BETWEEN PLACE: FOOD CONSUMPTION AND SPACES OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN MONTPELLIER, FRANCE

by

Jonathan Munetz

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Introduction

"If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast," wrote Ernest Hemingway about his time there in the 1920s.[1] He surely had more in mind than profiteroles, foie gras, and terrines when he penned these words. Hemingway's Paris was electric, pulsing with the café culture of the Left Bank at the pinnacle of the modern age. This was Paris—a Bohemian, exuberant ideal of how it must be to live as an expatriate, especially an American, in France. What Hemingway attempted to capture with words, George Gershwin set to music. The melodies of *An American in Paris*, composed in 1928, evoke a traveller's path through the city at that time.[2] If you have a musical imagination, perhaps you can feel the place in that era through Gershwin's tone poem; or if you are a more literary sort, maybe you can picture Hemingway's city—in the company of Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Pablo Picasso. Such a place now exists only as sets of recollections. Yet this Paris of the past lives on. What is more, this long-past or maybe merely mythic capital and all of its romantic evocations are projected onto the entire country, if only in our minds. This is what it must be like to live as a foreigner in France.

Such an image endures in American culture. Just this past summer, Woody Allen drew on these collective sets of recollections anew. In Allen's film, *Midnight in Paris*, Gil, a nebbish American screenwriter (portrayed by Owen Wilson), travels each night in a magical car back to 1920s Paris, where he is welcomed by F. Scott Fitzgerald. He promptly meets Hemingway,

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[1] Ernest Hemingway. *A Moveable Feast*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964, epigraph.
[2] "Gershwin, George." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev., edited by Michael Kennedy. Oxford Music Online, accessed August 31, 2011, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e4213.

Picasso, and Gertrude Stein. This is the Golden Age, he declares—the best time and place to live. Soon he is cavorting with the who's who of expats in the city, champagne in hand. Yet, it all seems a bit too easy as Gil is seamlessly welcomed and integrated into a world not his own. Gil eventually realizes this, too, when he and his beautiful love-interest are transported by carriage to her idealized era, the Paris of the Belle Époque. As she decides to stay, he concludes that a Golden Age is the stuff of fantasy; better to return to his time and place and fully engage in life on his terms. Yes, the romantic evocations of Hemingway's France are sadly yet clearly unattainable. And just as we know that we cannot truly step into this world of the past, we can recognize that Paris, romantic or not, is not the whole of France. So what then becomes of the movable feast as we venture out from the center to the provinces?

In terms of feeling welcomed with open arms, like Gil, provincial France is just the place to relieve oneself of such rosy delusions. Even the French themselves often did not try to assimilate in their adopted city if work or fortune took them away from their native province. As historical geographer Graham Robb explains, "Foreigners who go to live in French towns today usually hope to be integrated and accepted by the community. This was not usually a preoccupation of the French inhabitants. By the mid-nineteenth century, half of the inhabitants of Paris came from the provinces and most of them did not consider themselves Parisian… Mentally, they never left their pays." [3] The advantage of this provincialism, though, was that "France itself was like a giant city in which every district had its own speciality. Horse-dealers came from Normandy […] porters and locksmiths (and, supposedly, lock-pickers) from Lyon,

[3] Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France: A Historical Geography from the Revolution to the First World War*, 1st American ed. (New York: Norton, 2007), 155-56.

second-and-clothes dealers from Alsace, [... and] cooks from Montpellier."[4] As the supposed provenance of cooks, Montpellier is the place to travel to find out if France, aside from Paris, continues to be a moveable feast.

Food is a powerful imaginary in how we see France from afar. France is the land of cuisine; of baguettes, croissants, and petits fours; of cheeses and champagne; of gastronomy; and of gastronomes.[5] This is the place that lent the English language one of its sweetest and most cherished words—*dessert.* It is a land that has taught the world how to eat and how to discuss eating. We can even hear as much in the very word "cuisine," a far more refined-sounding and sweeping word than its Anglo-Saxon equivalent, "cookery."

We have now moved conceptually from the realm of the figurative moveable feast to the realm of the literal one. Yet they are inseparable, for if we wish to examine how a society impacts or embraces newcomers, there is no easier way to do so than to look at its relationship with food. Put another way, food and social life reflect and impact one another. Scholars have long noted that food is the easiest way to cross cultural boundaries.[6] So, what better place to explore the interplay between food and culture than France?

Project Aims and Methodology

This work asks the simple question: What is the role of food for those between place? Such a question sits at the nexus of local food and culinary tourism discourses. Local food

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[4] Ibid., 156.
[5] In 2010, French cuisine, or more precisely "the gastronomic meal of the French," was recently added to UNESCO's *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. UNESCO Culture Section, "The gastronomic meal of the French," accessed September 7, 2011, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00437.
[6] Pierre L. Van Den Berghe, "Ethnic Cuisine: Culture in Nature," *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 7, no. 3 (1984).

literature has tended to assume that both local foods and their consumers are—and always have been—endemic to a place; that is, its subjects are static in both time and space. Conversely, culinary tourism discourse often concerns itself with mobile consumers who are seeking the next great taste experience, although it does recognize that one need not necessarily move to cross sociocultural boundaries. The insights of such discourse on boundary-crossing have much to add to agro-food scholarship. (These bodies of scholarship are discussed further in the literature review section, below.) My project inhabits a middle ground between these two bodies of work, looking for consumers who are neither truly settled nor purely transient. The central aim of the project was to interview expatriates living in Montpellier, France about their experiences with local food in order to elucidate the role of food and eating in their assimilation process.

I embarked on this study during a semester-long graduate research exchange at Montpellier SupAgro*, Le Centre international d'études supérieures en sciences agronomiques.* While there, I recruited twenty-three foreigners in Montpellier and its environs to participate in a semi-structured, face-to-face interview. Subjects had lived in France for between two months and two years, said they were comfortable with discussing their experiences with food in their newfound home in English, and were over the age of eighteen. The two-month to two-year timeframe for participants was chosen as a window for people who were "transitioning." They were not yet grounded or emplaced in their locale nor were they about to move on before their experiences began to seem mundane.

Participants were recruited by placing posters in the Montpellier city center in spots frequented by expatriates, such as cafés, bars, and bookstores. E-mail messages were also sent to the Montpellier SupAgro general listserv and to a French-as-a-Second-Language school with

which a SupAgro faculty member was connected to find potential interview subjects. In addition, I engaged in face-to-face networking, when appropriate, to directly recruit participants. Once subjects were interviewed, further interviewees were recruited via the snowball method. Interviews were conducted in May and June of 2010, and recorded digitally. I then analyzed the interview recordings for recurring themes, common threads, and unexpected revelations.

A large number of my interview subjects were students, which is not surprising given the recruitment methods at my disposal as well as the fact that Montpellier's population consists of about one-third students.[7] I first examined the interviews with subjects who were *not* students, on the assumption that they were closer to my target population of people who were settling into France but not about to move on. I quickly found, however, that the information gained from discussions with students and non-students was equally valuable and mutually enriching. I have augmented this information with perspectives from the popular and scholarly press. I have not recounted findings from every participant who took to the time to speak with me for my aim was to be evocative rather than claiming to be representative.

Sample questions for the semi-structured interviews may be found in Appendix A. A copy of the poster to be used for subject recruitment may be found in Appendix B.

Literature Review

My work is informed by three important scholarly discussions: work by cultural and historical geographers, agro-food scholarship on local food, and culinary tourism discourse. As one of the principal questions before us is how foreigners encounter a new place and negotiate

[7] In total, eleven of my twenty-three participants were students.

their way into a life there, let us "place" our discussion in a geographical context before discussing the two other bodies of scholarship in turn.

My project is based on the idea of being between places. Entrikin has suggested that there is a betweenness to the concept of place itself. Place may be interrogated either subjectively or objectively, and Entrikin suggests that we geographers should do both.[8] I claim that my subjects are "between place" in a subjective sense. Although they are objectively in France, they are psychologically transitioning. As the old maxim, "there is no disputing taste" suggests, personal experiences with taste are particularly subjective. As such, this project attempts to discover people's experiences of being between place by exploring their attitudes toward and recollections regarding food.

Tuan has elucidated how we can take a perspective of experience in order to understand how people transform universal, unfamiliar space into familiar, particular place.[9] Tuan considers experience "a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows his world."[10] Yet, he cautions, "the special quality of a fragrance, taste, or touch cannot be projected onto a public stage other than through pictorial and linguistic means."[11] We cannot taste as my subjects tasted. Yet we may explore how food impacted them in a broader context as they experienced their new homes by attending to the thoughts they had about it, the stories they told about it, and the significance they attached to it.

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[8] J. Nicholas Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
[9] Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979).
[10] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place: An Experiential Perspective," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 2 (1975): 151.
[11] Ibid., 152.

It is such stories, recollections, and meanings that are the center of my study. Such an approach is similar to that of historical geographer John Western in his work on Strasbourg. Western reminds us that "You don't have anything if you don't have the stories" in the epigraph to his work.[12] He tells us plainly, "That the book's epigraph highlights 'stories' expresses my sentiments."[13] Western lets his broader themes arise from the stories of his subjects. So do I. Like Western, my arguments move from the particular to the general, and in large part "particular" means that I have closely attended to the experiences of my participants. Also like Western's work, the goal of this project was not a comprehensive review of academic scholarship on the themes that it engages—e.g., immigration in France, globalization, or foodways; rather it gives primacy to the world experienced by its subjects as they recounted it.[14]

Many subjects' stories show how they, newcomers to France, navigated a middle ground, a sense of being neither quite here nor quite there. In such instances, the work of Tim Cresswell proves insightful.[15] Cresswell explores objects and actions that are either "in-place" or "out-of-place." He reminds us that there is nothing natural about what is considered appropriate (in-place) or inappropriate (out-of-place) within a certain sociospatial context. Yet, when someone transgresses what is considered normal, proper, or commonsense, we notice behaviors that had been previously naturalized, existing only at the periphery of our awareness.[16] In Cresswell's language, these are instances of "transgression." Such transgressions are not necessarily intentional resistance to established norms; they may be entirely accidental. My subjects often

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[12] John Western, *Self-Portrait: Strasbourg, The City of Europe* (Syracuse University, forthcoming).
[13] Ibid., 7.
[14] Ibid., 6.
[15] Timothy John Cresswell, "In Place/out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1992).
[16] Ibid., 1-11.

spoke of violating the normative foodways around them. At these points of transgression, French people either showed my subjects how to behave properly within the prevailing cultural context or, for the less fortunate, sanctioned them for behaving differently than expected.[17]

Because at one moment my subjects may have acted in way that was in-place and at another moment in a way that seemed out-of-place, it makes sense to refer to them, as subjects, with the liminal term "between place." Such terminology complements Cresswell's work, and the synergies do not end there. Cresswell argues that expectations regarding behavior construct and shape ideologies in place. His focus on the construction of normative landscapes relies on notions of territoriality and occurs largely in the public sphere. My project's focus on the construction of normative foodscapes does not take a territoriality-based perspective and occurs more often in the private sphere. The world of Cresswell's subjects is somewhat atypical. He examines graffiti artists in New York, a hippy convoy at Stonehenge, and a women's peace camp set up to protest nuclear missiles at a United States Air Force base in Greenham Common, England. The world of my subjects is one of knives and forks. Their transgressions occur in the most quotidian of landscapes: *sûr la table.* These are not small distinctions; still, both works deal with the intersection of different groups of people with differing notions of what constitutes appropriate behavior.

So, who defines what normal is? Cresswell's work tells us that it is those with the power to do so. But, perhaps because the nature of my subjects' transgressions was arguably more

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[17] For instance: A Scottish teacher ate Roquefort for breakfast with honey. Her French roommate informed her that she was bizarre. Conversely, a young American girl wanted to have Nutella on bread for dessert with lunch. Her French boyfriend informed her that you could only eat that in the morning, at breakfast time. A pair of Czech girls decided to eat an apple at the break between their classes. A French student told them that they were always eating—always! One did not eat between meals.

subtle and certainly more private, these foreigners in France were sometimes able to dispute taste, offering the French people with whom they interacted an opening, an *amuse-bouche,* to new ways of eating and thinking. Such instances were moments of hope. In the main, Cresswell's argument—that power defines normative actions in place—stands; there are cases, however, where the power to shape what is considered well and good may lay in unexpected hands. It is my hope that exploring such instances proves insightful.

Now, let us turn to the other bodies of work that provide insight to this project. First among these is agro-food scholarship concerning local food. Much academic inquiry has focused on defining the minutiae of local, such as attempting to pin down an absolute distance or time traveled from a consumer's home to a point of food production or purchase.[18] It is not surprising that researchers have found that consumers have a wide range of opinions on what comprises "local" food.[19] There are instances in which the answers to such questions have practical applications in terms of marketing products to consumers or in terms of living or enacting a locavore lifestyle.[20] Yet, overall, it is safe to assert that what constitutes local changes

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[18] For instance, a U.K. study found that consumers considered local foods to be those which were produced and sold within a 20-50 mile radius of a their home, while a U.S. study found that the majority of consumer's conceptions of local was less than 25 miles away (S Chambers et al., "Local, National and Imported Foods: A Qualitative Study," *Appetite* (2007); Wuyang Hu et al., "What Is Local and for What Foods Does It Matter?" in *Southern Agricultural Economics Association Annual Meeting* (Orlando, Florida 2010). The San Francisco-based Locavores group along with Smith and MacKinnon seem to be perfectly content within the confines of a 100-mile radius, whereas Gary Nabhan suggests a 250-mile radius for the less fertile Arizona desert (Jessica Prentice, et al., "Locavores," accessed May 1, 2010, http://www.locavores.com/; Gary Paul Nabhan, *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods* (New York: Norton, 2002); Alisa Dawn Smith and J. B. MacKinnon, *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2007).) In Ohio and Kentucky, more than three-quarters of the consumers queried by Hu et al. did not consider food produced within 100 miles to be local (Hu et al., "What is Local and for What Foods Does it Matter?.")

[19] Lydia Zepeda and Catherine Leviten-Reid, "Consumers' Views on Local Food," *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 35, no. 3 (2004).

[20] For example, the Willy Street Co-op in Madison, Wisconsin, defines local as food produced within the state or within a 150-mile radius of the county where the cooperative is located. (Willy Street Co-op, "Product Selection Philosophy," accessed March 24, 2010, http://www.willystreet.coop/product_philosophy.)

with the place and with the context. People's lived individual experiences also vary widely. For this reason, it is the perspective of experience, like Western's emphasis on stories, that informs my work. Capturing individuals' rich, multifarious impressions of local foods as they experienced them seems to be the best way to valorize the fluid and dynamic nature of those foods and of their eaters within a broader context.

The perspective of experience is also helpful for engaging with a particularly salient critique within the food literature, the nativist critique. Hinrichs and Winter have raised the concern that local food movements might exhibit a "defensive localism," excluding those not from a particular place.[21] In light of this apprehension, Dupuis and Goodman have called for a "reflexive politics of localism."[22] I fully agree that in order to be inclusive, local food systems must be consciously reflexive. As will become apparent in chapter one, however, I am somewhat more reticent about efficacy or desirability of a reflexive *politics* of localism.

Overall, my central research question of "what is the role of food for those between place?" aligns well with existing calls in the literature for a less "defensive" and more "reflexive" localism.[23] My project directly responds to those calls by examining the experiences of foreigners as they acclimated to a new environment. It valorizes the voice of the "others" whom scholars have worried such movements would exclude. In addition, this research hopes to foster further discussion by directly addressing the static bias in the literature. Recognizing this static bias

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[21] C. Clare Hinrichs, "The Practice and Politics of Food System Localization," *Journal of Rural Studies* 19, no. 1 (2003); Michael Winter, "Embeddedness, the New Food Economy and Defensive Localism," *Journal of Rural Studies* (2003).

[22] E. Melanie DuPuis and David Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism," *Journal of Rural Studies* 21, no. 3 (2005).

[23] Hinrichs, "The Practice and Politics of Food System Localization."; Winter, "Embeddedness, the new food economy and defensive localism New Food Economy and Defensive Localism."; DuPuis and Goodman, " Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism."

merely entails realizing that people move, they settle in new places, and they consume new foods as part of their assimilation process in those places. That is, who and what are "local" and to where are time-mediated processes. Describing and engaging with the experiences of these foreigners, hopefully elucidates the workings of such processes. In this way, I hope my work is "reflexively local."

