

**BREAKING THE MOULD:
COOKING SEMIOTICS AND HETEROGENEITY**

by

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**BREAKING THE MOULD:
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KATHLEEN LOREN BATSTONE

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree
of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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ABSTRACT

At the heart of the dissertation are two beliefs: first, that food preparation operates symbolically in literature and film, and second, that the symbolic function of food preparation is "multifunctional" in that it varies depending on social context. Supplementing these beliefs with elements of semiotic, post-structural, feminist, interarts, and linguistic theory, my concern is with the capacity of cooking as a symbol to resist binary classifications as illustrated in a variety of twentieth-century literary texts and films. An examination of the relationship between cooking and such traditional binaries as life and death, and masculine and feminine reveals the ability of food preparation to disrupt such oppositions following a Derridean model in which the two poles of the binary are seen to be interdependent or part of a continuum rather than antagonistic. The application of cooking's deconstructive capacity to the pairs metaphor/metonymy, and art/craft also raises questions regarding the status of these linguistic and institutional oppositions. The increasing attention paid to cooking in popular culture, represented by such markers as the popularity of cooking shows on television and the elevation of certain chefs to the status of celebrities, as well as the many connections between food preparation and almost all areas of social and cultural life indicate the importance of a greater understanding of cooking's symbolic function.

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INTRODUCTION

The advent of women's liberation, the civil rights movement, and the push for gay rights have resulted in an expansion and redirection of both social and academic discourse toward a reexamination of what constitute "appropriate" areas of study with increased attention being given to the importance of "non-traditional" research topics. Post-structuralist, post-colonial, feminist and queer theories (among others) have embraced and ushered into the academy approaches to texts and texts themselves which have traditionally been marginalized or completely ignored. It would, of course, be foolhardy to assume that these changes have been universally embraced, or to deny that there continues to be resistance towards augmenting or even replacing the canonized curriculum with texts and methods of inquiry which are seen as overtly political or driven by minority "special interest groups." Be that as it may, the increasing incidence of research that foregrounds not only traditionally marginalized texts and authors, but the ideological discourses which have contributed to their marginalization, signals the importance of questioning and interpreting the social and ideological structures that provide a framework for the world's cultures.

Although the study of issues relating to race, gender and sexuality has achieved a certain degree of tolerance if not acceptance within the academic community, topics remain which have received little attention or recognition. In "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," Alice Walker addresses this subject in the course of describing her attempts to discover and validate the modes of creative expression practiced by African-American women in the early part of the century. Her particular interest is in the degree to which

arts such as quilting and gardening have been denied value and status by an artistic, and implicitly an academic community focused on "high art." My particular purpose is to add the art of cooking to Walker's list of neglected arts; specifically, I wish to investigate the "whys" and "hows" of the failure of much of the academic and artistic community to consider cooking -- food preparation in the broadest sense -- as a topic worthy of inquiry, and to attempt an analysis of some of the functions of food preparation in films and literary texts originating in the latter half of the twentieth century. Possible explanations for its neglect include the association of cooking with "women's work," and the status which the senses of taste and smell occupy within much of the Western world's hierarchy of the senses. My main interest, however, and the explanation which I believe to be most fruitful, lies in the difficulties that cooking presents to the binary system of classification upon which many -- if not all -- cultures are founded. While gender association and the low status assigned to the "proximity" senses -- senses such as smell and taste which are differentiated from the "abstract" senses of hearing and sight -- are significant aspects of cooking's neglect, its capacity to resist binary categorization threatens any structure that relies upon dichotomy to order the universe, and thus represents an element which is better denied significance lest it destabilise such fundamental oppositions as male and female, art and science, or time and space.

The concrete focus of my investigation will be on food preparation as it is represented in several twentieth century films and novels. Drawing on the disciplines of literature, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy (among others), my approach will employ the strengths, while also recognising the weaknesses of semiotic theory, make use of elements of feminist and anthropological theories which speak to the concepts of liminality and

boundary blur, and include some of the premises of interarts theory and linguistics. I realise that critical approaches which are fundamentally structuralist and others associated with post-structuralism may make for strange bedfellows. Such an approach, however, may also speak to the ability of cooking to deconstruct the oppositions set out by literary theory in addition to more generally recognised binaries. The dissertation will begin (Chapter One) with an examination of possible explanations for the neglect of cooking as a topic of investigation, focusing primarily on the place occupied by the senses of smell and taste -- those principally associated with food and its enjoyment, followed by a discussion elaborating the status of food preparation as a "binary buster."

One of the difficulties involved in writing a treatise on food preparation is the degree to which cooking is inextricably linked with food on the one hand, and eating on the other. Although I am primarily interested in cooking as an activity and in those characters who engage in food preparation, discussions of these will necessarily also involve references to food, eating and the sense of taste. As much as possible, however, I have made an effort to avoid conflating these elements and to treat them rather as adjuncts complementary to the act of cooking, particularly as it is perceived in Western popular culture. Thus while discussions of the value of the senses of smell and taste and the interaction of all the senses which takes place during eating, and the references made to food more generally may appear to redirect the investigation away from its primary focus, my aim is to provide not only some background on the reasons for cooking's neglect, but also an indication of the complexity of cooking as an activity which incorporates a variety of disparate elements.

Although I plan to make use of a variety of critical approaches to the investigation of cooking, the study will be founded primarily on the more general tenets of semiotic theory. Robert Scholes defines semiotics as "the study of codes: the systems that enable human beings to perceive certain events or entities *as* signs, bearing meaning" (ix) and he sees the critical enterprise of semiotics as "a continual process of defamiliarization: the exposing of conventions, the discovering of codes that have become so ingrained we do not notice them but believe ourselves to behold through their transparency the real itself" (127). Umberto Eco expands this definition to include "everything that can be *taken* as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it. *Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie*" (Theory 7). The ability of cooking to "lie" will not be a focus of my investigation but rather its capacity to mean, to signify or stand for something else, particularly in the context of literature and film, and hence my study must draw on the structures established by semioticians, particularly semioticians of food and eating, as a research model. The use of such models, however, should not go unquestioned. In a post-structuralist age it is impossible to ignore the criticism directed at structuralist theory and practices, particularly their tendency toward ahistorical, apolitical approaches which attempt to delineate a universally applicable system of codes. Jonathan Culler, for example, defensively argues that, "semiotics does not assume agreement among readers. On the contrary, the most interesting cases will be those where readers disagree and where semiotics must construct models to account for divergence of perceptions and responses" (80). Ironically, however, he then

goes on to propose a model which is self-contained and posits a unified structure which encompasses the totality of, in this case, linguistic codes. Keeping in mind some of the problems associated with semiotic practice, therefore, I will first examine various methods by which semiotic theory has been applied to the study of cooking, food, and eating, with the aim of devising, with the help of some post-structuralist theoretical streams, a methodology which incorporates the most useful elements of semiotics while hopefully avoiding some of its pitfalls.

