* (Paris: Editions Perrin, 2010), 304-305.

Pascal Ory notes that that reality of the French diet has rarely come close to romanticized French gastronomic myths. But he is optimistic that French gastronomy will persevere in the age of fusion cuisines and fast food, as long as the French maintain their national appreciation of good food and the sociability of the table as they embrace the *métissage* (mixing) of the "global village."[18] This national appreciation of good food, he says, is really what UNESCO's recognition was about. Similarly, Priscilla Ferguson points out the similarities in the conditions today—international exchange, national investment, widening prosperity, entrepreneurial chefs, and proliferating gastronomic media—with those of the early nineteenth century that first produced the "triumph of French cuisine."[19] She argues that while the gastronomic field will become more internationalized (but not homogenized), the special French proclivity to elevate the meal to the level of art will remain potent "for all times and places."[20] Both Ory and Ferguson show that France's culinary reputation is a discursively constructed myth, but they still trace it back to some fundamental element in French culture shared by the French population.

Taking this emphasis on the discursive construction of French gastronomic identity a step further, my work suggests that it is the representations of French cuisine themselves which constitute French gastronomic identity, rather than some underlying cultural particularity of the French. Furthermore, I have argued that the myth of French gastronomy has always been defined in a global context, since that is where "French gastronomy" must be identified and distinguished from "other" food. What has been most exceptional about French gastronomy, then, is not the passion the French have for food so much as the passion the world has for French food. Indeed, this has been the case for a long time. From the foreign tourists who chronicled Paris's first

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[18] Ory, *L'identité passe à table,* 128-29.

[19] Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste,* 165-167.

[20] Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste,* 201.

restaurants and Auguste Escoffier's London clientele to Julia Child on American TV and Enrico Macias's crusade for "French" couscous, people of many nationalities and perspectives have participated in making and remaking, reinforcing and challenging French gastronomic identity.

Thus, despite popular belief, the idea of French food does actually directly reflect the attitudes of the French people or the whole ensemble of food eaten in France. While Antonin Carême was building the reputation of "French cuisine" with feasts for aristocrats from across Europe, most of the French population ate a bland, insufficient diet. Likewise, the ubiquity of McDonald's, doner kebab, and sushi restaurants in Paris, has not, as of yet, diminished the world's supply of crème brûlée. The myth of French gastronomy has always been a metaphor, not for what it really is to be French, but for what Frenchness *means* in the world. In the Belle Epoque, at the height of rural modernization and colonial expansion, the narrative of the "triumph" of a "universal" French cuisine prevailed because that was the image of French civilization that powerful interests sought to project. Today, it is the narratives of the "decline of French cuisine" and "endangered local traditions" that fit France's broader situation in the post-colonial world. Ironic as it may be, that narrative of "decline" and "endangerment" has been very effective in serving the interests of France, its culinary reputation, and the producers of French food. After all, what drives demand better than perceived scarcity?

At the same time, adopting a traditional image of "French cuisine" has not prevented the ongoing diversification or innovation of cooking and dining in France.[21] While alarmists continue to lament France's lack of Michelin stars or the poor showing of French chefs on best-in-the-world lists, French chefs themselves are renouncing their stars and criticizing this system

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[21] Michael Steinberger, "Can Anyone Save French Food?" *nytimes.com,* March 28, 2014, accessed November 14, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/30/magazine/can-anyone-save-french-food.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C{%222%22%3A%22RI%3A12%22}.

that claimed the life of Bernard Loiseau—the chef who committed suicide in 2003 after a reduced score in Gault-Millau and rumors that he could lose his third Michelin star.[22] The best restaurants in Paris and Lyon, as Ory attests, have continued to achieve excellence, especially in becoming more overtly transnational.[23] New cosmopolitan discourses of gastronomic criticism have emerged with publications such as *Le Fooding.* But none of these trends need to match the dominant narrative of traditionalistic "French cuisine" in order to find success in France. Within limits, French diners can have a more parochial notion of "French" gastronomy, without necessarily becoming more parochial in their own appetites.

Moreover, this new myth of essentialized French traditionalism and particularism is also finding great success in the global market. Since the 1980s, the world has embraced French gastronomy in terms of the excellence of its traditional products, classic recipes, and old-world *savoir-faire* and *joie de vivre.* I need only walk down the aisles of my local American supermarket to see many imported French cheeses, wines, and fruit preserves alongside American-made, French-style products like *crème fraîche*, baguettes, and Dijon mustard. On the menu at a hip, local "gastro-pub" alongside fancy burgers and tacos, I find "steak-frites." On television, Anthony Bourdain and Gordon Ramsay pepper their speech with passable French almost as much as with four-letter words. If Julia Child is no longer with us, her French-accented partner in crime, Jacques Pepin, still holds culinary court on public television. The titles of recent popular American publications on French cuisine are too many to mention.[24] In other words, the

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[22] Rambourg, 302.

[23] Ory, *L'identité passe à table,* 127.

[24] Two notable examples include: Adam Gopnik, *The Table Comes First: Family, France, and the Meaning of Food* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011); Luke Barr, *Provence, 1970: M. F. K. Fisher, Julia Child, James Beard and the Reinvention of American Taste* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2013).

wide range of food, cuisine, and gastronomy identified as "French" is hardly in decline anywhere. Whether any of it is good or "authentic," of course, is a matter of taste.

From a higher vantage, then, this dissertation has been the story of a country that had long understood itself to be an empire learning to distinguish itself as one nation among many. This has taken place in a world that has become smaller, more crowded, and more diverse. Transnational forces have been perceived as threatening to French national identity, culture, and gastronomic traditions. Yet these conditions and even the perception of endangerment itself have actually helped to sharpen the definition, heighten the awareness, and increase the economic viability of France's local products and traditions. In the disorienting cultural kaleidoscope of the post-colonial world, food's unique combination of corporeal intimacy and global exportability has made it a solid foundation for constructing identity and tradition. France's wealth of local and traditional foods and its global reputation for culinary excellence have ensured the continued potency of the myth of French gastronomy in the global age.

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