There is another body of academic work, with which local food literature does not widely engage, which directly addresses the crossing of cultural boundaries. This is work on culinary tourism. I particularly embrace Lucy Long's folkloristic perspective on the phenomenon, which takes the catholic view of culinary tourism as the intentional exploration of othered foodways.[24] In addition, Jill Rudy has turned her gaze to those from elsewhere who stay for an extended period of time in one place. Her subjects and mine have much in common that separates them from typical tourists. As she notes, "[w]ithout significant effort to avoid unfamiliar culinary systems, the long-term visitor or resident will experience more frequent encounters with new aspects of foodways than the culinary tourist: more new food items, new meal systems and cuisines, and new methods of food procurement, preparation, and presentation."[25] These people's longer-term stay in a new place "most likely creates compelling twin desires for new *and* familiar eating experiences," she explains.[26]

It is not surprising that the amount of time spent in a place alters people's experiences in that place. Yet, this simple insight is important to help situate work such as mine or Rudy's. At

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[24] Lucy M. Long, "Culinary Tourism: A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness," in *Culinary Tourism*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 21.
[25] Jill Terry Rudy, "Of Course in Guatemala, Bananas are Better: Exotic and Familiar Eating Experiences of Mormon Missionaries," in *Culinary Tourism*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 131.
[26] Ibid.

one end of a spectrum, local food literature often assumes stasis for either the foods it studies or their consumers. At the other end, work on culinary tourism concerns itself with mobile consumers who seek the next great taste experience, moving on before anything seems too familiar or mundane.[27] Projects such as mine or Rudy's inhabit a middle ground, looking for consumers who are neither truly settled nor purely transient. Thus, I hope to enrich agro-food scholarship with the insights on boundary-crossing provided by culinary tourism literature.

Inhabiting a middle ground was not always easy or pleasant for my research subjects as they attempted to acclimate to both food and social life in their newfound homes, however. As Bessière has suggested within the literature on local food, if newcomers value items or practices differently from longstanding residents, conflicts may arise. [28] Indeed, my subjects' experiences were, at times, characterized by misunderstandings or disagreements. In some instances, such moments of contention presented opportunities for innovation and inventiveness in terms of French food and French social interaction more generally (see, chapter two.) In these instances, Long's interpretation of people intentionally exploring another culture seems apt. In other cases, however, the back-and-forth between foreigners and their French counterparts was not characterized by a sense of engagement or a spirit of exchange. The foreigners in question were left feeling out-of-place. In such moments, Cresswell's ideas might provide a useful framework.

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[27] Jennie Germann Molz, " Eating Difference: The Cosmopolitan Mobilities of Culinary Tourism," *Space and Culture* 10, no. 1 (2007). Molz examines the accounts of round-the-world travelers who eat to feel displaced rather than emplaced. As she explains with regards to her subjects, "Instead of eating to feel at home, culinary tourists eat to feel displaced, voluntarily engaging in the sense of outsiderness or alienation that can result from eating strange and unfamiliar foods": 82.

[28] J Bessière, " Local Development and Heritage: Traditional Food and Cuisine as Tourist Attractions in Rural Areas," *Sociologia Ruralis* (1998): 28, states: "Difficulties may arise if non-members happen to grant a special value to an item of heritage and somehow consider it as theirs, until they eventually play an active part in its protection. Take the example of newcomers or residents not belonging to a specific village community, or tourists appropriating a heritage, and thereby creating conflicts."

The three scholars just mentioned, Bessière, Long, and Cresswell, represent three distinct disciplinary perspectives on the same issue: that of local food, culinary tourism, and cultural geography respectively. They are mutually enriching. Yet, you will not find their voices, or those of other academics, dominating the body of this thesis. Rather, it is Western's sentiments and approach that guide this work—that is, I hope to let the stories speak for themselves.

Structure

This thesis takes the following basic structure: chapter one explores people's experiences with a particular local product, Roquefort cheese. Roquefort came up spontaneously and repeatedly in my interviews. I never intended to discuss it per se; people just wanted to talk about it. People's individual experiences with Roquefort contrast with the politically imbued discourses around this product and its circulation in the global marketplace. In addition to Roquefort's political role or lack thereof, I describe the role of chance in the cheese's storied history. I argue that greater attention be paid to random confluences of events, the happy accidents of the sort that characterize the origin story of Roquefort (recounted in that section.)

Chapter two delves further into individual experiences regarding local food for foreigners in France. It focuses particularly on the interactions between two women and their French boyfriends to demonstrate that new perspectives and experiences of foreigners are a locus for innovation in French cuisine. Their experiences are juxtaposed with those of a three-star Michelin chef, who similarly found that influences from abroad allowed him to be innovative in both his cooking and his thinking.

Chapter three further situates the place of foreigners in French society. While most of the people discussed earlier come from a place of privilege, as white, first-world Anglos, this section attempts to give voice, more specifically, to those who are less privileged within France.

Scale

Although each chapter of the thesis deals with issues at varying scales, the general scale of inquiry with respect to food gets larger with each of the three chapters. As just mentioned, chapter one focuses on people's experiences with a single, regional specialty product—Roquefort. While the cheese was a common element of each subject's experiences, its meanings and their implications varied amongst the people interviewed.

Chapter two places products within the context of cuisines. As such, food items are seen as ingredients in a dish, dishes in a meal, or elements of a larger system of cuisine. Foreign influences are considered as potential sources of innovation, both materially, in terms of what a meal is comprised of, and ideally, in terms of people's conceptions about "what goes with what," or not.

While chapter three considers specific products and cuisines as well, it does so within a larger social context. It begins by examining impressions about the industrial production and taste of food in France in contrast to that of participants' homelands; it continues by elucidating the different structuring of time around eating; it deals with the variety and relative cost of food; and it concludes with how people's experiences with food evoke processes of exclusion within French society more generally. The final section of this chapter then deals with a particular social and spatial context in which those who were unable to connect to their French locale

through food may find a space of inclusion, one with a clearly global sense of place within their local context. That place and its food, which, broadly speaking, operates on a global scale, is McDonald's. Although its reach is worldwide, much of the evidence and insights surrounding this food purveyor (restaurant proves to be a contentious term in this case) are specific to France. To what extent the reader feels comfortable generalizing McDonald France's actions to the corporation in a larger, global context, I leave to him or her.

Throughout the body of the work, I do not call attention explicitly to the scale of inquiry. Still, as one reads on, it is worth noting that the insights drawn as these different foreigners interact with "food" occur at different scales.

Chapter 1 – Encounters with Roquefort

– *Bonjour.*

– *Bonjour.*

– *Je voudrais un …*

(I would like a …) the bakery customer grapples with the word, unsure not only of what she would like at that moment but also of how to properly signal to the woman behind the counter which of the delectable pastries before her she is about to buy.

– I would like one of those – she says, in her best French, pointing at an elegant piece of *patisserie.*

– *Pardon?*

– I would like one of … – she tries again. Her pronunciation cannot be that terrible, she says to herself. She has lived here six months already. She steels herself to the almost incredible response, as the bakery attendant picks up the wrong pastry, a few pieces down in the bakery case. Really!? This one begins with a vowel. What I said begins with a consonant. All I want is something to eat. You must be willfully choosing not to understand me, really.

It is not hard to see how the local cuisine in a new locale can serve as a shibboleth. And it is experiences like this that point at the initial impetus behind the inquiry you are about to read. This project expands upon the nativist critique of local food systems.[29] It pays particular attention to a call in the local food literature for reflexivity in how we conceive of

[29] DuPuis and Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism."; Winter, "Embeddedness, the New Food Economy and Defensive Localism."; Hinrichs, "The Practice and Politics of Food System Localization."

local. That call, as articulated by Dupuis and Goodman, was not just for a reflexive view of localism, however, but rather for a reflexive politics of localism.[30] Such a distinction is more than semantic. Local food systems research and its critics and critiques have privileged the political and the economic. This claim should not be surprising or controversial. Indeed, this body of scholarship has increasingly connected food system localization and emplacement with environmental sustainability and social justice.[31] Kloppenburg has invited us to "come into the foodshed" whereas Nabhan has suggested that we "come home to eat." Kingsolver, Smith and MacKinnon, and Nabhan have documented and shared their own personal attempts to do so, living close to the land and consuming only what was locally available to them. They have shown how they have re-located the local, becoming grounded and emplaced in their communities.[32]

Dupuis and Goodman state that the goal of their particular critique is "to put localist actions on a better political footing," in order to contribute to a more open and democratic politics of local food.[33] It is a worthy goal. Yet, it is not clear that emphasizing the political nature of localist food actions is the most effective way to address their feared exclusionary or nativist results. For, while all actions may have political implications, they do not necessarily have political motivations. Clearly, enacting or living a reflexive localism is difficult, but it is not necessarily because of the nativist political inclinations that many scholars intimate.

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[30] DuPuis and Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism."
[31] Jack Kloppenburg Jr., John Hendrickson, and G.W. Stevenson, "Coming in to the Foodshed," *Agriculture and Human Values* 13, no. 3 (1996).
[32] Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, Kindle ed. (New York: Harper Collins e-books, 2007), Amazon Kindle; Nabhan, *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods*; Smith and MacKinnon, *The 100-mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating*.
[33] DuPuis and Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism," 360.

Rather, the obstacles to such reflexivity are comprised of habits, attitudes, inclinations, and acquired patterns of behavior. In short, they are cultural.

This distinction between cultural and political motivations, which might be reiterated as unconscious versus conscious decision-making and reactions, is apparent from the experiences of the participants in this study and of those in their lives. For instance, some of the foreigners who participated in this research had French romantic partners. (You will meet them further in chapter two.) It would seem, prima facie, that these French partners, by virtue of their involvement with non-French people, were not largely nativists. Yet, they still told their partners, you cannot eat that, or that food is only appropriate for breakfast (in the morning), or those ingredients do not go together.

Such proscriptions were not a sign of politically motivated nativism (or politically implicated nativism either). The French partners did not object to the fact that their other halves ate French foods, but they did object to how they were eating them. The behaviors of their non-French partners violated French foodways, and thus in their minds common knowledge and perhaps even good sense. They had learned how to eat; now they would show their significant other as well. Indeed, such tutelage—far from being "defensive"—was one of the ultimate ways in which these French partners were able to invite their other halves into their cultural hearth. In other words, when French people showed their non-French partners how to eat local food it was, seemingly, a way to include them and make them feel comfortable.

So, as such instances make clear, it was not the consumption of local or French food that was at issue; it was how that food was consumed within the prevailing cultural context.

Prominent foodie-scholars, such as Levi-Strauss or Brillat-Savarin, have reminded us that we do not typically just eat food, rather we tend to eat foods in combination, i.e., dishes and cuisines. Local food discourse does not always recall this insight even when it might do be valuable to do so. Indeed, the recollections of the subjects of this research project bore out such observations on the part of the anthropologist and the gastronome, as well. For instance, people paired Roquefort cheese with salted butter and Muscat or with pears for a summer salad or with local honey.

It was not just what they ate, but how they ate it. To continue with the example, they ate cheese before dessert or as dessert. When one participant attempted to eat Roquefort for breakfast, her French roommate informed her that she was weird. When another thought that the bread with Nutella was a more tempting dessert, her French boyfriend informed her that this was not an option; she could have cheese or yogurt (discussed further in Chapter 2). The policing of boundaries of what is considered appropriate eating behavior or not is important to the acculturation process of these newcomers to Montpellier. In such interactions, it becomes clear that food is not merely a static object, but a dynamic component of ongoing social processes.

This insight, while arrived at independently, directly engages with Dupuis and Goodman's critique that "despite its potential complementarity, the agro-food literature on local food systems curiously has ignored [a] challenging body of work in human geography. Indeed, the quality 'turn' literature takes the ontology of the local as given, not as a category to be explicated in terms of societal processes."[34] The discussion of the processes by which not-yet-locals experience their new locale and its foods surely shows that what and whom are

[34] Ibid., 368.

considered local is not static but rather the outcome of social interactions over time. That is, this project considers local "a category to be explicated in terms of societal processes."

Such processes are historical. Still, in large part, literature on local food appears to assume that local foods are flatly endemic to their present locale. This viewpoint is what I refer to as the static bias in the literature. Some have recognized that the production and consumption of particular foods in specific places are the result of continuous human choices through time, though. Once more, the insights of Dupuis and Goodman provide a useful pivot point from which to examine such work. They draw, particularly on the insights of "urban environmental history."[35]

Their reading of environmental history literature privileges the agency of political actors. Such emphasis no-doubt serves their end of enhancing the political footing of food localists. Yet, such an interpretation of the contributions of historical perspectives downplays the importance of contingency. While one factor that environmental historians have indeed emphasized is the role of local elites and institutions in the linking of city to country and of farm to fork, they have also reserved a central place in their narratives for Nature and its vicissitudes.[36] Indeed, nothing seems to better characterize the nature of Nature than stochastic processes—that is, randomness.

That is to say, although choice (in the aggregate) plays a significant role in what and how we eat, so does chance. Moreover, while human choices are frequently constrained by natural processes, they are also expanded by happy turns of events. Many participants in this

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[35] Ibid., 365-66.
[36] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

project mentioned one such local specialty, which originates from one such fortuitous fluke—Roquefort cheese.

Roquefort's origin story tells of a shepherd, who was about to have his lunch of sheep's-milk curds on bread in one of the caves of the region. He got distracted by a shepherdess. She held his interest for a long time, and by the time he got back, the curds had turned moldy; hence, Roquefort.[37] Even if the story is only legend, it still approximates how the cheese is made in the present. Sheep's milk is cultured with *penicillium roqueforti* bacteria, which are native to the caves of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon. The cheese is aged in those same caves. Mythical shepherds aside, Roquefort's existence was initially due to the unique conditions of one set of caves, to the actions of a bacterium native to the soil of those caves, and to their chance discovery by one whose identity has been lost to time.[38]

Roquefort and the stories behind its discovery demonstrate the importance of chance as humans navigate and interact with the world around us. This cheese is imbued with more than just a pungent odor and a deep mythology, however; it has become an object that is intensely political. Perhaps the best-known contemporary manifestation of this politics of cheese comes from José Bové. In 1999, Bové led a group of fellow Roquefort producers in

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[37] J Bodnár, "Roquefort Vs. Big Mac: Globalization and Its Others," *European Journal of Sociology* (2003). The version recounted by Kurlansky in *Salt: A World History* does not involve a shepherdess.

[38] If the argument for contingency strikes one as unconvincing because it is a position that can be broadly applied, the story of Roquefort could also be explicated with regards to the agency of non-human actors. That is, one could look at *penicillium roqueforti* and the caves of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon as actants in the network of Roquefort production. The Lacaune ewes, which provide all of the milk for the cheese would be actants enrolled in the network as well. For more information on actor-network theory (ANT) see: Michel Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fisherman of St. Brieuc Bay," In *The Science Studies Reader*, edited by M. Biagioli (New York: Routledge, 1999); John Law, "Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics," In *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 141-158; Mrill Ingram, "Fermentation, Rot, and Other Human-Mircobial Performances," In *Knowing Nature, Transforming Ecologists: Science, Power, and Practice in Environmental Science and Managament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 99-112.
One could also take a broader perspective, not constructing a network of actants but merely acknowledging the agency of Nature in the creation of Roquefort.

dismantling a McDonald's in the small town of Millau in protest against the U.S.'s levying of a 100 percent import duty on the cheese in response to the European Union's ban on U.S. hormone-treated beef.[39] Bové and Roquefort also took center stage at the protests of the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999. The McDonald's incident, no-doubt aided by Bové's radical persona and handlebar mustache, propelled Roquefort to the symbolic center of a struggle over globalization.[40] One might even say that the "cheese stands alone" as a counter-weight to the idea of homogenous, corporate, global food. Scholars have discussed this contrast in precisely this way.[41] Roquefort has not receded from the spotlight in U.S.-French disputes. In 2003, Jacques Chirac criticized the U.S.-led war in Iraq, prompting a U.S.-conservative backlash against things French, including Roquefort and "freedom fries." On January 19, 2009, for example, the departing Bush Administration tripled the tax on

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[39] S. Bowen, "Embedding Local Places in Global Spaces: Geographical Indications as a Territorial Development Strategy," *Rural Sociology* 75, no. 2 (2010).