Within the semiotic arena itself, there exist several different approaches to the study of food and cooking, the first of which are Claude Lévi-Strauss's concepts of the culinary triangle and the study of *gustemes*, models which focus on cooking as representative of binary paradigm classes, and on the elaboration of the internal systems of national cuisines respectively. Claude Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle and its corresponding apexes of raw, cooked and rotten constitute the most well-known example of a semiotic investigation of cooking. For Lévi-Strauss, the terms "raw" and "cooked" headline paradigm classes under which the binaries nature/culture, elaborated/unelaborated, and man/women, -- to name a few -- are classified, and his stated objective is to define "the culinary triangle in its most general manifestation and to show how, in every culture, it could be used as a formal framework to express other oppositions, either cosmological or sociological" (*Origin* 479). In addition to attempting to define cosmological and sociological structures through the elements of cooking, Lévi-Strauss also makes an effort to classify various national cuisines according to the extent to which their constituent parts, "*gustemes*," reflect one pole or another of a series of binaries:

We might then distinguish English cooking from French cooking by

means of three oppositions: *endogenous/exogenous* (that is, national vs. exotic ingredients); *central/peripheral* (staple food vs. its accompaniments); *marked/not marked* (that is, savory or bland). We should then be able to construct a chart, with + and - signs corresponding to the pertinent or non-pertinent character of each opposition in the system under consideration. (*Structural 86*)

Lévi-Strauss's creation of paradigm classes and *gustemes* reflects what Lynda Davey-Longstreet identifies as the two most common approaches to culinary semiotics: "One group of researchers reinterprets the literary food item as a résumé or reformulation of social processes and ideologies in the world outside the text. . . . The second approach considers the food item as a social sign, and as a linguistic unit within a specialized system of communication" (223). Writing in the context of food in literature, her comments are particularly applicable to Lévi-Strauss's culinary semiotics; the culinary triangle is a reformulation of the social processes outside the structure, while the theory of *gustemes* elaborates the specialized systems which make up national cuisines.

Another well-known food semiotician is Roland Barthes whose "food system" in *Elements of Semiology* sets out a language of food based on the Saussurian model. Barthes's system is made up of "i) rules of exclusion (alimentary taboos); ii) signifying oppositions of units, the type of which remains to be determined (for instance the type savoury/sweet); iii) rules of association, either simultaneous (at the level of a dish) or successive (at the level of a menu); [and] iv) rituals of use which function, perhaps, as a kind of alimentary rhetoric" (27-28). In "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," Barthes expands his explanation of food as a code to include the role it plays in representing various sociological functions. He examines some of the themes represented by food in advertising, including

its role in signifying class distinctions, masculine and feminine, and health and sickness and suggests that "activity, work, sports, effort, leisure, celebration -- every one of these situations is expressed through food" (24-25).

The approaches of Lévi-Strauss and Barthes follow a traditional structuralist pattern, one that has been criticised by subsequent and more contemporary theorists. Identifying the weaknesses of Lévi-Strauss in particular, Mary Douglas states:

He fails us in two major respects. First, he takes leave of the small-scale relations which generate the codification and are sustained by it. Here and there his feet touch solid ground, but mostly he is orbiting in rarefied space where he expects to find universal food meanings common to all mankind. . . . Second, he relies entirely on the resources of binary analysis. ("Deciphering" 37)

Dissatisfaction with a model which "is orbiting in rarefied space" is also evident in more recent writing on food semiotics which stresses materiality alongside abstract theory. Thierry Belleguic and Lynda Davey-Longstreet indicate how a shift occurred that moved the semiotic study of food away from the structuralist model:

It seems that semiotics of food, like semiotics in general, has gone from a theory of the sign that is essentially linguistic and discursive in nature to a wider theory of the sign that includes both the act of reference and the object. In other words, to return more specifically to the semiotics of food, what is ingested is not simply a sign, understood within the context of a signifying system, but it is organic matter that becomes flesh. . . . A new modality thus becomes evident, which goes beyond the collective symbolic systems that govern the alimentary to include the individual in his or her specific relationship -- be it orthodoxal or heterodoxal -- to these systems. (204)

Although each of these approaches may be applied effectively in particular situations, for the purpose of this project the elaborated strategies may also prove to be too unwieldy. Mary Douglas, indeed, shows the impracticality of a study of culinary semiotics based on the model of syntagm

and paradigm set up by Lévi-Strauss when she sets out a sample of such an analysis and then observes "how long and tedious the exhaustive analysis would be, even to read. It would be more taxing to observe and record" (40). Obviously limits must be set on my investigation, the purpose of which is not the kind of study set out by Lévi-Strauss in any case. Instead of an exhaustive taxonomy of culinary signs, I would like to borrow an idea put-forward by Joel Kuipers that words for representing taste experience operate as multi-functional signs, apply this to cooking, and examine the extent to which this multi-functionality acts to undermine traditional binary oppositions within selected novels and films. It is the very fact that cooking evades binary classification, and thereby in some ways is completely at odds with the whole structuralist-semiotic tradition, that is at issue here. Thus it may appear that, when all is said and done, nothing remains of semiotics in this study but the theory in its most general form, a concern with "everything that can be *taken* as a sign" (*Eco Theory* 7), and very little of the previously established practice, for what I hope to show is that cooking is indeed a sign, or a system of signs, but one which evades the kind of binary classification which directs traditional semiotic analysis. It is a sign system which is potentially undefinable: my concern, however, is more with what cooking *does*, rather than what it *is*; how it functions to disrupt rather than define. To this end, I will be employing not only semiotic theory, but also some of the basic tenets of post-structuralism -- the Derridean conception of binary deconstruction, to name but one example -- as well as aspects of feminism and post-colonialism related to materiality and the body, issues of gender and ethnicity, and liminality.

One creative format which seems to provide a ready forum for the blending of a more abstracted semiotic practice as well as one which is more

connected to the body is that of fiction. The process of moving away from a universalist conception is facilitated, according to Lynda Davey-Longstreet, by an investigation which focuses on fictional texts: "Nor does the sign in a fictional work, in contrast to the non-fictional sign, depend uniquely on its capacity to mirror the external world of social codes, ideologies, and symbolic networks. Instead, the fictional sign almost inevitably attaches itself to an *individual body* which is, in most instances, that of a particular literary character" (222). The ability of food as sign to subvert the codes of the external world is also apparent in works of fiction since "a text has the potential to break the rules of the social semiotic. It may play with the rules for poetic or comic purposes, or it may subvert them in order to oppose the 'official' mainstream culture . . ." (O'Toole 216). As a final point on culinary semiotics and literary texts, Mervyn Nicholson suggests that in life, "eating is a routine necessity, but in literature eating is always a symbolic act. In life people eat in order to be alive, but the characters of literature do not eat to live, since they aren't alive. They eat only for a symbolic purpose" (38), a statement that I believe is applicable to cooking as well, and for the same reasons.

Thus Chapter Two will introduce the primary texts and films and provide evidence of cooking's ability to disrupt traditional binaries in these texts, focusing on oppositions such as self and other, life and death, and fantasy and reality. A list of films and literary texts which contain food and/or eating would be enormous, those which highlight eating and food, somewhat less so, and a list of texts which focus on cooking, considerably smaller. Although it is not comprehensive, the selection of primary texts I have chosen brings together representatives from a variety of countries and ethnic backgrounds and works drawn from several genres. The texts originate, for the most part, in the second half of the twentieth century and

have been chosen entirely because of the important role which they assign to cooks and to food preparation. Several of the texts appear in the form of both novel/short story and film: *Like Water for Chocolate* (written by Laura Esquivel, directed by Alfonso Arau); *Fried Green Tomatoes* (novel by Fannie Flagg, film directed by Jon Avnet); and *Babette's Feast*, (short story by Isak Dinesen, film by Just Betzer and Bo Christensen). Others are either one or the other: such novels as *The Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood, John Lanchester's *The Debt to Pleasure*, and Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*; and such films as *The Decline of the American Empire* by Denys Arcand, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* by Luis Buñuel, *La Grande Bouffe* by Marco Ferreri, *Tampopo* by Itami Juuzuo, Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott's *Big Night*, and Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*.