[40] Here is a sample of media coverage on Bové, Roquefort, and globalization in its first wave in 1999 – 2000: "Mcdonald's Destroyer Goes on Trial in France: A Farming Activist Says He Is Like Gandhi for His Actions against the U.S. Chain," *The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)*, July 1, 2000; Gay Alcorn, "The Seattle Cheese Party," *The Age*, November 30, 1999; Charles Bremner, "Big Mac Protester a 'French Gandhi'," *The Times (London)*, July 1, 2000; Beatrix Campbell, "Stand up for Cheese Power; Us Agribusiness Is under Fierce Attack from Radical French Peasants Armed with Bulldozers, Fire Hoses - and Roquefort," *The Independent (London)*, August 6, 2000; Suzanne Daley, "Montredon Journal; French See a Hero in War on 'Mcdomination'," *New York Times*, October 12, 1999; Lee Greenberg, "From Sheep Farmer to Martyr: Jose Bove Trashed Mcdonald's as a Symbol of His Disgust with Globalization," *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 3, 2000; Stuart Jeffries, "Bove's French Farmers Return to Mcdonald's," *The Guardian (London)*, August 13, 2001; Geoff Kitney, "Roquefort's Robin Hood Takes on Big Mac," *The Age (Melbourne)*, July 1, 2000 ; Geoff Kitney, "Think Global, Think Protest," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 1, 2000 ; John Lichfield, "French Town to Become 'Seattle-Sur-Tarn' as Protester's Trial Begins," *The Independent (London)*, June 26, 2000; John Lloyd, "Globalization's Arch Enemy: Since the Roquefort Hit the Fan, Farmers in Southern France Have Been Fighting Mad, Says John Lloyd," *The Globe and Mail*, July 5, 2000; Siegfried Mortkowitz, "Roundup: Globalization Foes Gather in Support of French Activist," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, June 30, 2000; Rory Mulholland, "The Roquefort Revolutionary: He's the World's Angriest Farmer, and, as You'd Expect, He's French. What's Slightly More Surprising Is That He's Fast Becoming a Global Celebrity. Rory Mulholland Meets Jose Bove , International Master of Agricultural Action Directe," *The Independent (London)*, February 20, 2000; Julian Nundy, "The Raider of Roquefort Rallies French," *The Scotsman*, September 4, 1999; Tamara Thiessen, "France Ready for Its Own Seattle," *The Gazette (Montreal, Quebec)*, June 29, 2000; Charles Trueheart, "A Beef with More Than Big Mac; French Trial Draws 20,000 Activists against Globalization," *Washington Post*, July 1, 2000.

[41] See Bodnár, "Roquefort vs. Big Mac: globalization and its others."

Roquefort to 300 percent.[42] The center of no less than three trade wars in the past decade, the politicization of Roquefort is clear.

Despite the clear depiction of Roquefort as an overtly political object both by scholars and by the popular press, it did not play such a role in the experiences of the participants in this study. Let us turn to their words and experiences to gain a richer picture of how cheeses generally and Roquefort specifically shaped their time in France thus far.

To begin with, the sheer variety of cheeses was a source of excitement for some. As a young woman from Germany explained, "I always like France because of their good wines and because of their good cheese. And so, I'm here, and I find in the supermarket so many different kinds of cheese and paté." When asked, she specified that she liked two things in particular: baked goods, like *pain au chocolat*, and "all the cheese: the goat cheese, the sheep cheese, every sort of cheese; and all the milk products—the yogurts and the *mousse au chocolat*. You find all those things in the supermarket, and they have a really great choice [selection]. And you can pick everything you want. That doesn't exist in Germany. So, I am quite happy with the food here."[43] For her, the extent of Gallic dairy offerings in contrast to her native Germany was enough to lead her to a sense of contentment regarding the food in Montpellier.

Expansive cheese choices were prominent in the minds of other respondents as well. A woman who had previously lived in London and now worked in a small, English-language bookshop, noted, "I've tried so many cheeses since I've been here and I can't remember the names of half of them. They've all been pretty good," especially the goat cheese. She explained, "I really like the goat's cheese here, and I like the fact that it's eaten unripe as well so it doesn't

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[42] Cody Edward, "Bush War on Roquefort Raises a Stink in France," *The Washington Post*, January 29 2009; Henry Samuel, "Roquefort Farmers Celebrate After US Drops 'Super Tax'," *The Telegraph*, May 7, 2009.
[43] Respondent 3.

taste, you know, goat's cheese normally has the really strong flavor; you can get the unripe one that doesn't have quite such a strong flavor, so it doesn't overpower everything that you use it with.

"But we had some lovely cheese; I can't remember what it was called. It began with an 'm.' I can't remember. It was really nice. It had like a blue vein that ran through the middle, and I don't usually like blue cheese, but this was Roquefort as well." Roquefort, aside from its pungency, quite unlike the mild, unripe goat cheese that this Londoner liked so well, is a regional specialty of Languedoc, made exclusively in the town of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon, about 65 miles northwest of Montepellier. This so-called "king of cheeses" came up frequently and spontaneously.

One respondent, an American journalist in his sixties who had lived in Germany for the past thirteen years, initially said that there were no local flavors that had helped him to settle in to or connect to living in the area. Rather, he felt that the landscape of markets, the many different varieties of foods, and a sense of connoisseurship among the people were what most struck him since moving to Montpellier. In the midst of this explanation, however, he recalled an encounter with an extraordinary Roquefort.

Setting the scene, he explained how he lived just next to the *Place de la Comédie*, the main square in Montpellier. Promotional events would often occur there. On one particular day, the promotion offered free samples of cheese. He was lucky that day not only because of the cheese, but also because he was able to use his sense of taste. While not unusual for most people, he had recently lost his ability to taste due to a polyp in his nose impinging upon a most regrettable nerve. This was a particularly unfortunate condition for him because he had moved

to the region, in part, for the food. Ever so often though, he would have good days, when his senses of smell and taste would return. On this such day, he was presented with the Roquefort:

> There was this guy giving away little samples of his Roquefort cheese on a little piece of bread, and I hadn't had anything to eat for lunch; and my nose was open; and I could taste. As a result, when that happens, I usually taste very intensely. I had never had a Roquefort cheese this good, never ever. It was not that strong. A lot of the ones I'd had have just been really very strong, and this one had sort of like, I keep saying, a taste of the barnyard floor to it.
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> There was like a hay note and something else happening in there. It wasn't entirely pleasant, but it was part of the mix. It had been very obviously put in there purposely. This is the kind I've been buying when I buy, which I will a lot in the summer when the pears come in. For lunch, pears and Roquefort cheese make a real nice little combination. The brand is Carles, C-a-r-l-e-s.[44]

What an intense experience for him: after being accustomed to an attenuated sense of taste and smell, his nose finally cleared leaving him with heightened sensory awareness. Then, he experienced the best Roquefort of his life. He had never had one this good. Surprisingly, it did not taste too strong, but it was complex. He got to have the subtle "hay note" without having to swallow the entire "barnyard floor."

Aside from the powerful past sensory encounter that this moment recalled for the journalist, it also presaged a pleasant future. That future was pear season, which he noted was summer. At the time of this discussion, summer was still a few weeks off. So, he would have to wait for lunches of pears with Roquefort. He seemed content to do so. For him, that flavor combination marked the seasons; and given that the pear-Roquefort duo was a taste of summer, that is when he would have it. He would buy more Roquefort when the pears came in.

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[44] Respondent 15.

The journalist's affinity for these two foods together affects not just how the Roquefort was eaten with respect to the time of the year and the cycles of the seasons, but also draws attention to the importance of the melding of different flavors. Roquefort with pears combines salty with sweet. A similar flavor combination involving Roquefort made an impression on two young, American girls, who were roommates in Montpellier. One early June day they were eating lunch with their hospitable landlord. As one of the girls explains, "We were eating. He brings out this Roquefort, and says, 'Okay, so you have to have the Roquefort with Muscat,' wine. I was like, 'Okay.' So he goes, 'Also you need to have it with butter.' I was like, 'What?! I've never heard that before.' So you pair it; you take the Roquefort, cheese; take some butter with sea salt; and mash it together so it forms this creamy Roquefort-butter mixture. Spread it on toast. And you put it in your mouth. And he says, 'You have to drink the wine while your eating it.' I was like, 'What?!'

"So you have the food. You're chewing the food, and you sip the Muscat while your chewing it; and the flavors mix. It's the mixture of flavors that just—that's one thing about French food that I've learned… it's about choosing a main dish and a side dish and a wine and a cheese that all complement each other and enhance the subtle flavors in each thing. The butter enhances the creaminess of the Roquefort and there's the saltiness of the butter with the sweet Muscat wine all mixed together; and they bring out different flavors in your mouth."[45]

Her roommate was also impressed by the lunch with the Roquefort. She recounted the following story when asked about how food had helped her to settle in to Montpellier: "For instance, we have landlords who are pretty much like a host family for us. They're fabulous, and they have us over for meals sometimes and that's *wonderful*... We always have cheese. We

[45] Respondent 20.

always have wine. For instance, today we had lunch with them, and they took out Roquefort. And, they said you have to mix it with this sea-salt butter. Eat it, and then drink a sip of Muscat wine at the same time. This is something I did not know about, but now I do. And apparently that's a French thing. So, these are things you learn from the locals, and from eating with them. It's great [laughs]."[46] Both respondents appreciated their landlords' hospitality and tutelage. When the landlords instructed them on how to eat the cheese with salted butter and Muscat wine, they introduced the girls not only to a bold, new flavor combination, but also to how to eat these products together in the local context.

It is not hard for foreigners in Montpellier (or anywhere in France) to encounter Roquefort, but it is unlikely they would spontaneously think to purchase and eat Roquefort, sea-salt butter, and Muscat as a unit. Local guidance was necessary to instruct those not from the region about which foods and flavors went together in the cultural context. It probably did not hurt that Roquefort and Muscat are also regional specialties; still, it is hard to say to what extent the girls would have felt differently about the cheese course at lunch that day had the foods involved come from another region.

It is worth noting that at least one of the ingredients in the Roquefort-butter-Muscat trio was most likely not from Languedoc: in France, salted butter typically comes from Brittany. The first young woman's description of butter with sea salt, however, is ambiguous. She says, "you take the Roquefort, cheese; take some butter with sea salt; and mash it together so it forms this creamy Roquefort-butter mixture."[47] They could have been taking Roquefort, butter, and sea salt and mashing them together. In this case, the salt may have been the famous local, *sel de*

[46] Respondent 21.
[47] Respondent 20.

Camargue. This sea salt from Aigues-Mortes, a walled city with extensive salt evaporation ponds built out into the Mediterranean Sea, is in fact rubbed on Roquefort before it is aged.[48] So, locally produced salt is already part of the Roquefort whether it was added later or not. Alternatively, the girls could have being taking salted butter and mixing it with the Roquefort. The roommate's description seems to clarify, "For instance, today we had lunch with [our landlords], and they took out Roquefort. And, they said you have to mix it with this sea-salt butter."[49] "Sea-salt butter" sounds like butter from Brittany rather than sweet butter mixed with the well-known local salt.[50] Regardless of whether the salt and butter were Languedocien or Breton, the flavors of the cheese, butter, and wine and the personal introduction of this combination of foods by the girls' landlords were what made the experience special.

The importance of guidance when eating local specialties was highlighted by the experiences of those who did not receive it. Such was the case for a Scottish teacher on sabbatical, who mentioned eating Roquefort for breakfast. She recounted, "one thing I do have in the morning that I have had back home—I think I experienced this in Italy actually, this mixture of flavors—is Roquefort with honey. Even my French housemates are slightly perturbed by this, but I love it. It's just an example of that sort of mix of flavors. And if you think, Roquefort? with honey? in the morning?, but … I like it. It wakes me up, that kind of

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[48] Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York: Walker and Co., 2002).
[49] Respondent 21.
[50] Salt is, indeed, one of the most significant local products from this part of French Mediterranean coast. In an age when salt has become a commodity, it is easy to forget that salt was once a valuable and differentiated product. (See, Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*. for a comprehensive and enjoyable overview of salt's role in world history, including information on Southern France. Anne Willan, *French Regional Cooking*, 1st ed. (New York: W. Morrow, 1981), a cookbook, includes background on the role of salt in French society on pages 218-9. The work divides France into twelve regions, and offers also offers historical background on each.) *Sel de Camargue* is by contemporary standards rather expensive, especially when leaving the region. If one leaves the country, it is even pricier. For example, Fleur de sel de Camargue retails for about fifteen USD on Amazon.com as of December 2010.

explosion of flavors."[51] Roquefort and honey are a similar flavor combination to the Roquefort, butter, and Muscat described by the young roommates, salty and pungent mixed with sweet. They are also two local products, honey from the Cevennes being well known in the area. Yet, the idea of eating this combination at breakfast bothered the teacher's housemates. She articulated well that it was the context that perturbed them. Breakfast was not the time for such an explosion of flavors.

Other expatriates were aware of the importance of local assistance for their acclimation process in France as well. Guidance was especially important when it came to navigating the new geographies of food around them. The American journalist who was waiting for pear season to stock up on Roquefort also hoped to find a French guide in order to be able to buy meat in the way that he wanted. He explained, now, "I only go to the supermarket for things like meat, which I'm going to change that at some point when I learn how to deal with the butchers over here.… I'm not sure how to ask them how to cut stuff up. What I really need is – I need a French guide. I had these people in Germany and I learned how to cope with Germany well enough that I was then able to help newcomers who showed up and pass it along that way. Well, I've had no help since I've been here at all. So I really need to get somebody to help me out on some of these things."[52]

His desire for a local guide demonstrated his aspirations of connecting to French society more generally. A French guide could be the start of a broader network of contacts within Montpellier; what is more, it would allow him to conduct himself independently in daily life. The completion of simple, everyday tasks such as dealing with the butcher were a

[51] Respondent 17.
[52] Respondent 15.

step toward becoming more enmeshed in the social life of his newfound home. Because eating is one of the most basic and constant of life's necessities it is no surprise that a lack of connectedness and comfort were evident in the journalist's recollections of food shopping.

Local help was not a guarantee that newcomers would take to French food, however. And not everyone liked the cheese offerings either. Distaste for cheese was the first thing that a Chinese, environmental-engineering student mentioned when asked how he was finding the food in France. "To be honest," he said, "I don't like the cheese at all. Not even a bit of cheese will drive me crazy."[53] It smells like feet, he explained. Each time he would eat with French friends, they would try to share their preferred cheese with him, but, he recalled, "every time, I have to imagine some excuse to refuse… It's very difficult for me." At last, he was able to simply explain that he did not like cheese, but he still had lingering doubts. "I think the French people do not like the people who do not like cheese," he said. He deduced that this must be the case because of the French affinity for cheese, the hundreds of varieties of cheese available, and the notion that "cheese is one character of [French] culture."

Aside from their role as a cultural touchstone, French cheeses also represented an entire approach to producing, distributing, and selling. The case of Roquefort surfaced again in a conversation with a retired widow from California. Born in England, she had spent the past thirty-seven years in California before deciding to split her time between there and Montpellier. She drew a contrast between her two current homes: she had the impressions that the French were more attuned to eating seasonally because they had a longer history of doing so and that agricultural producers in France were generally smaller than those in the

[53] Respondent 13.

U.S.[54] For her, Roquefort was emblematic of an artisanally produced, local cheese with a small distribution.

> Here, there's a more sort of an artisan, craftsman approach [compared to in the U.S.] to producing the local cheese that doesn't have a huge distribution that maybe is just dispersed locally. And so it's easier [for farms to survive.] And it's always been that way. So if you live in the Dordogne, you go and get really amazing *foie gras,* or if you live in another area, you go get wonderful Roquefort cheese. And so it seems to me that they've always had this tradition of producing locally, selling locally, and we haven't.[55]

A long, local, artisanal tradition related to Roquefort certainly exists. Some even claim that Pliny the Elder mentioned the cheese's better qualities as far back as 79 A.D.[56] The cheese was supposedly Charlemagne's favorite. Initially, the blue parts repulsed him and he cut them out until the monks of the St. Gall monastery, who introduced him to the cheese convinced him that these were the best parts. And convince him they did, for Charlemagne had the monks provide him with two wheels of Roquefort every year for the rest of his life.[57] Almost six-hundred years later, in 1411, Charles VI granted the village of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon a monopoly on production of the cheese.[58] And ever since he "issued [that] decree restricting the name Roquefort to the cheese made in the Roquefort district of the Causses, no other 'bastard cheese made in bastard caves' (as the people of Roquefort jealously referred

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[54] Respondent 18. She explains, just before the discussion of local products such as *foie gras de Dordogne* and *Roquefort,* "And I think they have many more small agricultural enterprises, so small producers of olives, or small producers of strawberries or local farmers who cultivate asparagus. Someone else will go out and hunt truffles. So the farms or the agricultural properties are smaller, whereas in the States – and here we get into politics and agricultural business which I don't know anything about – but it seems that perhaps the properties have to be bigger to make money, etc."

[55] Respondent 18.

[56] "Roquefort Cheese-France: French Cheese Guide," accessed December 19, 2010, http://www.cheese-france.com/cheese/roquefort.htm; Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*; Vivienne Marquis and Patricia Haskell, *The Cheese Book: A Definitive Guide to the Cheeses of the World, from Fresh Country Cheeses to Cheddars and Blues, Parmesan, Camembert and Brie, Pungent Goat Cheeses and the Richest Crèmes ... And a Collection of Great Cheese Recipes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965). 148.

[57] Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*: 155.

[58] "Roquefort Cheese-France: French Cheese Guide"; Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*: 156.

to their competitors' products) could be called Roquefort."[59] Yet, those 'bastard cheese' competitors might not stand much of a chance next to the "king of cheeses" and the "cheese of kings" for the structures behind the production of Roquefort precluded the availability of essential ingredients to competitors.

Indeed, it is not just location, process, or even a fifteenth-century royal decree that make Roquefort Roquefort; it is also the milk. In the humorous words of the late journalist and food writer Waverly Root, 'Almost alone of modern cheeses it is made of sheep's milk. There are a number of French cheeses which formerly used sheep's milk but most of them have shifted to cow's milk in these hurried times, for reasons that will be clear to anyone who has ever tried to milk a sheep.'[60] Images of recalcitrant ewes aside, it is worth pointing out that "these hurried times" were the mid-nineteen sixties, at least that is when Marquis and Haskell published *The Cheese Book*, which quotes Mr. Root. Yet, even half a century ago, Marquis and Haskell explain, "even if it were easier to milk a sheep[,] it is doubtful that much of the milk would go into other cheeses for almost all of France's sheep's milk is earmarked for Roquefort, and the demand far exceeds the supply."[61] Roquefort, clearly, has been appreciated not just by elites but also widely distributed for some time.

So, the woman from California was correct, there is an extensive tradition of local production around products such as Roquefort. But this particular cheese's far exceeded the local, becoming enrolled in global networks of distribution, as evidenced by José Bové, and the political actions that centered around the cheese in 1999 and 2000. While Roquefort

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[59] Marquis and Haskell, *The Cheese Book: A Definitive Guide to the Cheeses of the World, from Fresh Country Cheeses to Cheddars and Blues, Parmesan, Camembert and Brie, Pungent Goat Cheeses and the Richest Crèmes … And a Collection of Great Cheese Recipes,* 148.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 149.

was not the best example of a cheese that was just "dispersed locally"[62] as the California retiree imagined, it was certainly the paragon of a regional specialty. Indeed, independent of its history, the cheese had diverse and enduring significance for each of these foreigners in Montpellier.

For these respondents, Roquefort and the social experiences surrounding it were a meaningful contextualization of their time in France thus far. The two young American girls, who were roommates, were struck by the flavor combination of the cheese combined with Muscat and butter. They recalled, with gratitude how their kindly French landlords introduced them to this new experience. For one of them, that meal was the first instance that sprang to mind when asked about the role of food in her acclimation process. For the London woman working in the bookshop, Roquefort served as a pungent counterpoint to the "lovely," mild, unripe goat cheeses she so liked. For the American journalist who had come from Berlin, it was time to buy Roquefort when the pears started appearing at the market stalls. For the retiree from California, Roquefort was a paragon of local, artisanal production. And for the Scottish teacher, the combination of Roquefort with honey was the perfect accompaniment to her morning double espresso—an explosion of flavors to get her going at the beginning of the day, despite the skeptical reactions of her housemates. For these expatriates, Roquefort variously signified a commingling or uniqueness of flavors, a change in the season, an artisanal means of production, or a distribution that was confined to the immediate area. For some, it was even a connection to their newfound home. For none of them was eating Roquefort a political statement.

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[62] Respondent 18.

So where does this leave us as far as a reflexive politics of localism? First, merely conducting such an inquiry elucidates foreigners' consumption experiences with local foods. Valorizing their voices and personal experiences in such a way may be a first step toward a broader and more inclusive notion of the local, at least within the scholarly literature. Yet, academic inquiry alone is surely not what agro-food scholars had in mind when they warned against defensiveness in the arena of local food.

In terms of actual people on the ground then, it seems that the positionality of the others whom local food scholars would like to include, in fact, prevents them (that is, outsiders) from meaningfully engaging in the political processes of their newfound homes. That is, the political implications of their choices may not have been evident to foreigners because they had only lived for a short time in a society in which the tacit rules and norms of the sociopolitical landscape are not yet apparent. In the event that newcomers were aware of the politically imbued nature of their choices (such as eating Roquefort cheese), they may not yet have been adequately connected to social networks that would have effected the outcome of their decisions. (Recall the journalist's awareness that he was still in need of a guide in order to accomplish the tasks of daily life.) If they have already become well enmeshed in their newfound home, then perhaps they were in a position to accumulate the social and cultural capital—which cast in the role envisioned by scholars such as Dupuis and Goodman is equivalent to political capital—in order to exert an influence on "the local." It might be difficult to see how those who do not yet understand the prevailing modes and norms of a culture would be in position to affect change within it. Encouragingly, the daily interactions of the participants of this study show that foreigners may provide a source of innovation in

French cuisine—a subject to which I shall now turn. Still, it hardly seems fair to place the onus of political transformation on those who are still between place.

Chapter 2 – Disputing Taste: Foreigners as Catalysts for Culinary Innovation

Some find it difficult to be "between place." Not so for the young woman from Maine. She was simply enamored of her new French home. She explained, "I love it. I really love it. I absolutely love it. You start a life someplace else and initially it's difficult, but then afterwards you really grow to love it."[63] Within just two months, she said she was already feeling acclimated. She had overcome some initial linguistic challenges and was even dating a French boy. Her enthusiasm for the food seemed to echo her feelings about France more generally: "I *love* the food here!" she exclaimed.

She immediately clarified, though, "But, the one thing that I don't really like too much is that people are very rigid about their food here, about the way they eat. That's been a little difficult." This young woman's impressions of French rigidity typified many foreigners' view of how the French related to their food. At the same time, however, her continual interactions with her French significant other signified an opening, the chance to inject some dynamism into the stasis of native cuisines and worldviews. That is, the presence of those from elsewhere was a stochastic process, an element of randomness, shaking up the apparent order of French foodways. The addition of foreign consumers into the culinary system pushed that system not from order to chaos, however, but in another direction—innovation.

Let us turn back to the young woman from Maine. One day, all she wanted was dessert. She recalled, "The other day, I have a boyfriend here who's French, and I was eating

[63] Respondent 5

with him. And we were eating lunch together. And then, after lunch, I—you normally have bread with, gosh, almost every meal—and so we had bread during the meal and then afterwards he brought out yogurt and cheese.

"But I wanted another piece of bread with *Nutella* on it, but I wasn't allowed to have that because he said that that would be 'too much in the middle of the day.' But I didn't really understand. I wasn't really sure why that was.

"He said, 'that's something you only eat for breakfast. You can't eat that after lunch. That's only a breakfast food.'" Such instances happened to her frequently. This rigidity was both frustrating and absurd.

"I was really pissed off," she said, laughing, "'cause I just wanted dessert." She explained, "in the States we have peanut butter and jelly for lunch, and then, if you wanna have for a snack, like a piece of bread with jam on it or with peanut butter, that's totally normal. And, yeah, it's very much like cheese or yogurt or something sweet after lunch but nothing like that."[64] Bread with Nutella was, apparently, not an option. She could have yogurt or cheese.

While her French boyfriend was around to confine her dessert choices to those acceptable within the realm of French gastronomy, she would have to make sure that Nutella did not grace bread after noon. Yet, perhaps, as she continued to suggest new and seemingly daring culinary possibilities to him, she might affect his view of what was permissible. That is, perhaps foreigners such as her could spur further French flexibility with their food.

The experiences of a young Australian woman support this notion. Like the woman from Maine, she had a French boyfriend, but they had been together longer, moving to

[64] Ibid.

Montpellier as a couple from the U.K. She had lived in France longer as well, a full two years in Montpellier in comparison to ten months for the woman from Maine. In her slightly longer time in France, she had formed an impression of French food that was fundamentally similar to that of the Mainer. That impression was one of rigidity. "The French aren't the most flexible in terms of breaking away from their traditional cooking," she explained. "Sure, they cook pasta and pizza, but everyone does."[65]

She found that French food could grow tiresome as well. Although it was very good, it was also quite simple. If there was one thing French cuisine was lacking, in her view, it was inventiveness. This stood in contrast to the culinary landscape of her native Australia as she explained:

> I think probably [in] Australian cuisine they put more ingredients and more different flavors together. And the French keep it simple, but it's really good.
>
> … if I'm cooking I'll want to put combinations together that French people would never put together. Like, I think because we're in Australia we have influences from all different countries. … I guess, in Australia, what we call *modern Australian cuisine* is mixing cuisines. So you take some Asian ingredients, you take some Italian ingredients, and you put [them] together and it works. But, [with] French people when you say, "Oh, I'm going to put this and this together," they're like, "*What!?* [You] can't do that. That doesn't go." And it's like, "Yeah, it does. Try it." Because they're used to traditional cooking, which is simpler, I think, but very good, but not as inventive.[66]

This comparative lack of originality seemed stifling to her. She thought French food was "limited." She elaborated, "I think if I ate in a French restaurant every day […] after a week I would be like, 'okay, that's enough.'" Restaurant menus were basically uniform, she said; and there were few restaurants that dared "to do things that [were] a bit different." With this,

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[65] Respondent 14.
[66] Ibid.

she concluded that, as mentioned earlier, the French were not "the most flexible in terms of breaking away from their traditional cooking." This was not to say that she disliked French cooking. She thought it was high-quality. It was just not interesting. She noted, "every French home that I've eaten in, I've eaten good food, but it's all been very simple. And sometimes it's really simple," she laughed. In general, she would have preferred a larger mix of foods.

The Australian woman's thoughts on the comparative simplicity and limits of French cuisine had implications for more than just our brief meeting. As a foreigner in a new place, she met and ate with French people constantly. The span between what constituted common knowledge when it came to food offered ample opportunity for perplexity on both sides.

Not surprisingly, the plurality of such interactions happened with her boyfriend. He was originally from Montpellier, although they had moved back there together from the U.K. They would have the "that does not go together" discussion frequently. This happens with "my partner all the time," she explained. "If we're cooking together or I will suggest something for dinner and he'll say, 'Oh, really? Like, huh? Are you sure?' 'Yeah, I'm sure,'" she would say.

No similar salient instances stood out to her. "Yeah, that's the only example I can give," she said of the situations with her boyfriend. Perhaps that was the case because one would not discuss such matters with mere acquaintances. Conversations of this sort were reserved for one's intimates. So, if it is true that *de gustabus non disputandum est*, perhaps there is only no disputing taste in the public sphere. In private, however, clashing over

rooted instincts and firm convictions about what constitutes an appropriate dinner is certainly fair game. At their best, such discussions would serve to enlarge the cognitive and the gustatory worlds of both parties. Really, that goes together? Yes, it does. Try it. And once he has, perhaps, a revelation, a moment of surprise over a never-before-imagined, indeed a never-before-imaginable, set of sensations. In disputing taste, those from here (the French boyfriend) and those from there (the Australian girlfriend, in this instance) liberate one another to explore new realms of possibility.

Each new interaction presented a potential aperture, a place for the erosion of old habits and predispositions. Yet, these new spaces of possibility were not necessarily equally appealing to everyone. While taste is certainly a product of culture and of community, it is also highly individual. In the case of these two women and their boyfriends, we know nothing of the partners other than what the women volunteered. Surely though, they have different senses of adventure and openness, distinct degrees of parochialism, and varying levels of *gourmandise* (a weakness for good food). Each is a product of his unique life experiences and a reflection of his own proclivities.

Yet, moments of openness extend beyond the instant when someone suggests mixing a new variety of ingredients or having Nutella and bread for dessert rather than a *baba au rhum.*[67] These interactions reach back in time to encompass all of the other instances in which the women (or others) had invited them to try something daring and different. This duration was longer for the Australian woman than for the American woman—two years,

[67] Stanislas Leczinski, the exiled king, brought the now-ubiquitous dessert *baba au rhum* to France from Poland in the eighteenth century, as mentioned in Jean François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984). The case of *baba* demonstrates how the foreign origins of dishes are oft forgotten.

rather than just a few months. Perhaps this longer time together created a greater sense of trust, connection, and comfort allowing the Australian woman to put a little bit of this in a pot with some of that, even though the boyfriend's initial reaction was skeptical, whereas the American woman was left eating cheese or yogurt, not Nutella. The longer they spent together, the longer they were exposed to each other's foreign ideas about food.

In such interactions, these couples became culinary tourists in their own kitchens. Whenever they purposefully crossed boundaries and explored each other's conceptions of food, they traveled, even if they never left home. The folkloristic perspective on culinary tourism put forth by Lucy Long proves elucidating. To her, culinary tourism is "the intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an other—participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system or eating style considered to belong to a culinary system not one's own."[68] Long's expansive definition of culinary tourism as the intentional exploration of othered foodways certainly accords with the experiences of these men and women. Yet, I have already hinted at the one key difference that sets them apart from typical tourists: time.

Culinary tourism discourse has recognized such an important temporal distinction, and consequently directed its gaze to the private and domestic sphere.[69] Jill Rudy has noted that unlike novelty-seeking tourists, "the extended stay most likely creates compelling twin desires for new *and* familiar eating experiences," and "[w]ithout significant effort to avoid

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[68] Long, "Culinary Tourism: A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness," 21.
[69] See Rudy, "Of Course in Guatemala, Bananas are Better: Exotic and Familiar Eating Experiences of Mormon Missionaries."; Miryam Rotkovitz, "Kashering the Melting Pot: Oreos, Sushi Restaurants, 'Kosher Treif,' and the Observant American Jew," in *Culinary Tourism*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004); Jacqueline S. Thursby, "Culinary Tourism Among Basques and Basque Americans: Maintenance and Inventions," in *Culinary Tourism*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

unfamiliar culinary systems, the long-term visitor or resident will experience more frequent encounters with new aspects of foodways than the culinary tourist: more new food items, new meal systems and cuisines, and new methods of food procurement, preparation, and presentation."[70] The participants in this study surely had more in-depth, nuanced accounts of their experiences with food than would typical tourists or sojourners. Still, they had all lived in France for less than a couple of years, so they presumably were not yet locals. They were familiar with their surroundings, but not yet so accustomed to them that the workings of daily life were fully naturalized. They were a group in transition—not tourists but not locals. Here, in the interstices between insider and outsider, would their experiences with food unfold.

The insights from culinary tourism discourse, then, add support to the idea that when these women introduced unexpected, inventive flavor and ingredient combinations to their partners, they did more than expand their palates. The novel suggestions and possibilities that people from elsewhere, such as the young women from Maine and Australia, brought with them to the dinner table fueled innovation in French cuisine by injecting variation into the world of their French hosts. Such variation could provide the fodder for new inventiveness in French food and hence in French social life as it occurred at the table as well.