Prominent in the discussion and criticism of the role of cooking is its connection to the family, and this will be the focus of Chapter Three. The traditional household structure in which a woman prepares food for her husband and children is seen as sustaining the family on a psychological as well as physiological level, a perception which remains in evidence in articles in women's magazines and advice for frustrated parents which continue to advocate coming together around the dinner table as a way to maintain and strengthen family unity. The responsibility for food preparation continues to rest primarily with the mother as does the concomitant responsibility for keeping the family together. Mervyn Nicholson's contention -- that through breast-feeding, "Women *are* food for infants" (47) -- emphasises the close affiliation of women with food, a connection whose central role in the development of early parent-child relationships Diane Ackerman sees as reinforced by the fact that, the "first thing we taste is milk from our mother's

breast, accompanied by love and affection, stroking, a sense of security, warmth, and well-being, out first intense feelings of pleasure. Later on she will feed us solid food from her hands, or even chew food first and press it into our mouths, partially digested" (129). Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil note that "women's work of feeding the family, of creating and staging the family-meal-as-event, can be seen as counteracting the centrifugal forces which push apart the activities of the individual family members each with his or her own schedules, commitments, interests and priorities. In this sense . . . feeding literally *produces* family" (82).

In my discussion of family and food, particularly salient to my concern with cooking as a deconstructor of binaries is the fact that the family brings together a number of unique individuals into a more-or-less coherent group, a group which nonetheless is not a homogeneous mass but manages to allow for difference. Just as cooking brings together the different senses and a variety of what may appear to be incompatible ingredients, the family too is a collection of disparate elements. The same situation pertains to the prenatal state, as Julia Kristeva suggests in her article "Women's Time," when she highlights pregnancy as a condition which deconstructs the binary self/other through the incorporation of the child-to-be "other" within the mother-to-be's "self." As she sees it: "Pregnancy seems to be experienced as the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and of an other, of nature and consciousness, of physiology and speech" (31).

Linked by their deconstructive potential, the parallel between pregnancy and food preparation raises the possibility of cooking as a substitute for pregnancy and/or childrearing, forces which work to create both heterogeneity and continuity. It also raises interesting questions with regard

to the role played by cooking by men and by women who have never been pregnant, as well as in the creation of non-biological families in which holding together disparate individuals in a family unit may be more difficult to sustain than among families with genetic ties. This possibility seems particularly relevant to a topic which is currently in the forefront in the popular media and in government, that being an increased willingness to reconsider how the family has been defined and a move toward greater recognition of non-traditional family structures. For these groups, the biological connection between mother and child may be absent as may the experience of feeding from the mother's body. For others, the absence of spouse, children, or both sets up a situation in which the desire for some sort of family connection is especially frustrated. Particularly for these non-biological "parents," the possibility that cooking produces family represents a potential avenue for the creation of a familial community which may otherwise prove unattainable.

Chapter Four will explore the relationship of food preparation to the opposition metaphor/metonymy, two literary devices which share a variety of characteristics with food preparation. Perhaps the most well-known illustration of the connection between food and the principles of substitution and combination which characterise metaphor and metonymy respectively, is Barthes's discussion of the "food system" in which he attempts a semiology of food structured around the terms "system," which corresponds to Lévi-Strauss's paradigm class, or Roman Jakobson's notion of substitution, where "syntagm" represents combination. Barthes makes special mention of the restaurant menu which, "actualizes both planes: the horizontal reading of the entrees, for instance, corresponds to the system, the vertical reading of the menu corresponds to the syntagm" (*Elements* 63). Expanding on Barthes's

discussion, in this chapter I will first begin with a discussion of some of the characteristics of both metaphor and metonymy and how these characteristics apply to cooking, and then move on to an investigation of how these principles are illustrated by the literary texts and films and the degree to which cooking carries out a deconstruction of the binary metaphor/metonymy.

Much has been written on metaphor, somewhat less on metonymy, and a good part of what has been written varies in terms of emphasis, from general discussions to a specific focus on everything from literary metaphors to how the process of metaphor facilitates learning, from ideas about metonymy as a basic principle of linguistics to its function as a poetic device in the form of synecdoche. In addition, there is much disagreement and contradiction within the discourse. As a result, the characteristics of metaphor and metonymy which I have chosen to highlight are not comprehensive and do not represent the entire range of ideas on the subject. Instead, I have chosen to focus on elements which treat the terms fairly broadly so as to enable a comparison with cooking as a non-linguistic practice.

The focus of Chapter Five will be how cooking functions in relation to issues arising from interarts theory. Among these are the division between "visual" and "verbal" arts, and the proper roles of each as decreed by critics who connect them to space and time respectively. According to G.E. Lessing, painting "must be content with coexistent actions or with mere bodies which, by their position, permit us to conjecture an action" (77), whereas poetry "can raise to this degree of illusion the representation of objects other than those that are visible. Consequently, whole categories of pictures which the poet claims as his own must necessarily be beyond the reach of the artist" (76). Arguing against Lessing's position, W.J.T. Mitchell states that "the aim of

Lessing's law of genre, then, is clearly not to make the spatial and temporal arts separate but equal, but to segregate them in what he regards as their natural inequality" (*Iconology* 107), an inequality which assigns a higher rank to poetry and classifies painting as a poor relation.

Mitchell's disagreement goes beyond the inequality of Lessing's ranking scheme, and takes issue with Lessing's belief that the visual and verbal arts have their respective realms and should not attempt to cross over from one realm to the other. Mitchell sees Lessing's prohibition against border crossing as indicative of a larger fear, that the "adulteration of the arts, of the genres, is an incitement to the adulteration of every other domestic, political, and natural distinction" (*Iconology* 109). As he sees it:

all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no "purely" visual or verbal arts. . . . The "differences" between images and language are not merely formal matters: they are, in practice, linked to things like the difference between the (speaking) self and the (seen) other; between telling and showing; between "hearsay" and "eyewitness" testimony; between words (heard, quoted, inscribed) and objects or actions (seen, depicted, described); between sensory channels, traditions of representation, and modes of experience. (*Picture Theory* 5)

The division of the arts into the categories of verbal and visual reflects the separation of the senses, and just as the artistic dichotomies are problematized by the addition of other art forms such as music, so does the breakdown become relevant to cooking as an art form. As multi-sensory activities, cooking and food appreciation serve not only to deconstruct divisions such as Lessing's but also introduce interesting comparisons with multi-media forms of artistic representation -- film, for example -- as well as developments involving computers and the internet. Answers to the question of how cooking functions both within and around the traditional forms of literature

and film should illuminate another aspect of its role as a culturally and politically charged signifier and as an art in its own right.

Chapter Six deals with the way the binaries male/female and masculine/feminine have been used to structure cooking and its related elements, and then goes on to explore the degree to which filmic and literary texts can function to undermine such a division. Beginning with evidence of the gendering of the senses and focusing first on an investigation of how gender roles function in the practice of cooking and second, on how issues of gender and sexuality are treated in novels and film, my emphasis will be, once again, primarily on cooking as opposed to eating or food itself. For this reason, I have chosen not to address another subject intimately connected with gender and food, that being the problem of eating disorders and their relation to female sexuality. Rather than examining the role of women as consumers (or non-consumers, as the case may be), I will be looking at women and men as producers of food, often for the purpose of consumption by others, be they family or paying customers.

Although cooking has traditionally been a practice in which gender division is paramount, once again I want to argue that its function in literature and film can instead be to undermine this separation. While several of the texts which focus on cooking deconstruct the gender binary, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* and Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* are particularly interesting examples and introduce ideas which may provide an insightful way of approaching other works. For this reason I will follow more of a case study model in this chapter, looking first at the way *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Eat Drink Man Woman* attempt to undo the masculine/feminine binary, then assessing the success of their efforts in the context of Julia Kristeva's call for the "demassification of the problematic of

difference" in her article on what she sees to be the three phases of feminism, entitled "Women's Time."

The topic of Chapter Seven provides a fitting end to the discussion of films and literary texts that feature cooking by focusing on its relationship to the life/death binary. This is perhaps one of the most obvious areas in which food preparation plays a role, particularly at a time in history when fears of disease and death surround the agricultural industry, and the possibility of food poisoning, as a result of poor preparation and handling of meats especially, is a warning being sounded by various media outlets and consumer agencies. Instinctively associated with life through its provision of sustenance, cooking can also play a role in death, and not merely as a result of the withholding of necessary nourishment. Early examples of the degree to which cooking problematizes the distinction between life and death include the Biblical demand of a burnt offering, a sacrifice that requires the death of one creature to further the redemption of another. Evidence from other cultures as well as other points in history further support the ambiguous position of food preparation in this polarity, including the condition known as the "omnivores paradox" in which omnivores run the risk of poisoning as they attempt to add more possible foods to their almost limitless repertoire.

When examining the relation of cooking to life and death in films and literary texts, what immediately becomes apparent is the degree to which films, in particular, seem more interested in the potential connection between food preparation and death, than in its life-sustaining properties. Of course, the role of cooking in promoting life is certainly not absent and includes such ideas as its contribution to the maintenance of health and the conception of children. Still, perhaps because the idea of death arising from a practice so closely associated with life suggests the ultimate perversion or

reversal, there appears to be a filmic and literary fascination with a gastronomically inspired demise. From both the planned and unintentional murder by cooking, either through poisoning or overconsumption, to the cooking and eating of a human corpse, the texts abound with examples which blur the border between dining and dispatching. As is to be expected, eating also figures prominently in this discussion, particularly in Marco Ferreri's *La Grande Bouffe* which features four men intent on eating themselves to death. Other ideas which are presented in the films and texts include issues of disgust and decay as well as the association of cooking and funerals.

Instead of ending with such "closure," however, in the last chapter I will introduce some areas for further investigation. The first topic is that of cooking and technology viewed from the perspective of some of Marshall McLuhan's thoughts on technology and the senses. Contemporary advances in computer technology, in particular, raise interesting questions with regard to the sensory hierarchy since they represent a multi-media technology which nonetheless relies heavily on the monopolising presence of the phonetic alphabet. The next set of questions revolves around the possibility that cooking may play different roles in narratives from written and oral cultures. Again making reference to McLuhan's ideas about the phonetic alphabet and its capacity to diminish the importance of other senses in favour of vision, my hypothesis is that cooking, which makes use of all the senses, may play a different role in cultures that rely on multi-sensory oral communication than in written cultures which focus on only one sense. In turn, the final area I will touch on pertains to some of the possible differences between the treatment of cooking in literature and in film. Of all the topics tackled in this study, this one is the most difficult, perhaps because it -- like the question about written and oral cultures -- rests on a binary foundation. One

undeniable conclusion, however, is the fact that there has recently been an explosion in the number of films focusing on cooks and cooking, a phenomenon which is no doubt related to the popularity of cooking programs on television and which reflects the multi-sensory appeal of food preparation.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HIERARCHY OF THE SENSES

An investigation of the marginalization of cooking cannot proceed independently from an examination of the treatment of elements which are key aspects of cooking as a practice: the senses required for its appreciation - primarily smell and taste; its constituent parts -- food; and its ultimate purpose -- eating. In the case of the first, an understanding of the place assigned to cooking in Western culture is aided by an investigation of how the senses have been ranked according to the hierarchical structure, since such ranking also carries with it corresponding hierarchies of objects and activities, with both closely embedded in cultural values.

In "The Shifting Sensorium," Walter Ong discusses the concept of the sensorium, the relative value assigned to the senses by a particular society. He argues that a culture brings the individual citizen "to organize his sensorium by attending to some types of perception more than others, by making an issue of certain ones while relatively neglecting other ones" (28). The title of Ong's essay refers to the different positions that particular senses occupy in a variety of cultures and diachronically through a culture's history. Addressing the evolution of the sensorium, Anthony Synnott in "Puzzling Over the Senses: From Plato to Marx," traces the hierarchy of the senses as it has played out throughout the history of Western culture, a study complemented by other notable examples from the worlds of science, literature, and philosophy. It is significant that relatively little has changed in the way that the senses have been ranked from antiquity to the present.

According to Synnott, in Western cultures, the hierarchy of the senses gives the "abstract" senses of sight and hearing precedence over the

"proximity" senses of smell, touch, and taste. Beginning with the distinction drawn by the Greeks between the senses and the mind, Synnott discusses Plato's belief that vision occupied an exalted position as "the sense that leads to God and Truth," a position supported by Aristotle's ranking of the senses in which sight is regarded as "superior to touch in purity, and hearing and smell to taste" (63). The division of the sensorium into those senses identified with abstraction and those associated with materiality is based on a view of humanity which isolates mind from body, elevating the mind to the level of the divine and relegating the body to the animal realm. In this vein, Aristotle justified his own ranking scheme with the rationale that touch and taste are "animal" senses, for in "touch and taste, through lust and gluttony, humanity is 'incontinent and intemperate'" (63).

The opinions of several other philosophers, stated either directly or by implication through the stresses placed on particular senses in their writing and practice, reinforce the Platonic and Aristotelian sensory hierarchies. In a study of the treatment of the sense of taste, Jukka Gronow draws attention to Immanuel Kant's ranking and observes that "the 'near' senses, taste and smell, were treated with suspicion because they were thought to be capable of serving only lower sensual pleasures, whereas hearing and sight, in particular, were held up as the senses capable of mediating pure and therefore more noble, aesthetic pleasures" (ix). Particularly disdainful of the sense of smell, Kant had asked the question, "To which organic sense do we owe the least and which seems to be the most dispensable?" To which he himself had responded, the "sense of smell. It does not pay us to cultivate it or to refine it in order to gain enjoyment; this sense can pick up more objects of aversion than of pleasure (especially in crowded places) and, besides, the pleasure

coming from the sense of smell cannot be other than fleeting and transitory" (46).

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic writings and practice further reinforce the preeminent position accorded to sight and hearing through his stress on the translation of visual images through the medium of speech in dream analysis and the "talking cure." A further elaboration of psychoanalytic theory, the Lacanian mirror stage, relies entirely on vision for the establishment of the self and entry into the symbolic order -- the centrality of the symbolic order reinforcing once again the importance of the senses primarily associated with language: vision and hearing. Freud, however, did not ignore the other senses completely since the developmental stages he lays out establish a sensory hierarchy connected to the organs with which they are most closely associated. In a semiotic investigation of the role of fruit in poetry, Carole Dietrich points out the hierarchical nature of Freud's system in which the "oral stage must be passed through to attain higher, more important stages; first the anal, more removed from food, then the genital, which is interested only in sex" (129). Although the primary senses which correspond to these stages are not indicated, it is reasonable to assume that the sense of taste would be closely linked with orality, the lowest stage on the developmental ladder. The sense of touch which accompanies taste in orality continues through to the genital stage, presumably elevating it to a higher level than that assigned to taste.