Yet, the private tables and discussions of these young people from abroad, living in Montpellier, hardly seem like the unsung springboard for change waiting to take France unawares. For that, it is best to turn to something to which the French culinary scene is

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[70] Rudy, "Of Course in Guatemala, Bananas are Better: Exotic and Familiar Eating Experiences of Mormon Missionaries," 131.

more attuned—a Michelin-starred chef. Food writer Michael Steinberger notes, that "among many French chefs now, the hunger for fun was matched by a professed indifference to Michelin; they were happy to receive its benediction but were not seeking it. Even so, the stars were finding them."[71] Pascal Barbot was one such chef. The Michelin Guide awarded Barbot its highest honor, a third star for his Parisian restaurant, Astrance, in 2007 at the precocious age of thirty-four.[72]

And, where had inspired Barbot, propelling him to such achievements? Australia. As Steinberger explains,

> In 1998, Barbot left Arpège [a three-Michelin-star restaurant][73] and Paris and moved to Sydney … he adored Australia. What he found most appealing there was the sense of freedom. It was a young dynamic country, where people were completely receptive to new ideas, not the least at the table. This was particularly true of Sydney, which offered a dizzying array of cuisines and where an exuberant inventiveness held sway. The chefs wanted to surprise, diners wanted to be surprised.[74]

This spirit of inventiveness and urge to be surprised sound like exactly what the young Australian women missed when she compared her experiences in France with her memories of home. Indeed, her recollections and those of the young three-star chef aligned well:

> Barbot had never encountered such a spirited, progressive food culture, and he found it enthralling. Australia introduced him to new flavors and techniques but what it mostly did was unshackle his mind. "Back in France, when I would try to create different kinds of dishes, I would question myself and worry about how people would react," he said. "But after Australia, I

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[71] Michael Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France* `(New York: Bloomsbury, 2009). 192.
[72] Ibid., 196.
[73] Arpège is a three-star restaurant in Paris run by chef Alain Passard. Barbot worked there for five years prior to leaving for Australia. As recounted in, ibid., 194.
[74] Ibid.

> didn't ask myself those questions anymore. 'Is it okay to use scallops for something? What will people think?' I didn't care anymore. I was *décomplexe*—free." [75]

Barbot's experience in Australia opened him up to new possibilities. Previously, he worried that if he dared be too inventive that diners would have the same reaction as the Australian interviewee's French boyfriend, the "you're mixing *that* with *that*?" response. After his time in Australia, however, he was able to let his culinary muse run free. As Steinberger sums up the situation, "In the past, French chefs had gone abroad to convert others; Barbot went abroad and returned home having been converted instead."[76]

While the end result of this conversion was new flavors and techniques, as Steinberger notes, they were only part of the cause for Barbot's new sense of liberation. Rather, the exposure to a culture where varied and foreign influences were the norm prompted his sense of openness and freedom. As Barbot describes himself as *décomplexe,* he implies that before he went to Australia he was someone with a complex, with hang-ups. Without such *complexes*, he was unencumbered and able to inhabit a place in the Parisian culinary landscape not only of excellence—which he had already attained before by working at Arpège—but also of originality. Australia, a world previously apart from his own, was Barbot's catalyst for innovation.

Yet, his openness to outside influences left him no less emplaced in his Parisian home. In fact, every week Barbot would travel to the vast wholesale market, Rungis, on the periphery of the city to buy produce for Astrance. He would leave at 5:30 A.M. for a Tuesday trek, driving a rented van. As far as he knew, he was not just the only three-star chef

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

shopping there; he was one of only two chefs to regularly take the time to make the trip.[77] When Steinberger joined Barbot one morning, the chef spent three hours at the market, inspecting every product with "forensic scrutiny."[78] That day, "the apricots, just in from the South of France were the primary source of indecision. Barbot went through perhaps twenty apricots, spread over three stands, before finally choosing several small baskets. At one point, as he wavered over one carton, he laughed at his own compulsiveness. 'Can you imagine taking an hour to buy a box of apricots?'" he said.[79] Surely, these trips and his attention to detail were not just in search of quality. As Steinberger explains, "he wanted a closer relationship with the ingredients and the people who furnished them. … His visits were reconnaissance missions: He went to see what was in the market and to hear what the farmers were talking about—how crops were faring, how the growing season was shaping up."[80] Every week, Barbot ventured "into the foodshed"[81] and reveled in the "the sensual, the emotional, and the expressive" qualities of food.[82]

Barbot's regular face-to-face contact with the vendors at Rungis showed more than just his savvy and dedication as a restaurateur. He was also cultivating continual, personal relationships with those who produced the food he cooked and served—certainly a behavior considered one of the hallmarks of alternative food systems.[83] These interactions did help bind him to the people selling the food and to the land producing it; yet they did not bound

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[77] Ibid., 197.
[78] Ibid., 198.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 197.
[81] Kloppenburg Jr., Hendrickson, and Stevenson, "Coming in to the Foodshed."
[82] Laura B. Delind, " Of Bodies, Place, and Culture: Re-Situating Local Food," *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* (2006).
[83] C. Clare Hinrichs, "Embeddedness and Local Food Systems: Notes on Two Types of Direct Agricultural Market," *Journal of Rural Studies* 16(2000).

him mentally to the confines of Paris. In the moment, he strove to connect with the sensual materiality of the perfect apricots and to learn of farmer's experiences with the land. Yet, in such instances, he was informed by memory, his ties not just to the present moment but also to his past experiences; experiences such as Australia. So, he obsessed over apricots for an hour, but he would not later obsess over whether what he decided to do with them strayed too far from convention.

Materially, Barbot seemed to embrace the local through his direct contact with the produce of the market and the farmers selling it. Ideally, however, his principles were hybrid. He managed to be both *terrien* (connected to the land), as he conversed with local farmers about the state of their crops and of the growing season, as well as cosmopolitan, as he drew on his memories of Australia and the freedom and openness that he had gained from his time there. He showed that it was possible to strengthen connections to the here, which was presently around him, without negating the importance of insights from the there, which was presently not. Far, from embodying a nativist viewpoint, the only three-star chef who took the time to venture to Rungis represented an open, expansive worldview. If, as scholars have recognized, chefs are "potentially important partners in efforts to promote local food systems," then Barbot surely espouses the ideal of a reflexively local *chef du cuisine.*[84]

Taken together, Barbot's experiences abroad transported back home along with my foreign informants' habits from home brought with them overseas hint that the mixing of sensibilities about food and the crossing of cultural lines may be transformative. Yet change was not necessarily effortless. The personal actions and interactions of the Mainer, the

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[84] Shoshanah M. Inwood et al., "Restaurants, Chefs and Local Foods: Insights Drawn from Application of a Diffusion of Innovation Framework," *Agriculture and Human Values* 26(2009).

Australian, and the chef drew on realms of individual memory and of past experience. Culinary heritage, more broadly, "corresponds to the memory of a whole group, to its roots, which generates a feeling of belonging to [a] particular area, investing it with value."[85] Bessière suggests that if newcomers value items or practices differently from longstanding residents, conflicts may arise.[86] Indeed, the recollections of the young women bore out this suggestion. The woman from Maine was "pissed off 'cause [she] just wanted dessert."[87] The women from Australia kept having to explain 'yeah, I'm sure' that those things go together when cooking or eating with her boyfriend. On the part of Barbot, Steinberger notes, "it is possible that Michelin had promoted Barbot [to three-stars] to make a statement—to demonstrate that the Guide, contrary to the accusations […], was not stuck in the past."[88] Indeed, Steinberger characterizes Barbot as "a mold-breaker among French chefs."[89] He grew up in a home where "food was treated as mere sustenance" and unlike so many others did not have "a grandmother story" when it came to cooking. As such, he did not truly engage with cuisine until cooking school.

Like Barbot's relatively late arrival on the culinary scene, the women from Maine and Australia arrived relatively late to the table not just with regards to French cuisine but also with respect to social life in France more generally. Yet, as Barbot's innovative qualities as a chef ultimately earned him recognition, it is clear that the outcome of divergent views

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[85] Bessière, "Local Development and Heritage: Traditional Food and Cuisine as Tourist Attractions in Rural Areas," 29.
[86] Ibid., 28., He states: "Difficulties may arise if non-members happen to grant a special value to an item of heritage and somehow consider it as theirs, until they eventually play an active part in its protection. Take the example of newcomers or residents not belonging to a specific village community, or tourists appropriating a heritage, and thereby creating conflicts," 28.
[87] Respondent 5.
[88] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France*: 194.
[89] Ibid.

regarding acceptable culinary practice could be more than merely conflictual. So, Bessière's assessment is certainly correct in the short term: newcomers' different ideas did create disagreement and controversy. Over the longer term, though, new arrivals presumably did not aim to push ideas or practices that were deliberately at-odds with those of more-established locals (or in Barbot's case, members of his profession). Rather, they were in the process of assimilating such heritage as their own as they became more emplaced in their new homes. While moments of contention certainly arose, it is best not to view them as impediments to valorization of local practices or heritage. A more sanguine treatment of these interactions is how Long describes culinary tourism: they are moments of engagement and of "intentional, exploratory participation."[90] Such instances offer the promise of inventiveness and innovation—for, if there is one constant, it is change.

[90] Long, "Culinary Tourism: A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness," 21.

Chapter 3 – Subaltern Eaters

Although, the foreigners interviewed in Montpellier did not experience Roquefort as a political object, the politics of French defensive localism are nonetheless well epitomized by the discourse surrounding Bové, Roquefort, and *McDo*.[91] In this discourse, the geopolitical and cultural position of France is juxtaposed against that of the United States. The dismantling of the Millau McDonald's in 1999 was as much a reaction against globalization generally as it was against the relative decline of France's influence on the international stage. In short, it was about power. Bové's exploits were a response to the potent forces of global capitalism and American cultural imperialism as manifested in the realm of food. Roquefort stood for the traditional, the artisanal, and the slow, McDo for the modern, the industrial, and the fast.

On the face of it, these synecdochic comparisons seem reasonable and intuitive. The position that French traditional foodways are being overtaken by the fast-paced, global juggernaut of neoliberal capitalism is not an unsympathetic one. From there, it is easy to make the leap, as the McDonald's-bulldozing farmers hope you would, to think of France as the land of varied, flavorful, traditional foods. Still, these comparisons and their ensuing conclusions seem to be only narrowly applicable. One may accept Bové's two-point contrast of the subalterns of France resisting the homogenizing global hegemon. Yet, what if we look at the matter from the other direction? What if France is not the (culinary) subaltern but the hegemon, and what if we look not at France's external relations in the worlds of global trade and cultural circulation but rather at its internal relations amongst its own inhabitants?

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[91] *McDo* is what the French commonly call McDonald's.

In the discussion of foreigners' eating experiences in France so far, we have paid scant attention to their positionality within French society. The majority of people whose experiences have been described to this point were first-world Anglos.[92] Many of them were impressed by the variety of foods available in France, the quality of the products, and the amount of time spent enjoying them. People, such as the retiree from California who mentioned Roquefort, also noted impressions of a smaller-scale craft tradition around food production in France. Such perceptions align well with the rhetoric of movements such as Bové's. These experiences and observations seem quite different, however, from those respondents who came from less privileged places within French society. To them, the food they had experienced in France seemed industrial and flavorless, indicated a different structuring of time from their home countries, manifested their exclusion from society at large, and was often too expensive to afford.

People were not concerned about the taste of the food in the places where he had eaten, declared a young man from Peru, studying for his Master's degree in rural development and agronomy. Food in France was "like an industrial product," he explained. Of the many, many French fries he had eaten since arriving in France, they all tasted the same. He thought that people had tried to "homogenize the flavors." In contrast, food in Peru was "like a handicraft." The taste of food varied depending on where it was bought and how it was prepared. To illustrate, he compared the university dining halls in Peru and France. In France, the dining hall was cleaner than back home, but in Peru the food tasted

[92] Part of this no-doubt has to do with the project design, which targeted English-speaking foreigners. Yet, English is the present *lingua franca.* So, I was able to speak with participants from all six continents.

better. He noted that one might be more likely to get sick from the less sanitary practices back home, but he was more than willing to sacrifice hygiene for flavor. When asked if he had a preference, he said Peru, *biensûr*—Peru, of course.[93]

His neighbor, a young woman from Algeria, agreed that food in France was industrial. It just didn't taste good. It was not that she did not like French cuisine. In fact, the industrial nature of French foods came up when she mentioned that she was going back to Algeria in July and that she planned to cook French-style food for friends and family, just like the last time she was in her hometown. She thought her parents and siblings would appreciate a taste of her life in France. So she planned to make quiche. She might have to search for ingredients though: "The difficulty for me will be the crème fraiche 'cause I live in a small region. I don't know now if it exists or not," she explained. "In 2008, I [found] it, but not like in France [where] it's… all throughout supermarkets. It's not like in Algeria." Crème fraiche was not ubiquitous because it was not a staple of Algerian cookery. "We are not so accustomed to [put] crème fraiche in our food," she explained. "So I like [these] thing[s] here in France." She enjoyed crème fraiche partly because of its novelty. It contrasted with the experiences of her upbringing, and it was delicious. For her, it seemed emblematically French.[94]

Despite its Frenchness, if she did find crème fraiche when she returned to Algeria, it would likely be different. "It will be more with a good taste in Algeria than here in France," she said. "Cause here I say that it's so industrial cause there is no real good taste. There is no good taste of things. […] when I talk about tomatoes, everything… in general, fruits and

[93] Respondent 22. This respondent did not give his permission to be quoted directly on the IRB consent form.
[94] Respondent 23.

vegetables, I prefer Algerian fruits and vegetables because there is good, good taste. And here in France, I have sometimes the impression that I eat paper."[95] Like eating paper! Indeed, and she confirmed that that tastelessness was because food in France was more industrial.

The Peruvian student elaborated that the food was industrial both in how it tasted and how it was produced. He was particularly struck by the rhetoric around food production in France because, to him, it seemed to belie reality. He began by explaining that he was very proud of the food of his native Peru; indeed, he thought it was the best in the world. Therefore, the contrast between his culinary pride and that of the Europeans around him was amusing, he said. Various Europeans and other non-Peruvians had claimed to him that they had the world's most natural and healthiest food.

In particular, he mentioned "these *bio* people," European advocates of organic food, and advertisements for *bio* products.[96] They portrayed such foods, again as the safest and most natural available.[97] The retiree from California, like many other respondents, had picked up on such ideas regarding *bio* products as well. For instance, she mentioned one of the largest, most prominent outdoor markets in the city, located along the aqueduct; this market sold organic products. "There's another market in *Les Arceaux* twice a week, called *Bio,* because they're very much into *bio*," she said, "which is health food; naturally raised, organically raised type things."[98] When discussing the products at the *Marché des Arceaux,* she mentioned health and naturalness, inline with the Peruvian student's impressions of the

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[95] Ibid.
[96] *Bio* is short for *biologique,* which is roughly equivalent in its usage to "organic." The standards for *bio* in France and *organic* in the U.S. are surely not the same, but the details of such distinctions do not seem relevant for this discussion. I will use the terms equivalently from this point on.
[97] Respondent 22.
[98] Respondent 18.

discourse around organic farming in France. But, contended the Peruvian, contrasting the actual conditions on such farms (like the ones supplying produce to the *bio* market at *Les Arceaux*) and the technology utilized on them with the environment of a typical farm in Peru or elsewhere in the third world, would yield a very different image. A typical Peruvian farm was less mechanized and industrial than an organic farm in France, he asserted; in actuality, a French organic farm had more in common with a French industrial farming operation than with a typical farm in Peru or another third-world country.[99]

Indeed, his impressions are borne out by the numbers. France is the most mechanized agricultural producer in the world. Even ten years ago, "only 2 percent of the French live[d] off the land. [And] French agro-business is the most aggressive, the most productive, and the most mechanized in the world," according to Nadeau and Barlow.[100] Taken in this light, Bové's claims regarding the erosion of French artisanal ways by the external forces of industry seem hollow. In comparison to the contexts from which most of France's immigrants came, France's foodscape was marked by industrialization. The Algerian and Peruvian respondents would likely agree with José Bové that industrial food was homogenous and flavorless. Indeed, they already said as much. Where they would differ, however, was where the locus of that industrial food was. For our third-world respondents, that locus was France. For Bové and his compatriots, such a notion would be an anathema.

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[99] Respondent 22: 'or another third-world country' was the respondent's formulation, not mine. I am aware that speaking of the first, second, or third worlds may be seen as dated or out-of-favor. However, this is the language used by this vocal respondent. It seems best to stay close to his words.