The next to weigh in on this issue is Georg Hegel who confronts the hierarchy of the senses more directly, linking the respective values of the senses with the location of their primary organs in the face, and again making reference to the separation between human and animal when he relegates those senses which are of primary importance to animals to the lower

echelons of the sensorium. For Hegel, as Synnott notes, the "rank order of the sense organs for animals is, therefore, mouth, nose and eyes, with the mouth as the principal survival mechanism and the nose and eyes as 'servants and helpers.'" For people, however, things are different: "Thus in the upper part of the face, the 'soulful and spiritual relation to things is manifested . . . in the intellectual brow and, lying under it, the eye, expressive of the soul.' In the lower part of the face is the mouth, 'the practical organ of nourishment,' which Hegel evaluated as an animal function." As Synnott also explains, Hegel "found it significant that the nose is intermediate between eye and mouth; but it still belongs to an 'animal need' and is 'in the service of the mouth and feeding'" (72).

As a final example, Synnott looks at Karl Marx and, his belief that humankind "is affirmed in the objective world not only in the act of thinking but with *all* his senses" (73). While the philosophers examined previously tend to base their versions of the sensorium on the preeminence of language and the intellect as those characteristics which distinguish us from animals, Synnott characterizes Marx's concern as being with the "animalization of humanity in the capitalist mode of production" (73). It is rather the condition of sensory deprivation under which the proletariat toil which Synnott sees as being of concern to Marx as he "situated his discourse of the senses squarely within the arena of real, material life - the arena of 'eating, drinking, procreating'" (74). Although he is critical of philosophy which is abstracted from material existence, some of Marx's comments indicate a continued association of certain senses with the less valued animal realm, as well as his conviction that, for the worker, "none of his senses exist any longer, and not only in his human fashion, but in an inhuman fashion, and therefore not even in an animal fashion" (148).

Although such ranking systems tend to assign greater value to the senses of sight and hearing based primarily on an organizational principle which stresses the "human" over the "animal" senses, the use of the human/animal distinction is not the only factor at play in the establishment of sensory hierarchies. We have already seen Ong's indication of the division abstract/proximity in which the senses most closely connected with bodily survival fall behind those associated with abstract thought, a hierarchical structure epitomised by Ong's characterisation of the Freudian belief that "for abstract thinking the proximity senses - smell, taste, and in a special way touch (although touch concerns space as well as contact and is thus simultaneously concrete and abstract) - must be minimized in favour of the more abstract hearing and sight" (28). Other fundamental principles of Western culture have also contributed to the privileging of sight and hearing, in particular the invention of the alphabet and the stress on individualism rather than collectivity. In his discussion of the effect of various technologies on sensory hierarchies, Marshall McLuhan is especially emphatic on the subject of the role of the alphabet in the relative valuing of the senses, holding it responsible for "a continuous drive in the Western world toward the separation of the senses, of functions, of operations, of states emotional and physical" (*Gutenberg* 42). In his opinion, the "phonetic alphabet reduced the use of all the senses at once, which is oral speech, to a merely visual code" (*Gutenberg* 45), a situation which not only isolates sight from the other senses but also elevates it above them in a value hierarchy. According to McLuhan, in addition to the alphabet, the advent of the printing press was also responsible for a cultural shift in focus toward vision and its relation to the written word, for "as an intensification and extension of the visual function, the phonetic alphabet diminishes the role of the other senses of sound and

touch and taste in any literate culture" (*Understanding* 84). McLuhan predicts a shift in the sensorium "back into the oral and auditory modes because of the electronic pressure of simultaneity" (*Gutenberg* 72), a suggestion which may be borne out by the current trend toward the blending of text, sound and image in such media as CD-ROM and the internet. Such a shift, however, does nothing to recoup touch, smell and taste, senses which have fallen even further into neglect due to the advent of technologies such as virtual reality.

Related to the influence that the alphabet and print have had on the hierarchy of the senses is the focus in Western cultures on individuality. McLuhan suggests that, "if rigorous centralism" -- the kind which draws our focus almost exclusively to the visual function -- "is a main feature of literacy and print, no less so is the eager assertion of individual rights" (*Gutenberg* 220), and he goes on to argue that "print created individualism and nationalism in the sixteenth century" (*Understanding* 20). Whether or not individualism arose directly from the use of print, its connection with the visual has been documented by anthropologists who have examined cultures and societies in which hearing, which occupies a position inferior to sight in the Western sensorium, is the most favoured of the senses. David Howes, in "Sensorial Anthropology," indicates that "the more a society emphasizes the eye, the less communal it will be: the more it emphasizes the ear, the less individualistic it will be" (178), a position supported by the research of George Devereux which concludes that among societies that favour either speech or hearing, the "speech group would seek self-expression and the imposition of the self upon reality - which is fairly characteristic of Western Europeans and of Malays. The 'hearing' group would, in that case, seek selflessness rather than self-expression" (45). While one might in turn assume that like hearing, taste is a sense which would presumably have less value in cultures in which

individuality is stressed, the opposite seems true. According to Diane Ackerman in *A Natural History of the Senses*, "The other senses may be enjoyed in all their beauty when one is alone, but taste is largely social. Humans rarely choose to dine in solitude, and food has a powerful social component" (127).

A third possible influence on the ranking of the Western sensorium lies in the association of particular senses with the categories masculine and feminine within patriarchal cultures. Whether the primary classification masculine/feminine has resulted in a gendering of the senses, or whether the causality was reversed and attributes assigned to particular senses led them to be connected with one gender or another is not especially important here. Instead, I wish to focus on the end result which is that there exists in Western cultures a system of classification which labels certain senses feminine, and others masculine, and that such a system regards those "feminine" senses as inferior. Investigating the cultural significance of the sense of smell throughout history, Constance Classen discusses the gendering of vision and smell in particular, from a perspective which views their association with masculine and feminine as arising from the relative value of the senses:

[Sight] had become the pre-eminent means and metaphor for discovery and knowledge, the sense par excellence of science. Sight therefore increasingly became associated with men who -- as explorers, scientists, politicians, or industrialists -- were perceived as discovering and dominating the world through their keen gaze. Smell, in turn, was now considered the sense of intuition and sentiment, of home-making and seduction, all of which were associated with women. Significantly, however, smell was also the sense of "savages" and animals. (*Aroma* 84)

Such attitudes are of course central to the concept of the male gaze, where, like the sense of smell, the more feminized sense of touch is attributed lesser value. As David Howes explains, the "opposition between the sexes is,

therefore, partly expressed and partly constituted by an opposition between the senses," and uses this to explain, in the words of Luce Irigaray, "why men in Western society generally devalue and avoid touch while women 'prefer touch'" ("Sensorial" 189).

More generally, it is the traditional association of women with the body and men with the mind that plays a role in the connection of women with, and the lower value attributed to, the senses of touch, smell and taste. In *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, Deane Curtin argues that in philosophy in particular -- and, I would suggest, in the Western analytic tradition as a whole -- "our relations to aspects of life that can only be understood as concrete and embodied . . . have been marginalized. They have been pushed to the periphery of what is regarded as important" (3). In the same volume Lisa Heldke relates such concrete experience specifically to the knowledge associated with cooking, a practice intimately connected to the senses of taste and smell, when she suggests that the "knowing involved in making a cake is 'contained' not simply 'in my head' but in my hands, my wrists, my eyes and nose as well. The phrase 'bodily knowledge' is not a metaphor. It is an acknowledgment of the fact that I know things literally with my body" (218). This type of "bodily" knowledge is one that has not only received little attention, but has also been dismissed as inferior to the understanding of the mind with its perceived connection to transcendental truth.

Thus there is evidence of an elaborate and widespread organisational structure in which issues of sensory perception, individualism, gender, and materiality have been aligned according to a hierarchical structure of value. The consistent association of food, cooking, and the senses of smell and taste with the categories of lesser value, including the classifications "animal,"

"illiterate," and "feminine," goes a long way toward explaining why researchers have failed to consider cooking a subject worthy of concentrated investigation. I believe, however, that such explanations are not entirely sufficient and may tend to obscure what I see as the main impediment to the widespread study of cooking; this main obstacle is the ability of food preparation -- and eating along with it -- to resist containment within one term of a binary opposition; its tendency toward mediation and hybridity is the major thorn in the side of a worldview reliant on an interconnected series of hierarchical oppositions as its foundational structure.

A look back at some of the opinions which have been expressed on the topic of the sensorium, for example, reveals an underlying concern with the senses as they relate to *purity* as well as certain definitional problems when it comes to assessing the respective values of the senses. Revisiting the ideas of Aristotle, one might note that for him, sight is assigned a higher value because of its superiority to touch "in purity," just as Gronow draws attention to Kant's opinion that hearing and sight are the senses "capable of mediating pure, and therefore more noble, aesthetic pleasures" (ix emphasis mine). A hierarchy which holds as its ultimate good the achievement of purity is one in which an activity as heterogeneous as cooking is likely to elicit not only disdain, but also potentially fear, the fear that arises from the recognition that there exists an element which has the potential to undermine the philosophical base which underlies an entire cultural structure. The slipperiness of the ability of cooking to be classified is illustrated by the inadequacy of a label which is fairly standard when it comes to categorising the senses primarily associated with food: the "proximity" senses of smell and taste. While the connection with proximity may be more easily applied to taste, it is much more problematic when it comes to smell, a sense which

requires no more physical proximity to the source of the sensation in many cases than do vision or hearing.

Instead of being merely a matter of its position relative to the hierarchy of the senses, I believe it is this very resistance to labeling which renders cooking unpalatable for study. Echoing the concerns suggested by Aristotle and Kant, for example, in his introduction to *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, entitled "Introduction on Taste," Edmund Burke demonstrates the desire to erase the heterogeneity of the sense of taste as well as the dangers inherent in the admission of the ambiguous status of the sense:

it is probable that the standard both of reason and Taste is the same in all human creatures. For if there were not some principles of judgment as well as of sentiment common to all mankind, no hold could possibly be taken either on their reason or their passions, sufficient to maintain the ordinary correspondence of life. . . . for if Taste has no fixed principles, if the imagination is not affected according to some invariable and certain laws, our labour is like to be employed to very little purpose, as it must be judged an useless, if not an absurd undertaking, to lay down rules for caprice, and to set up for a legislator of whims and fancies. (11-12)

In addition to, once again, aligning taste with characteristics labeled feminine, Burke's statement lays bare the fear of a concept which defies rules and the anxiety which such a possibility provokes, anxiety which may explain the neglect of cooking based on the belief that "those elements which are systematically suppressed by a culture are so regulated not only because they are considered inferior, but also because they are considered threatening to the social order" (Classen *Aroma* 4), a social order which, in this case, values fixed signification within an overarching binary system of classification.

Viewed from a variety of perspectives, cooking resists the kind of classification fundamental to the ordering of Western cultures, for food preparation and the eating which follows it are activities which employ all of

the senses. In comparing the effects of cooking and art in his study of the psychology of visual art, E.H. Gombrich indicates that both "are 'global' impressions that result from the interaction of innumerable stimuli" (310), a condition Ackerman relates directly to the senses: "a food's flavour includes its texture, smell, temperature, color, and painfulness (as in spices), among many other features" (142). In a statement that reveals even more clearly the insecurity at the heart of Burke's suggestion that the standards of taste are universal, he observes "that the pleasures of sight are not near so complicated, and confused, and altered by unnatural habits and associations as the pleasures of Taste are" (15). As a final example, McLuhan offers us a detailed elaboration of the degree to which a multitude of senses come into play in the tasting of wine:

A sip is very complex: as you raise the glass to your lips you take a slight breath inhaling the smell of the wine as you taste it and feel it in your mouth. Three senses are reporting at once. Because wine is volatile and is a complex collection of tastes, the whole sensation is changing as the wine first touches your mouth, as it moves to your throat, as you swallow, and as the three senses recover from the action. It is interesting that the ears shut off as you swallow, helping you to focus on the working senses, and that your eyes seem to cease to focus as you taste, although there may be a recalled image of the way the wine looks or of the surroundings. At the same time, various muscle senses are involved in tasting and swallowing, for instance, the grimace when you taste something sour; this muscle reaction is recognizable when exaggerated to the point of unpleasantness, but is almost unnoticed when a normal part of the taste. (Item 18 - *Verbi*)

Not only the use of a variety of senses, but also their interrelation are essential components of the gastronomic experience.

Cooking resists categorization not only from the perspective of sensory affiliation, but also within the realm of language. McLuhan ends his elaboration of the wine tasting process with the opinion that a "description of tasting wine is also inhibited by the few words existing to describe taste

sensations," a condition that applies not only to wine but to foods and their preparation as well. In an anthropological study of the role of the sense of taste in Weyewan culture, Joel Kuipers notes that "the taste vocabulary is not exhaustive. . . . There are a number of tastes which fall into the interstices" (118), a situation related to cooking by Peter Farb and George Armelagos when they discuss "the very small number of categories used to describe the preparation of food, no matter what language is spoken" (108). Even the ubiquitous term "taste" is apparently an inadequate representation of the sense to which it is applied since "in ordinary conversation the term taste is used to refer to the perception of flavor, a combination of true taste and smell. There is no verb in the English language (we are not sure about other languages) to express the perception of flavor" (Duffy and Bartoshuk 145).

A third example of the fluidity of the culinary code is the status of cooking and food as transformational. Anyone who has begun with butter, flour and eggs and finished with a cake can speak to the ability of cooking to transform raw ingredients, just as food exerts a fundamental, bodily transformation on those who engage in its consumption. Thierry Belleguic and Lynda Davey-Longstreet in "The Semiotics of Food" indicate that "what is ingested is not simply a sign, understood within the context of a signifying system, but it is organic matter that becomes flesh. . . . if understood within the internal relationship of its presence to/within the body, the food item is assimilated by the body, transforming it while transforming itself" (204). Further support is provided by Mervyn Nicholson in his discussion of the connection between food and power in literature, when he suggests that "to exist is an activity of daily transformation; one continually forms and transforms oneself, and the material means by which one performs this act of self-creation is food" (37).

The process by which food is assimilated and transformed into the components which make up a body speaks not only to the difficulty of isolating food from the flesh which it becomes, but also to the ability of food to move between worlds, between the exterior world of the "other" and the very housing of the self. Noting the way that food is able to move across otherwise impermeable boundaries, Paul Atkinson calls it "a liminal substance; it stands as a bridging substance between nature and culture, the human and the natural, the outside and the inside" (17). Similarly, noting that "the mouth is the most controlled opening of the body in regard to both the intake of food and the outflux of speech," Peter Falk calls it "a liminal zone, a 'curious in-between of the outside and inside'" (14). The dual purpose of the mouth with regard to both eating and speech reinforces the ability of this organ to move between worlds, the former intimately tied to corporeality and basic survival, and the latter belonging to the realm of theory and abstraction.