[100] Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow, *Sixty Million Frenchman Can't be Wrong: Why We Love France but not the French* (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2003). 24.

Regardless of where industrial food came from, it was meant to be produced and consumed quickly. Again, McDo (the global, Anglo) was fast, and Roquefort (the local, French) was slow. Yet, this neat dichotomy does not accord with the experiences of the project respondents who did not come from first-world spaces. For instance, the Algerian woman's cooking and eating habits had changed since living in France, largely due to time constraints. Algerian cookery was simply too time-intensive for her to accomplish in her new home she explained:

> And now I don't really cook Algerian food. Now, for me, it's a mixture, really. 'Cause our cook[ery] of our food, in general, needs many [much] time in the kitchen cause we use a lot of spices—we use, really, onion, tomatoes. You have to let this [sit] for moments [a long time] in the casserole, the pot. So when I say, for me or my mother, when I say that I have to [… cook] dinner I have two hours and perhaps more than that to [… make…] dinner. But here in France, you come in at midday at your home and you have thirty minutes and you have to eat. But in Algeria it's so, so difficult.[101]

The time constraints of her life in France meant that she could not eat as slowly as she might have in Algeria. She simply could not cook and eat something that required two hours when she had only thirty minutes.

Her experiences contrast with the impressions of those from more developed countries. For instance, the retiree from California enjoyed lingering over long, social meals. "[Food]'s important," she said. "For me, eating alone, I eat well, but I don't care when I eat. That's not so terribly important. But the experience of sharing a meal with others, that's a big—something that's high on my list in terms of how I like to spend my time. So being in France, everybody likes to go out and eat and sit around and spend two or three hours doing

[101] Respondent 23.

it. So, I'm very comfortable doing that, and it's something that I like to do a lot."[102] A young woman from Vancouver similarly noted the prolonged, social nature of meals. "You could be at the dinner table for hours and only be at the, I don't know, the entrée [appetizer]. They last long cause they're just talking over a meal. … People here take their time to eat; that's a huge difference" from back home, she said.[103] The social aspect of eating was paramount. Again, the California retiree summarized, "I like to spend three hours over a meal with conversation, decent food and good wine, whereas other people might prefer to eat their meal in front of the TV and to me that is absolutely horrible." Why was that horrible? "Because I'd rather have the exchange of a conversation, eye contact with somebody, just linger, talk about life, than sit in front of a TV."[104] Yes, for most respondents, meals were the pivot of sociality.

Not everyone reveled in leisurely meals, however. A man in his early forties had moved to Montpellier from Singapore with his Japanese wife. Prior to that they had lived in Japan, where they first met, although he was originally from Quebec. Having lived and traveled in a variety of places, he noted, "our mealtimes are a bit interestingly shorter than anywhere before."[105] Why interestingly? "Because the perception is they should be longer […] in France, but we don't have long leisurely dinners or lunches or anything, in fact, at all. Nothing like what people perceive happens here." If it *were* to happen, he did not like the idea. Did he ever have long, leisurely meals, if he was meeting friends or going out, perhaps? "Yeah, that's different. And it's fun but it's sometimes agonizing, you know. For maybe a

[102] Respondent 18.
[103] Respondent 4.
[104] Respondent 18.
[105] Respondent 19.

North American like me, I just want to get on to the dessert and stop talking, or something like that." Agonizing. He said that he was not accustomed to prolonged mealtimes while growing up either. "My family was never a big long meal—we weren't into long meals. So, I don't have it in my genes to do that, so sure; I'm not sure if I could get used to it." He did not think that lingering around the table was how he wanted to spend his time:

> My friend [who] is married to a French woman has talked about meals that have lasted like from noon until, lunch lasts until dinner, you know. It lasts the whole afternoon until they're ready for dinner, basically. It's just one long, long, long eating binge. It's not a binge really because you're long pauses and I think that would be agonizing for me. However, I do like the idea of a long luxurious dinner at a nice restaurant, probably. I like the idea, I'm not sure; I'd have to be around the right company to get that. [106]

He was not sure whom that "right company" might be, but he was sure that it was not the one person with whom he spent the majority of his time—his wife. "For Shôko and I, […] because we live together, we see each other all the time; we don't go out to dinner to talk. What are we gonna talk about? It's the same thing over and over. So we're married. I think it would have to be with another couple or a group of people to make it more interesting."[107] While meals could be social for him, they were not his default outlet for sociality.

A young woman from Prague also pushed back against the ideal that lengthy meals were a good use of time. If lunches were shorter, then the day could end earlier, she asserted, giving people more free time. Long lunches were quite a contrast to what she was accustomed to. "The stop [break] for lunch is, here, for two hours […] it's a long time for me because if I take lunch in [the] Czech Republic it's just for twenty minutes, […]

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[106] Respondent 19.
[107] Ibid.

maximum. So, just eating and that's all, no talking."[108] In France, she said, an hour of the two-hour lunches was spent around the table, talking. What did she think of this difference? "I prefer to have a shorter stop [break] for lunch because then you will stop earlier, instead of 5pm it's 3:30pm. It's better to stop a little bit earlier [to] have time [of] your own." Whereas the women from California and from Vancouver preferred the sociality of long meals, the woman from the Czech Republic favored the independence that she associated with a schedule characterized by shorter meals like those she was used to. Although long meals may seem like a proxy for sociality, there were still some such as the Czech girl and the Canadian man who found such pursuits inefficient or even "agonizing." The ability to linger over meals or not was essentially governed by time constraints. For some (the Algerian woman, for instance) time in France was more constrained; for others, (the women from Vancouver and California, for example) it was less.

To know how a society values time, one need look no further than the structure of meals. For these respondents from elsewhere, the ordering of time in France was striking, and mealtimes governed the rhythms of daily life far beyond eating. For example, imagine taking a trip to the pharmacy. Montpellier, a medical town, is filled with independent pharmacies, marked by familiar green crosses. In some pharmacies, the green, glowing cross is accompanied by an equally prominent sign declaring, "non-stop." How convenient! A twenty-four-hour pharmacy! Or at least this is what an average Anglo might think upon seeing signs such as these. That unfortunate foreigner is in for a rude awakening when he or she realizes that "non-stop" in this context means that the pharmacy does not take a two-hour lunch break.

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[108] Respondent 12.

Now we have an idea of how mealtimes governed daily life in France. These were the times for eating, socializing, drinking coffee, smoking, or relaxing. Ideally, such activities occurred within a specific spatial context as well, *sûr la table.* One should not take a quick lunch at one's desk, nor grab *la malbouffe* to go. Ideally, in case we had forgotten Bové and Roquefort, one would eat lunch slowly and hopefully savor the flavors of a local, artisanal product. Indeed, mealtimes were for eating; other times were not.

Those who transgressed the established temporal and spatial norms around eating were sanctioned by their French peers. The young Czech woman had such an experience one day when she and a Czech friend of hers each took out an apple to eat during the fifteen-minute break in the middle of classes. She was taken aback because "one French student told us, 'you are eating all of the time. When I see you, you are eating.' I was very surprised," she said, "because it was just an apple. But it's true; I have never seen French students to eat [eating] something between the courses, during the break.

"But it isn't fair," she asserted, "because our lunch in [the] Czech Republic is only one plate with meat and potatoes and some sauce, and that's all. And it's enough for me. But here, the lunch is huge. You have the salad; you have the cheese; you have the dessert; and also [it's] very big. There [are] bigger portion[s] than in [the] Czech Republic, I think. Maybe that's why these students eat only the lunch and they don't eating during the breaks, because they are full from the big lunch, I think." Regardless of the quantity of the food, she had not yet become acculturated to the differences in scheduling and importance of meals. The comments of her French classmate enforced the idea that hers was not appropriate

behavior; it was out of time and out of place. One did not eat an apple in the break room, beside the coffee machine—at least not so close to lunchtime.

People's behavior changed not only in terms of when and how they ate, but also in terms of what they consumed. Many found their diets in France characterized by hybridity. The Algerian woman's habits were illustrative. She no longer cooked Algerian food, but she did not cook purely French food either. Rather, it was a mix. Her experiences recall the Australian woman's observation that modern, Australian cuisine was a mixture, a hybrid, of the many immigrant food traditions present in Australian society. Similarly, scholarship on food and social history has noted that immigrants are a source of variety, diversity, and innovation in cuisine.[109] Agro-food scholarship does not yet seem to have incorporated such important insights. Yet, it would be wise not to relegate such notions to the past for they are the essence of the current lived experiences of those such as these foreigners in France.

The Peruvian student's reflections illustrate this point and are reminiscent of Donna Gabaccia's scholarly work on the role of "multi-ethnic creole foodways" in the shaping of American identity.[110] He missed the varied, multicultural cuisines of his homeland that, he explained, developed due to a history of immigration. He listed: European cuisine, cuisine of the Americas, Chinese food, Japanese food, and foods that reflect a past of slave cultures. Food in France was not only less diverse, foods also tended to remain segregated, not mixing, he said. In Peru, he explained, when one speaks of Italian food, it is, in fact, Italian-Peruvian food; similarly, Chinese food is Chinese-Peruvian food. Such mixing altered foods, as varied ethnic cuisines became Peruvian.

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[109] Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[110] Ibid., 9.

In France, though, he thought that the food of immigrants remained as it was in countries or origin. For instance, the food of Arabic-speaking immigrants remained distinct from French food. In Montpellier, there were many North African restaurants located in the suburbs, but the Peruvian student did not find them to be integrated. In his view, the food of those restaurants, like the Greek and Italian food he had tried closer to the center of the city, remained apart—much like the people. Whereas Peruvians had taken immigrant food traditions and made them their own, he did not find that the French had done the same. Steinberger concurs, "The French still didn't consider Maghreb cuisine to be their own; they continued to regard it as something imported and exotic," he explains. "They also viewed it as inherently inferior to French cuisine."[111] Such an orientalist viewpoint would seem to do little to encourage social cohesion, especially in a place such as Montpellier with a large proportion of North African immigrants.

The separateness of these ethnic cuisines from the dominant culinary culture of France was a proxy for the state of integration of the people behind those cuisines. Such separation was about more than just food, the Peruvian student explained; it was about people's behaviors and habits and their expressions of cultural identity. How did these expressions of cultural identity play out here in France? French society was generally aggressive toward foreigners, he said.

He illustrated his point by comparing France with the United States, where he had lived before: The national mythology of the United States was that of a country of immigrants, which, he said, served to erase traces of the native past from the landscape. In contrast, the national mythology of France was predicated on an ancient, Gallic past, which

[111] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That : Food, Wine, and the End of France*, 211.

the French were intent on preserving. In his view, the consequences of this mythos were that the French tended to try to limit commingling of immigrant and native customs and tended to not be accepting of immigrant habits. In addition, French notions of cultural purity led them to be hostile to creolization. As he explained, the French did not want to mix their "pure" culture with the culture of immigrants.

In terms of cuisine, then, he doubted that French-Peruvian food would be an admixture that would interest the French. Peruvian-French cuisine would work in Peru but not in France. Such a mixture would not happen in France because the French were not as open as others to mixing, he asserted. Peru, in contrast, was open to cultural mixing, and had many immigrants from various countries, he explained. If the French were as closed as the Peruvian contended, it surely is a shame, for as scholars have noted, food is often the easiest way to cross cultural boundaries.[112]

Yet, it is clear that the ability to cross such boundaries was not symmetrical. As Fatéma Hal, the most famous Maghreb chef in France, explained to Michael Steinberger, pronouncements of food journalists and critics demonstrate this asymmetry: "If a top French chef decided to open a Moroccan restaurant, the French journalists would assume that not only would he succeed, he would do it better than a native chef like me. … But if I announced that I was going to open a place serving traditional French cuisine—no way. They wouldn't accept it."[113] Gérard Allemandou, another Parisian restaurateur summarized

[112] Van Den Berghe, "Ethnic Cuisine: Culture in Nature."
[113] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That : Food, Wine, and the End of France*, 211.

the state of affairs even more pithily: "Gastronomy is the last bastion of the reactionary spirit in France, and it's too bad."[114]

This was not always so. According to Steinberger, in the past, French food did help immigrants to assimilate. He illustrates this with the words of Gilles Pudlowski, a restaurant critic whose parents were Polish Jewish émigrés. Steinberger states, "it was the food that made [Pudlowski] feel French, 'The only France I know is gourmet France,' he wrote. 'My exemplary French … are master chefs … master vintners, cellar men, and vine growers … [ellipses in original] This country, as vast, multifarious, and well-fed as it is gourmand is indeed a gigantic, convivial, perpetual, quotidian feast.'"[115] For some that buffet was still open, but for others, it seemed closed.

Yet, the addition of other foreigners into the mixture of French society just might dilute the reactionary spirit that Allemandou and Hal lamented might spoil the broth and expand the definition of *French sûr la table.* Take, for instance, the following exchange with a young man from Michigan:

> "Is there something that you've eaten that you've liked in particular?"
>
> "Something French?"
>
> "Yes, something from here? Something that you've eaten since coming here?"
>
> "Sure. I really do like the Moroccan food and the kabob…"[116]

For this young American, Moroccan food was as French as a trip to the local *patisserie* or *boulangerie*. In fact, right after he mentioned his affinity for Moroccan food and

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[114] Ibid., 210.
[115] Ibid., 209.
[116] Respondent 1.

kabob, he said, "I really, really like the pastries and the baked goods."[117] The Czech woman, who generally did not like the food since living in France, said that the one change that she could foresee in her diet was that she planned to eat couscous when she returned to the Czech Republic.[118] If France was vast, multifarious, and gourmand, as Pudlowski, the Polish-Jewish food critic contended, then for today's *émigrés,* perhaps it was time to add the tagine-makers to the 'master chefs,' 'master vintners,' 'cellar men,' and 'vine growers.'[119]

* * *

Of the participants in this study, the Algerian, Peruvian, and Czech students all admitted they did not like the food in France. Two of them, the Peruvian and the Czech, stood out as feeling apart from the society around them. They were dissatisfied with their social life in France, and certainly did not exclaim like the girl from Maine, "I absolutely love it. You start a life someplace else and initially it's difficult, but then afterwards you really grow to love it," or, "I *love* the food here!"[120] Rather, the young Peruvian noted that while there were many things to like in Montpellier, such as the wealth of young people and cultural opportunities, there was still much that he was not used to; to which he felt ill at-ease; and to which he felt he would do well to adjust himself. Chief among those things was the food. The cuisine was an impediment to his integration, as we have already heard.

Yet, his straightforward assessment of his own situation in France sounded downright sanguine in comparison to the experiences of the young, Czech woman. Was she feeling

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Respondent 12.
[119] Although the words are mine, Steinberger would surely agree with this sentiment, as this is indeed one of his central claims.
[120] Respondent 5.

settled in? "No, I would like to go home," she said. She realized that her time in the South of France might prove beneficial in the longer-term though, "This is a very good opportunity for me, for my language, and to know other peoples," she noted, "but, in general, I can't live here because the South of France is so different. I don't like the transport here. I'm not used to the food here. So, I will be very happy when I go back… I'm happy that it's just for six months, and not for life." Was there any other reason she did not feel settled? "Yeah, there is not my family, not my friends, just Ivana [her friend, another Czech woman], you know. I can't speak Czech a lot. We speak only Erasmus here, not with French students, I think. So it is a little bit sad that you spend time with just ten students here. That's all."[121] Her sense of unease and rootlessness was not just an adjustment to the realities of daily life. It was not dealing with the new bus system or the lack of the salami, dumplings, and dark bread that she liked that impeded her acclimation. It was not even the want of good, affordable beer. Rather, it was a profound sense of exclusion from the community at large, a feeling of ghettoization, and a powerlessness to stop it.

It was not as if this young woman reveled in complaining or was unimaginative regarding her situation. In fact, she was strikingly empathetic to the perspectives of her French classmates, "Our French isn't as good. So I think it is very difficult to speak with French students. French for them is [their] maternal language. So it is very difficult to listen to us. I don't blame them because I think it is very difficult to think about 'what can she say' and 'what is she saying now, I'm not sure.' So, I think that it is also hard for them, but I thought that it [would] be a little bit different here." She thought it would be different.

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[121] Respondent 12. *Erasmus* – "Erasmus Mundus" is a European Commission-funded scholarship program, which enables students in the European Union to study in other countries. In this context, most study-abroad or foreign students at the woman's French host university, SupAgro, would be referred to as "Erasmus."