The liminal status of food and cooking thus functions hand-in-hand with the ability of smell and taste to transgress boundaries, physical and otherwise. Classen suggests that smells "resist containment in discrete units, whether physical or linguistic; they cross borders, linking disparate categories and confusing boundary lines" (204), and as a result, the sense of smell "has been marginalized because it is felt to threaten the abstract and impersonal regime of modernity by virtue of its radical interiority, its boundary-transgressing propensities and its emotional potency" (*Aroma* 5). Taste has also been said to operate in much the same way as smell in the case of mother and child. Julie Menella and Gary Beauchamp's "The Early Development of Human Flavor Preferences" discusses "research on other mammals [which]

suggests that the young develop preferences for the flavours of the foods eaten by the mother during nursing" (95).

Contributing to the difficulty involved in limiting the scope and definition of cooking and taste is the subversive role they play in undermining a variety of binary oppositions. Considered the father of the structural analysis of cooking, Claude Lévi-Strauss indicates the degree to which cooking fails to be contained by either term in binary structures such as raw/cooked and nature/culture:

Burned on one side and raw on the other, or grilled outside, raw within, the roasted incarnates the ambiguity of the raw and the cooked, of nature and culture, which the smoked and the boiled must illustrate in their turn for the structure to be coherent . . . hence the system demonstrates that the art of cooking is not located entirely on the side of culture. Adapting itself to the exigencies of the body, and determined in its modes by the way man's insertion into nature operates in different parts of the world, placed then between nature and culture, cooking rather represents their necessary articulation. It partakes of both domains and projects this duality on each of its manifestations. ("Culinary" 593)

Instead of identifying with one pole or the other, the dual nature of cooking places it in the position of mediator. Lévi-Strauss indicates how, at the start, "the myths about the origin of cooking postulate a vertical axis, the poles of which are the sun and the earth. Between these two, the discovery of cooking fire creates a middle term: when present, cooking fire mediates the opposition between sky and earth" (*Origin* 189), a condition that, in her article on food and multiculturalism in the work of A.M. Klein, Marta Dvorak categorises as expanding from a mediation between earth and sky to one that operates "between the subject and the physical world" (18). In *The Raw and the Cooked*, Lévi-Strauss also makes the connection between cooking and the subject:

the conjunction of a member of the social group with nature must be

mediated through the intervention of cooking fire, whose normal function is to mediatize the conjunction of the raw product and the human consumer, and whose operation thus has the effect of making sure that a natural creature is at one and the same time *cooked and socialized*. (336)

Curtin specifically identifies the resistance of cooking to binary classification as being responsible for the refusal of philosophy to consider it worthy of investigation. She identifies Plato's "determination to represent the world in terms of exclusive dualisms, dualisms that answer to the dominant metaphor of the pristine brightness of the Platonic heaven versus the dim, dusty cave: mind/body, self/other, culture (philosophy)/nature, good/evil, reason/emotion," a determination which "has systematically tended to exclude serious philosophical attention to those things that are *not* substances and can only be understood as deeply relational - things like our relations to food. . . ." (4-5). Her conclusion is that, in fact,

cooking requires an artful blending of the mental and physical, or "theory" and practice. As sustenance, food is as much mental and spiritual as it is physical. Far from supporting the model of radical dualism, cooking provides as clear an example as we have of what might be called a *body/mind working together in unison, engaged in a thoughtful practice which ministers to the whole person, an ordinary being in an ordinary context*. (10)

What also falls into place in turn is the link between food, hybridity and dietary taboos. Several studies of the theory and practice of dietary restrictions show how food items labeled as polluting are characterised by categorical indeterminacy. For example, in her study of the dietary rules of the Hua people of New Guinea, Anna Meigs explains that what is "prohibited (and labeled as polluting) is that which is formless (or anomalous, and/or is viewed as threatening to the structure of categories)" (101). Jean Soler has similarly noted about the dietary restrictions among the Jews that here "as elsewhere, it is a matter of upholding the separation between two classes or

two types of relationships. To abolish distinction by means of a sexual or culinary act is to subvert the order of the world. Everyone belongs to one species only, one people, one sex, one category" (64). Further on this topic, in her discussion of abjection and the perceived polluting effects of some foods, Julia Kristeva concludes that the "impure will be those who do not confine themselves to one element but point to admixture and confusion" (*Powers* 98).

By showing that cooking's constituent parts, its effects, and the senses necessary for its appreciation are problematic with regard to the hierarchical binary structures underlying Western cultures, I have thus set the foundation for an investigation of cooking as a deconstructor or destabiliser of binaries in film and literature. Part of the reason why I have thusfar had to rely so heavily on discussions of taste, smell and food, rather than on cooking specifically is the relative absence of critical and theoretical research on the subject. If food and eating have been neglected as objects of study, cooking has been doubly so, and the purpose of the remainder of this study will be to redress this neglect.

CHAPTER TWO

COOKING AS DECONSTRUCTIVE PRACTICE

There are several well-known literary texts that deal with food and eating, among them Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. Texts with a focus on cooking, however, are less known and fewer in number. A similar situation presents itself in the case of film, although, especially in the last fifteen years, there are some notable exceptions to the rule. In any case, and whatever the reason for such a phenomenon, in many creative works there is ample evidence of the role of food preparation in promoting heterogeneity and in dismantling binaries through boundary crossing and paradox.

Beginning first with a general example, one might note the way that in John Lanchester's *The Debt to Pleasure*, which relates the exploits of narrator Tarquin Winot for whom cooking is intimately connected with murder, the immigration policy of the United States is discussed via the metaphor of cooking:

Whereas the soul of a *daube* resides in pervasive unity -- the transformation of individual qualities into a single character, a sauté should comprehend an interplay among entities, each jealous of distinctive flavors and textures -- but united in harmony by the common veil of sauce. . . . One notes that in the United States the now-preferred metaphor to describe the assimilation of immigrants is that of the "salad bowl," supplanting the old idea of the "melting pot," the claim being that the older term is thought to imply a loss of original cultural identity. In other words the melting pot used to be regarded as a sauté, but has come to be seen as a daube. (22-23)

In the novel, class commingling is also indicated by a treatise on bouillabaisse, "that recipe which fuses the base with the noble, the leftover catch at the bottom of the fisherman's net . . . with the highest degree of esculence, delicacy, and artistry" (46-47). Similarly, the hierarchical ranking of normal

and abnormal is turned on its head when viewed from the perspective of the alcoholic: "to any really committed career drinker, drunkenness is normality and undrunkenness is exceptional, his sobriety was a way of being, in that all too accurate phrase, 'out of his head'" (69).

A more specific example of how cooking deconstructs binary oppositions can be found in Isak Dinesen's *Babette's Feast*, where renowned French chef Babette Hersant takes over cooking duties for a pair of Norwegian spinster sisters who have no understanding of, or appreciation for hedonistic pleasures. In her previous incarnation as chef of the Café Anglais, Babette blurred the division between body and soul, turning dinner into "a kind of love affair -- into a love affair of the noble and romantic category in which one no longer distinguishes between bodily and spiritual appetite or satiety" (38). An organ intimately connected with the appreciation of food, the tongue, is also seen as deconstructing the binary good/evil when one of the guests at the feast which closes the story remarks that the tongue is capable of both practices.