How so? "That we would have more contact with French students; that we can improve our French with original French students, not just with foreign students." The sense of exclusion and isolation that the young Czech woman felt in Montpellier may not have approached the "aggressiveness" toward foreigners that the young Peruvian man ascribed to French culture, but it certainly did not suggest a welcoming melting pot either. It seems that while the Czech woman attributed the sense of exclusion she felt to herself and her lack of French fluency, the Peruvian thought that such an experience was due to a greater degree to xenophobia on the part of the French. In either case, they did not feel settled, and the food was not helping.

Like the Peruvian and Czech participants, the Algerian woman was not greatly impressed by French food. Yet, overall, her feelings seemed much more positive. What made her impressions so different from those of the Peruvian and Czech students? In short, it was family.

This difference was evident in her demeanor. She spoke excitedly, full of energy and enthusiasm for her new home, much like young woman from Maine. Her favorite foods were *valfrais* (cheese) and a *baguette Antigone* (a baguette from a bakery called *Boulangerie Antigone*). These baguettes came from the Antigone Bakery, located in a neighborhood of the same name, where her uncle lived. Upon arriving in Montpellier to study French, English, and Arabic, she spent the first year living in her uncle's house. There, he tried to introduce her to foods that did not exist in Algeria. Whenever he would show her something new, she expressed a childlike wonder:

> For me, when I was sharing in [living with] my uncle it was so, so, so great for me because I was like a baby when [s]he saw something new. "Ah, this thing exists here in France?" I was like a baby who doesn't know anything—in general, in food.
>
> So, my uncle tried to give me the personality to know these things by buying everything that I don't [didn't] know, that didn't exist in Algeria, because he is an Algerian, too. So, he knows [which] things exist in Algeria. So, every time when he buys something that I don't know he says to me, "[Respondent 23], that is for you cause there is not this food in Algeria. So you have to eat it and to know it." It's really to know something that I don't have in Algeria. It was so fun because, for him, I was like a baby. "This is for you, [respondent 23], you don't know that."[122]

Her uncle was like the local guide that the American journalist had longed for—someone to show her the lay of the land and to actively introduce her to new tastes and experiences. Because they had a shared cultural background, he knew what foods were likely to be novel for her and made an extra effort to show her these new flavors.

The initial year at her uncle's was a good opportunity to be exposed to a new variety of foods, but it was not as if she liked them all. Sometimes, "[my uncle] and his wife try to do [make] something that I don't know, and I realize it would be strange to eat it," she explained. "Really, I don't appreciate all of the food." In general, she liked the food of her homeland more. "I prefer my food in Algeria because there [are] many spices, and it's well cooked, too. It's not like here. I imagine that, here, there's nothing. It's not well cooked. There's no spice. There is nothing." She explained that she missed spicy food and Middle-Eastern flavors because "for me, it's more *"équilibrée*, no?" Balanced. "Balanced, yeah, for me. I prefer my food in Algeria." So, while she enjoyed trying new things, it is clear that the young Algerian girl did not find French food to be particularly special.

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[122] Respondent 23.

To her, French cuisine generally was not balanced and was not very flavorful in comparison to that of Algeria. But, her initial year in France certainly had a more delicious and varied foodscape than did her present situation because she was living with her uncle. Not only did he go out of his way to make sure that she tried new foods, the fact that he was more established (working as a physician) offered her the opportunity to taste items she could not afford herself as a student. As she explained, "For me, my first year in France, I [didn't] work. I was in my uncle's. So I discovered many things—many different foods—here in France. But it's not a cheap one. He's a doctor so he [does not buy] his food from LIDL like me but from *Auchan*, from another [supermarket chain]. So there was really a great, great, great, diversity of food. So, this time helps me so well to know many things about food."[123] It was clear that for her—as with all of the respondents from the third world—cost was not no-object. This year, she was working at LIDL, a discount supermarket in order to support herself. While she had become quite well acquainted with the products at LIDL as a checker there, as she noted herself, LIDL was no *Auchan*. Living alone, she had a greater degree of autonomy, but less varied and high-quality culinary options due to budgetary constraints.

The young Peruvian concurred that the food he had experienced in France was not as flavorful, balanced, or affordable as that which he was used to. He ate the cheapest food available, he explained. His frustration with his limited choices was exacerbated his budget. To him, dietary options at the same price-point in Peru were more varied and interesting, whereas menus in France were uniform and predictable. When eating in cheap places, as he often did, he said, one gets standardized food without much in the way of flavor or spices.

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[123] Ibid.

Low-cost establishments are homogenous, he concluded. But even sitting down to a meal in France, or having a menu, was not the norm for him. In fact, he no longer ate meals. Instead, he would buy food at the low-cost supermarket and cook at home; but he did not prepare meals or even dishes.[124]

Rather, he ate to fill himself up. He tried to make sure he had enough macronutrients, attempting to keep track of his intake of protein, in the form of meat or fish; carbohydrates, usually in the form of potatoes; and maybe some salad, which he afforded its own category. As we talked, he spoke in the language of "protein" and "carbohydrates," not of dishes. He was conscious of the significance of discussing his dietary habits in this way. "It's not food," he said. In France, he just ate to eat. This state of affairs was quite different from his experiences back in Peru, where eating had been a time of sharing and communing with others. Here, it had become protein-intake time. Here, he got his macronutrients, alone. Part of this change was due to of money; part of it was because of lack of time; and part of it was out of force of habit. Most of the people around him ate either at home or in the university dining hall, but they would not invite him to eat with them, he said; and he did not want to spend a lot of money in the dining hall. So, he ended up in his room, eating by himself.

He said that he felt differently when eating since coming to France. In Peru, he said, you invited someone to eat if you wanted to have a conversation with him; in France, you invited him to drink. He explained that if one felt uncomfortable when eating, having others around would exacerbate that feeling of discomfort. Better to eat alone, he asserted, and go

[124] Respondent 22.

drinking afterward.[125] But such an endeavor was still apt to be pricey for foreigners like these participants. For instance, the Czech woman noted that beer was expensive. In the Czech Republic, a large (500 ml) beer cost €0.80 whereas in France a small beer (330 ml) cost €3.00. All of the food in France was more expensive than in the Czech Republic, she said, except for the wine.[126] And what was wine in the Mediterranean world of Montpellier if not sociality?[127]

Were feelings of disconnection then merely symptoms of longing for beer in a wine region? The Peruvian's experience suggested likely not. He said that the locus of his discomfort was not some social aspect of eating but rather the food itself, and only that. He elaborated, it was as if he did not taste the food here at all, for it was different from the food of his home country and, in addition, he only ate the cheapest food available. He did feel that French food had helped him to integrate since coming to Montpellier. Still, it was hard to imagine how he might experience *le grande cuisine* of France when his circumstances only permitted him to eat French fries.[128]

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[125] Respondent 22.
[126] Respondent 12.
[127] Massimo Montanari, "Introduction: Food Systems and Models of Civilization," in *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Jean Louis Flandrin, Massimo Montanari, and Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[128] I am not saying French fries for rhetorical flourish. When asked what a typical meal was for him in France, respondent 22 said, sausages with French fries, or beef with French fries, or fish with French fries and maybe salad. He went on to elaborate that the French fries he had eaten in France all tasted the same, whereas the ones in Peru were more varied, like a "handicraft." Later in our discussion, he said that he really liked the French fries in his new-found home. There was a wide variety of French fries here—less than in Peru, but more than in the United States, where he had briefly lived. He thought that the quality of the fries, their taste, and their texture were things that he liked. In the U.S., he thought that French fries were a standardized, industrial product. In short, French fries seemed to be a defining part of his culinary experience in Montpellier, as they were the topic of conversation in at least four separate instances during our 75-minute discussion. Similarly, respondent 12, the Czech woman says, "here in France I used to [am accustomed to] take pizza or some meat with fries or something, vegetable meal with fries" whereas a typical meal in the Czech Republic would consist of "Dumplings, sauce and meat, or potatoes and meat, yeah. Potatoes and meat or some food from potatoes." How did she find these experiences different? It centered a lot around fries. "In Czech Republic, I don't take fries a lot like here. I like fries, but we don't have it in our cafeteria or in home we don't

Taken together, the experiences of these foreigners tell us about the variety of available foods, their relative cost, the character of time that structured their consumption, and the hybrid, creole nature of the foods themselves. More than just being evocative, however, these themes and people's experiences in Montpellier call attention to social processes already unfolding within French society more generally. Those processes are ones of exclusion. Such exclusion extends beyond the realm of France's colonial past insofar as places such as Peru and the Czech Republic were never part of *la France entiere.*[129] Indeed, nativist sentiments have long existed amongst the residents of the hexagon itself.[130] Graham Robb, reminds us that people's principal attachments were to the land of their *pays,* a word deriving from the Latin *pagus* or the area controlled by a tribe. So, if the French oppressed there colonial subjects and behaved tribally amongst themselves, what hope did this leave for those from even farther afield?

Not surprisingly, the answer is that it depends. Let us return to the three familiar foreigners whose experiences we have just become familiar with—one signifying France's colonial connections, and the two others, representing inhabitants of developing countries with which France had less of a readily apparent historical connection. Recall, the Algerian women said she most enjoyed a *baguette Antigone* from the bakery in her uncle's neighborhood with *valfrais*. Of the many bakeries in Montpellier, she appreciated the taste of this one, close to where she had lived upon her arrival in France. Her uncle had shown her many new flavors, and although she said that the food here did not taste good and was

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do it. I think that in Czech Republic it is maybe more healthy for me, because here this is like some fast food." José Bové would surely be appalled that this women's experience of French cuisine was "like some fast food" when compared to her home country.

[129] The term for both continental France and its overseas departments.

[130] Robb, *The Discovery of France: A Historical Geography from the Revolution to the First World War*.

poorly cooked, she had taken to it enough that she planned to make quiche, complete with whatever crème fraiche she might find, when she returned home.[131]

In contrast, the Czech woman, knew nothing of local food since arriving in Montpellier. "I know nothing about local food here. Maybe there's some wine from here, but the food… I don't know anything about the food in France. So I can't say I am eating local food because I am not sure what is local food in France."[132] Was she interesting in finding out? "Yeah, maybe, but I'm scarred of, I don't like a lot of seafood like mussels. So it looks a little bit strange for me. So I didn't try it. Escargot, so I didn't try it, too. Oysters. It looks a little bit disgusting for me. So I'm not trying it." She associated seafood with the region, and really did not like it.[133] Based on what she knew of her surroundings, local food was not just culturally intimidating but viscerally off-putting.

The Peruvian student found the very idea of local food not just off-putting but also intellectually objectionable. He did not eat local food in Montpellier because he thought that local food in France was expensive and snobby. Furthermore, he declared, people who ate local food did so not for the taste but because they viewed it as a lifestyle choice. He did not like the idea of local food because he thought is was not "natural." He stated that local food producers did not sell food; they sold a lifestyle. Frankly, he found this stupid, he said. The ancillary lifestyle aspects of the European local food movement repelled him.[134]

If local food for some was expensive and elitist or unknowable and scary; if French gastronomy was the last bastion of the reactionary spirit within the country; if the vestiges of

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[131] Respondent 23.
[132] Respondent 12.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Respondent 22.

the gourmand, multifarious, quotidian feast that welcomed past generations of newcomers were now merely distant memories of another era, where did cuisine fit in the lives of people such as the respondents here?

José Bové probably would not like one potential answer. And it might not be enacting a "reflexive politics of localism," but it certainly was building a politics of inclusion. Who was creating and promoting a space of inclusion? McDonald's.

As Denis Hennequin, the President of McDonald's Europe from July 2005 to November 2010,[135] explained to Michael Steinberger, "McDonald's in his view, was helping to assimilate a large and rapidly growing immigrant population that generally felt marginalized in French society, and it was promoting diversity and solidarity in a country that badly needed more of both. 'We are a strong enabler for integration,' Hennequin said. 'We mix people of different origins, different levels of income.'"[136] Eric Gravier, a vice president at McDonald's France, concurred. "He said the company went to lengths to ensure that its restaurants were staffed by people of diverse backgrounds. Often, this meant that employees were sent to restaurants in neighborhoods outside their own in order to ensure a racial or ethnic balance behind the counter […] 'We have to mix,' said Gravier. 'Sometimes we get kids living fifteen minutes or a half hour away from stores, because it gives a mixture; we are careful about preserving multi-origins.'"[137]

A fast-food chain with a radical agenda of inclusivity, the company had refused to alter its menu in certain neighborhoods. As Gravier again explained to Steinberger,

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[135] "Denis Hennequin: Executive Profile & Biography – Businessweek," Bloomberg Businessweek, accessed July 9, 2011, http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/people/person.asp?personId=22709590&ticker=MCD:US.
[136] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That : Food, Wine, and the End of France*, 116.
[137] Ibid.

"'They've asked for halal beef in some places, but we've refused,' he said. 'We don't want to be seen as connected to one group or another; we want to be connected to everyone.' He proudly said that French politicians were no longer inclined to demonize McDonald's and were instead coming to recognize the company's social contributions: 'They are starting to see us an important actor in terms of diversity; we could become an interesting model for them to look at.'"[138] An interesting model, indeed.

French politicians were bound to take notice of McDo because of its relative success in another arena—employment. As Steinberger explains, McDonald's

> was providing jobs—lots of jobs—in a country that was having a conspicuously difficult time creating them. By 2007, McDonald's had nearly fifty thousand people on its payrolls in France, making it one of the country's largest private-sector employers, and the average age of its employees was twenty-five. French kids liked eating at McDonald's and they liked being on the other side of the counter, too. In 2006, McDonald's was rated the eight-best company to work for in France. In a nation beset with persistently high unemployment and frequent labor unrest, these were not figures to be sniffed at.[139]

These jobs were all the more important because of where they where being created. "The chain had many restaurants in predominantly immigrant neighborhoods, where the unemployment rates among youths were often as high as 50 percent," explains Steinberger.[140] When violence and vandalism erupted due to frustration from a lack of opportunity, as it did in 2005, McDonald's outlets escaped largely unscathed. As Hennequin explained, "The kids would say, 'Hey, my sister works there.'"[141]

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[138] Ibid., 117.
[139] Ibid., 115-16.
[140] Ibid., 116.
[141] As quoted in Steinberger, 116.

Although it may have played a positive role in certain communities, McDonald's was still surely a global corporation, whose lack of attachment to place could just as easily explain its refusal to alter its practices to local customs, such as offering halal beef in certain outlets. Gravier asserted that the company does not want to align itself to any one group in order to be open to all groups. By being "connected to everyone," as Gravier says, McDo can capture more of the market and appeal to more customers. One could say that such rhetoric is all in service of the bottom line. Taking such a view, one might turn Gravier's words on their head to claim that by being connected to no one, the company is simply connected to no one (other than perhaps to its own interests.)

But, just because McDo has asserted no particular *local* connection does not mean that it is disconnected from place—it is just that that sense of place is a global one.[142] While a corporate, global sense of place may not accord well with the local/global dichotomy that McDonald's has frequently come to symbolize, such ideals fit well with the sensibilities of the younger generation to whom the company hopes to appeal. "Hennequin claimed that McDonald's status as a symbol of globalization had also worked in its favor, at least with younger French. 'Kids here have a fascination with global culture,' he said. 'They don't have a problem with globalization; it's attractive to them.'"[143] The next generation of French diners were not defensive localists.[144] With a global sense of place, even if they did decide to wear handlebar mustaches, French youth would be unlikely to start bulldozing any fast-food franchises.

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[142] Doreen B. Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," in *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
[143] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That : Food, Wine, and the End of France*, 114.
[144] Hinrichs, "The Practice and Politics of Food System Localization."; Winter, "Embeddedness, the New Food Economy and Defensive Localism."

And although McDonald's sense of place was global, McDonald's France under the leadership of Hennequin was acutely focused on highlighting the company's French connections. The catalyst for this emphasis? M. Bové. When Bové and his fellow farmers took down the McDonald's in Millau, "McDonald's France was sourcing 75 percent of its ingredients domestically, and [Hennequin] felt it was imperative from a PR standpoint to force French farmers, hypocritically applauding Bové, to publicly acknowledge the large volume of business that they were doing with *McDo.*"[145] Just when Hennequin mentioned young people's fascination with global culture, Steinberger asked him about Bové directly.

> He claimed that Bové had actually ended up doing McDonald's a big favor. The incident in Millau, and the outpouring of support for Bové had caused Hennequin and his colleagues to do a better job communicating. As he put it, "We had French employees, French suppliers, French franchisees; we had this secret story that shouldn't have been a secret—that we're a French-operated company selling an American product." In the aftermath of the Bové imbroglio, the company played up its French connections, and the public responded. "We came out of this crisis stronger," Hennequin said. "French consumers heard our message and said, 'It's my McDonald's.' Bové helped us at the end of the day."[146]

The numbers bear out his claim. There are over 1100 restaurants across the country,[147] three more than the company had when Bové bulldozed his way into the global consciousness. France is the second most profitable market after only the United States.[148] The French spend more per trip than consumers anywhere else—$15, on average, versus $4 in the U.S.[149] Everyday, McDonald's France serves 1.5 million meals.[150] French consumers flocked

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[145] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France*, 107-08.
[146] Ibid., 114.
[147] "Les chiffres," McDonald's France, 2010, accessed July 12, 2011, http://www.mcdonalds.fr/index.html#/whoweare/chiffres/.
[148] Nadim Audi, "France, Land of Epicures, Gets Taste for McDonald's," *The New York Times*, October 26, 2009, 106; Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France*.
[149] Audi, "France, Land of Epicures, Gets Taste for McDonald's."

to McDonald's in large and increasing numbers. As they let their wallets and their stomachs do the talking, Bové seemed to be losing the battle.

Still, it is hard not to concur with Steinberger that, "As reprehensible as Bové's tactics were, it was difficult for a food-loving Francophile not to feel a *little* solidarity with him. If you believed that McDonald's was a blight on the American landscape, seeing it on French soil was like finding a peep show at the Vatican, and in a contest between Roquefort and Chicken McNuggets, I knew which side I was on."[151] An apt synopsis—and that "peep show at the Vatican" was before McDonald's announced its plans to open a restaurant in the mall under the Louvre.

This was no big deal. At least that was the feeling of Laruent Mortin, a 28-year-old bank clerk who spoke to *The New York Times* after the announcement. As he waited in line at the McDonald's near the Opéra Garnier, he informed the reporter that "This is news to me, but if they open a McDo in the Lourve, what's the big deal?"[152] Alain Drouard, the president of the *International Commission for Research into European Food History* and a professional historian, was similarly unfazed by the news. He told the *Times,* "We're in a process of industrialization […] The French have become eaters of convenience food."[153] If Drouard's countrymen found it difficult to fathom this development,[154] he explained, "Gastronomy is a discourse, it is about collective belief." But, he continued, "there is a gap

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[150] "Les chiffres." http://www.mcdonalds.fr/index.html#/whoweare/chiffres/ McDonald's France, 2010. Accessed July 12, 2011.
[151] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France*: 106.
[152] Audi, "France, Land of Epicures, Gets Taste for McDonald's."
[153] Ibid.
[154] Such as an anonymous, outraged art historian quoted in Henry Samuel, "McDonald's restaurants to open at the Louvre," *The Telegraph*, October 4, 2009, accessed July 12, 2011, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/6259044/McDonalds-restaurants-to-open-at-the-Louvre.html.

between this discourse and what the French eat." [155] Besides, "bistros don't know how to make a good sandwich anymore," anyway, he said. So, "McDo is a legitimate competitor."[156] M. Mortin, the bank employee seemed to feel similarly. He told the paper, "I come here once in a while. It's more of a real lunch than eating a sandwich in the street, and it doesn't take as much time as sitting in a restaurant. It doesn't mean I don't enjoy French cuisine," he said. "It's not exclusive."[157] Not exclusive, but omnivorous and open.

Perhaps surprisingly, the sentries of France's culinary establishment echoed these sentiments. Steinberger was able to speak to "those responsible for upholding France's culinary tradition." Jean-François Piège, a Michelin-starred chef, "didn't regard *McDo's* success as a sign of the cretinization of younger French palates. Quite the opposite: He believed it showed good taste. 'Other than the croque monsieur, we don't have a tradition of hot sandwiches here,' Piège explained to [Steinberger]. 'McDonald's gives you a hot sandwich, with flavorful meat; if the choice is between that and a ham and cheese sandwich out of the refrigerator, people are going to choose the hot sandwich. Also, McDonald's is very economical. Why has McDonald's succeeded here? Because it allows a certain person to eat well.'"[158] Alain Ducasse, Piège's mentor and a celebrity-chef-entrepreneur had a similar take, "'You eat simply, cheaply there—it is attractive for the young. […] The young don't have time for long lunches. They can't sit there drinking Cognacs and Armagnacs after lunch. They are busy; they have meetings. McDonald's offers speed and a good price; if the

[155] Audi, "France, Land of Epicures, Gets Taste for McDonald's."
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France*: 117-18.

café owners offer good sandwiches at a good price, with good bread, good butter, good ham, the young will come. Food has to evolve with changes in society.'"[159]

Steinberger also had the opportunity to speak to Jacques Puisais, who he describes as "France's philosopher of flavor, continuing a tradition of culinary high-mindedness that stretched back to Brillat-Savarin and Grimod de la Reynière."[160] Puisais thought that McDonald's fulfilled an important need in the face-paced, modern world. When people only had fifteen minutes for lunch, the local bistro was not an option. "But," Steinberger clarifies, "while he understood the appeal of McDonald's, he couldn't accept the notion that a meal there was a dining experience; even if you lingered at the table for an hour and finished up with an espresso and a *macaron,* it was still fast food. 'McDonald's is a place one eats, but it is not a restaurant,' Puisais said emphatically. 'There is no wine, there are no vegetables, there is no gastronomic discourse. One cannot truly eat in fifteen minutes.'"[161] A lack of wine or vegetables is easy to remedy, but for the gastronomic discourse one needs others. In order to have a true dining experience, according to France's philosopher of flavor, foods and flavors were necessary, but so was companionship. Without dining companions, the experience was lost. One might as well be eating industrial French fries, in ones room, alone.

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If a local sense of place and companionship could not be found for some foreigners in France (and, indeed some native-born French as well) and they were not returning home to a familiar place, then they would rely on the other sense of place that was readily accessible

[159] Ibid., 118.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 119.

to them on French soil. They turned to a universalist, catholic, global sense of place. McDonald's was savvy to this fact and made it part of its central message of inclusion.

One of the latest incarnations of that message of inclusion was a series of television advertisements entitled "come as you are," which began to air in France in May and June of 2010, precisely when this project was underway. One particular commercial, which became quite controversial, featured a gay teenager having a conversation with his boyfriend as he looks at their class photograph. "I miss you, too," he tells the young man on the other end of the line, as his father returns from picking up their fast-food fare. After sitting down, the father looks at the son's class picture, and tells him that he looks just like him at his age, a real ladies man. "Too bad your class is all boys… you could get all the girls." As the son smiles, the ad tag-line declares, *venez comme vous êtes*, "come as you are." Surely, this is a message of radical inclusion: come as you are.[162] It is more than that though: McDonald's has recognized that inclusivity is an effective means to sell its products.

José Bové proclaimed that "the world is not for sale." Yet, this quixotic notion, admirable though it may be, is not realistic. The world has already been sold, as M. Bové is quite aware. Now it is the task of the various stakeholders in what seems an asymmetrical auction to divvy up the market share. And if one hopes to win over consumers or gain adherents, then it one has to be savvy when it comes to *le marketing*, or a bit less sardonically, when it comes to outreach.

So, let us ask, how, where, and when does one eat local products? The answer to this question may be a shibboleth, excluding those without the proper know-how and guidance.

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[162] Ad is viewable at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBuKuA9nHsw. Accessed July 7, 2011. As of this date, the YouTube video upload of this commercial had 3.5 million views.

How does one eat McDo? However, wherever, and whenever, of course. Come as you are. This is not to suggest that French society (or any society) would be improved by discarding all rules of comportment and decorum regarding food. It surely seems better to have a designated two-hour lunch break, with real silverware, good wine, and stimulating conversation. Indeed, the French do seem to dine in McDonald's in this way, minus the silver and the wine.[163] McDonald's in France alloys French food culture with *la malbouffe* of a transnational corporation; it is a site of hybridity and mixing. While, from outside, these phenomena may seem an odd pairing, the French seem rather taken by it. Their embrace of McDo was aided by the company's messaging, which actively promotes an openness and inclusivity to whomever will consume its products. If producers of and advocates for local specialties hope to entice more people to appreciate their wares, they must do the same. Their message should be, "Come as you are; we'll show you the way."

[163] Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That : Food, Wine, and the End of France*, 108-09. "French diners tended to treat McDonald's as if it were no different than the bistro around the corner: They came, they ate, and they lingered. As [Eric] Gravier [a vice president of McDonald's France] artfully put it [to Steinberger, 'The French population uses McDonald's in a very French way; it is fast food, but not that fast.'"

Conclusion – Come as You Are. We'll show you the way.

This project began with a simple set of questions. Some of these were everyday questions of the sort you would pose to a new acquaintance: Where are you from? What brought you here? How are you finding it so far? Questions about food were equally straightforward: How are you finding the food? Did you have a favorite meal back in your home country? How has that changed since you came to France? Have you tried any of the local food?

These simple questions yield complex answers. We learn that newcomers to a locale do not experience the politics of their consumption choices in the same way that one might expect from inveterate locals or academic theoreticians. We find that more than just offering a new set of experiences and perspectives on food and its role in social life, foreigners and foreign influences are a source of novelty and innovation. Such innovation can be a font of energy and vitality for French society, or, truly, for anywhere.

Still, we apprehend, potential innovation from foreign influences can only be realized under the right conditions. It is much more likely to be achieved if the people and ideas in question occupy a place of privilege in their adopted society. That privilege can manifest itself in terms of socioeconomics, or, more importantly, it can manifest itself in terms of people's connectedness to those around them. Local guidance produces local connectedness.

Local guidance, local connectedness: what boring-sounding and faceless concepts. Yet, these were not abstractions to the people on the ground in France. They came from particular experiences with those in their lives. Local connections appeared in the form of the

welcoming uncle who had immigrated from Algeria years before; or through the heated discussions with the French boyfriend about what to cook for dinner that night; or in the faces of the kindly landlords who not only offered a multi-course lunch but also explained just how one should eat Roquefort with salted butter and Muscat wine. Those who did not share in such experiences regularly felt adrift. Some even articulated it just that clearly: What I really need is a local guide, one said.

How would he or others like him find a local guide? He did not know. Such people appear in our lives through luck or through serendipity. It is not as if there is some sort of global, local-guide service that exists to integrate newcomers whenever they arrive. And if there were, it would likely be profoundly dissatisfying—especially if it were based on monetary exchange. Yet, what if we could actively create spaces of inclusion? Places where people not from here felt welcomed rather than adrift? Such a suggestion sounds frighteningly utopian. And as we know from the very word "utopia," whose Greek origins are *ou 'not'* + *topos 'place,'* there is no such place.[164]

Yet, the utopian ideal is a useful, placeless place to arrive at, for it helps us to contrast the suggestion to "come as you are; we'll show you the way" and the call to create spaces of inclusion with the other calls and recommendations with which we began. The idea of Utopia is important not just as an imaginary, perfect place but also as product of humanism. And it is a humanist perspective that has informed much of this work.

Without this humanistic perspective, it might seem that we have arrived back where we started, with a call for a reflexive politics of localism. Yet, the spirit of that suggestion and the spirit of my call to create spaces of inclusion are not the same. We can see how the

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[164] "Utopia" in *New Oxford American Dictionary,* for Mac OS X, v. 2.1.3, Apple Computer, Inc., 2009.

different natures of these two distinct calls may create different outcomes. Upon further examination, even a reflexive politics of localism risks dichotomizing. The notion of reflexivity implies taking oneself into account. A politics of localism that is aware that it privileges the local is not necessarily one that does not continue to do so. Awareness is not action. The idea of reflexive localism itself seems to divide into *us* and *them*. We are the locals; they are the foreigners. Awareness is not action, but perhaps politics is. After all, as we saw earlier, the call was not for merely reflexive localism, but rather for a reflexive politics of localism. Yet, as we have also already seen, politics are not a reliable means of inclusion. If anything, politics are designed to divide, or at least have the unfortunate side effect of doing so.

I have argued that to privilege the political and the economic at the expense of the cultural was to miss something crucial. And it is. Yet, rhetorically, this statement seems to categorize ideas themselves into desirable, in this case "the cultural," and "less desirable," in this case "the political and the economic." So, let us bridge these fallacious categories by returning to the spirit behind my exhortation. I urged, "come as you are; we'll show you the way." It was a humanist call, a call that recognizes our common needs and potential.

Perhaps it is more than a call; it is a prescription, or even a mantra. It is not intended to be a political statement, for politics are not a reliable path to inclusivity. Rather it comes from the perspective of experience, human experience. It is a call that says if we attend to the experiences of others and recognize that our actions affect their lived realities then we will have better lived realities, better experiences. All of us. Of course, there is no guarantee, but

at our core we are all social beings, seeking to connect with those around us. Such is the basis of humanistic endeavors.

We began by positing that food could be a means to connect with those around us. So, what began as an inquiry about food has ended as a call for social change. And change is the crux of the matter. For at any given moment, who feels like the insider and who feels like the outsider may change. How might we navigate such change? Let us turn back to our humanist mantra of inclusion: we can see that, as we move through the world around us, we may be the 'we' in this declaration or we may be the 'you,' in any given space. But it does not matter, for we can embrace each change with a sense of hope and serenity, knowing that others will also say, "Come as you are. We'll show you the way."

Appendix A – Sample Interview Questions

Preliminary Questions

1) How long have you been here in France? in Montpellier?
2) Where are you from originally?
3) What brought you here?
4) How are you finding it here?
5) How are you finding the food?

Food Questions

6) What was your favorite food or meal before you came to France?
    a. How has that changed since you came to France?
7) Is there a story or memory that you associate with these foods or why you like them?
    a. Do they have any special meaning?
8) How important is food to you in general?
9) What has been your change in diet since you have been in France?
10) Did you decide to change?
    a. Do you have an example or story in mind concerning this change ?
    b. How do you feel about that?

Local Food Questions

11) Did you eat local food when you lived in _____?
    a. How has that changed since you came to France?
12) What did you think of as local food before you came to France?
    a. How has that changed since you came to France?
13) Have you had an opportunity to try any of the local food?
14) What have you eaten?
15) Did you like anything in particular?
16) Did you dislike anything in particular?
17) What do you think of as local food here?
18) Describe a typical meal in (your home country), describe a typical meal here. What is different about the two in terms of how the experience feels.
19) How is the food here different from the food you are used to?
20) Is there food here that you have eaten that you would not think of as 'local' food?
21) What is the experience like when you are eating such food?

Reasons for Consuming Local Foods

22) Why do you think people chose to consume local food?
23) Do think that the reasons are different in (your home country) vs. in France?

Traditions/Place-making/Identity

24) Do you feel you've settled in?
25) How do you feel food has helped you to settle in?
26) Could you tell me more about your food traditions?

27) Could you tell me about food and your identity?
28) Are there any other comments/thoughts/stories about local food in France you would like to share?

Appendix B – Subject Recruitment Materials

FOOD STUDY

Not from here?
Been in France for 2 months – 2 years?

Participate in interview about food (starting in May)

Contact Jonathan for more information

Receive a small gift for your participation

THE UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN MADISON

Montpellier SupAgro

Food Study / Jonathan 06.58.43.51.06 munetz@wisc.edu

Figure 1. Recruitment Poster

Subject Recruitment Email

Subject: Participate in Food Research Project

Hello:

We are recruiting participants for a study on food. If you are not from France and are interested in sharing your thoughts about French food, please consider participating. We are looking for people who have been in France for between 2 months – 2 years, who are over 18 years old.

Participants will take part in an interview lasting between 45 minutes - 1 hour in English. You will receive a small gift of a locally produced agricultural product for your participation. Please write munetz@wisc.edu if interested. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Munetz
Graduate Student
Department of Geography University of Wisconsin-Madison
munetz@wisc.edu

Chercheur Indépendant
Montpellier SupAgro

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