Another example, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, in which a young woman is prevented from marrying in order to care for her demanding mother and whose emotional outlet is her cooking, has been aptly described by Ksenija Bilbija as "breaking the boundaries between body and soul and . . . showing that they are actually one" as well as dismantling the "duality that puts masculinity on one side and femininity on the other" (161). Its deconstruction of binaries, as Kristine Ibsen notes, is also intimately connected with food which "functions as a narrative device in the novel: like a cinematic montage, bridging both temporal and spatial displacements" (138). From the ability of protagonist Tita's cooking to erase the distinction between self and other by transferring the passions and emotions of the cook to those

who eat what she has prepared, to Tita's simple playing with food as a child, creating out of sausages "creatures with the neck of a swan, the legs of a dog, the tail of a horse, and on and on" (7), the crossing of borders and blurring of categories abounds in both the novel and the film.

Equally, in Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, as Joseph Wagner notes, one of the paradoxes inherent in food preparation can be seen in the way that the character who is most closely associated with cooking, the owner of the Homesick Restaurant, Ezra Tull, "seems to be both central and peripheral" to the unfolding of the story (79). The novel tells the tale of the dysfunctional Tull family and their attempts to come to terms with, and overcome the conflict in their relationships. As Alice Hall Petry points out, in Tyler's novel, the very use of the term "homesick" connects the restaurant with elements of paradox and contradiction by the fact of its multifaceted meaning:

At one level, "homesick" can mean "sick for home," longing nostalgically for the warmth and security associated with the locale and group with which one is most familiar, and perhaps even emphasizing selectively one's positive memories to such an extreme degree that the remembered "home" is essentially a fantasy. On another level, "homesick" can mean "sick of home," yearning to break free of the strictures which are the underside of that security while not denying either the attractiveness or the value of it. On a final level, "homesick" can mean "sick from home" -- psychologically debilitated as the result of "home" not just in the sense of one's childhood domicile, but more obtusely in the sense of the traumatic experiences; dubious parental examples, and even the genetic legacy that are so often visited upon hapless offspring. (186)

The linguistic indeterminacy of the title sets the stage for the further destabilisation of rigid categories by cooking in the book.

A closer look at some of the specific binaries which figure prominently in such works illustrates the ability of cooking to deconstruct such pervasive oppositions as self and other, life and death, private and public, time and

space, and fantasy and reality. In *The Debt to Pleasure*, for example, the narrator states his objection to Roland Barthes's observation that "the meaning of any list of likes and dislikes is to be found in its assertion of the fact that each of us has a body, and that this body is different from everybody else's," and argues instead that the "real meaning of our dislikes is that they define us by separating us from what is outside us; they separate the self from the world in a way that mere banal liking cannot do" (6). At the same time, to "like something is to want to ingest it, and in that sense is to submit to the world" (7). His suggestion is then, that by liking something and wanting to ingest it, the divide between self and other may be bridged, a theory which Walter Ong also advanced when he observed that "what we are inclined to take into ourselves by eating . . . will by intussusception either actually become ourselves or refuse to be assimilated and perhaps kill us" (28).

In the case of Fannie Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes* and Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife, and her Lover* this blurring of the boundary between self and other is presented in its most concrete form -- i.e. cannibalism. In *Fried Green Tomatoes*, the story of a lesbian couple's lives as they run a café in the Southern United States, the body of Ruth Jameson's abusive husband, Frank Bennett, is barbecued and served to the lawman who arrives from Georgia to investigate his disappearance, while in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, which unfolds in a restaurant frequented by a gangster and his entourage, the sadistic bully Albert Spica is forced to eat part of the body of his wife's lover, carefully roasted and garnished, whom he has killed by forcing the pages of a book on the French revolution down his throat. While it is not his ingestion of the lover's body which is directly responsible for his death, but rather the bullet from Georgina's gun, that

eating is the official cause is emphasized by the word his wife Georgina utters as if to justify her shooting of Albert: "cannibal."

Even more emphatic in turn, is the death of Philippe in Marco Ferreri's *La Grande Bouffe*, in which a group of men retire to an estate in order to eat themselves to death, and what finishes off Philippe is the symbolic ingestion of his fiancée, Andrea. A rich dessert in the shape of a woman's breasts is served to him by his fiancée whose body has earlier been metaphorically ingested in the form of Tarte Andrea, a dessert whose shape is derived from an impression of her buttocks on a sheet of pastry. Following Ong's model, it would appear that the "other" in this case, Andrea, has refused to be assimilated and has instead precipitated Philippe's death.

In *Like Water for Chocolate*, transgressing the boundary between self and other is perhaps less literal though no less apparent. For Tita, cooking functions as a bridge, transferring her emotions to members of her family as well as to other dinner guests. In the first such instance, Tita's pain at her sister's marriage to Tita's love, Pedro, is carried in the wedding cake she prepares for the "moment they took their first bite of cake, everyone was flooded with a great wave of longing" followed by copious vomiting (37). On other occasions, Tita's cooking passes on her happiness at the baptism of her nephew Roberto (78), and her anger at her sister Rosaura's insistence that daughter Esperanza carry on the family tradition of remaining unmarried in order to care for her mother (211). The most significant transfer of emotion through food, however, is through Tita's preparation of quails in rose petal sauce, a dish made with roses given her by Pedro and stained with her own blood. When the family sits down to enjoy the meal, her sister Gertrudis becomes the medium through which Tita's passion for Pedro is expressed:

It was as if a strange alchemical process had dissolved her entire being

in the rose petal sauce, in the tender flesh of the quails, in the wine, in every one of the meal's aromas. That was the way she entered Pedro's body, hot, voluptuous, perfumed, totally sensuous. With that meal it seemed they had discovered a new system of communication, in which Tita was the transmitter, Pedro the receiver, and poor Gertrudis the medium, the conducting body through which the singular sexual message was passed. (48)

This situation ultimately leads Gertrudis to ride naked into the sunset with the revolutionary soldier who will become her husband.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*, a novel about a woman's increasing inability to eat certain foods as a result of conflicting feelings about her engagement, one of the few acts of cooking performed by the protagonist Marian, beyond the heating of pre-packaged foods or the boiling of water for eggs or tea, is to bake a cake in the shape of a woman which she offers to the fiancé whom she believes is trying to consume her. According to Pamela Bromberg, the split Marian has undergone between the self represented by her initial narration in the first person and the third person narration in which she sees herself as "other" after her engagement to Peter is healed by her own ingestion of the cake which Peter has refused: "By consuming the woman/cake, the mirror image of herself (the image desired by Peter, hired by Seymour Surveys, manipulated by Ainsley), she is quite literally joining her subject and object selves, healing the mirror's split" (18). Eating the cake not only bridges the divide between self and other, but also undoes the categories of inside and outside, and artificial and natural which have come to restrict greatly what Marian feels she is able to eat.

In his discussion of the function of food in literature as it relates to issues of power and social hierarchy, Mervyn Nicholson further notes the extent to which the act of eating is intimately connected with both poles of the binary life and death:

Food and death are dialectically related. Food makes you grow, food makes you live; the absence of food makes you die. It is the primal material means of exercising power: withholding it causes death, just as food itself comes out of killing another life-form. Food, power and death are metaphorically intertwined like the outline, color and shadow of an object. . . . Being dependent on food reminds us that what lives also dies: those who live by eating, always die. Only mortals, those who die, eat. (46-48)

Pointing out the examples of both Adam and Eve and Persephone, Nicholson reminds the reader of the fact that eating not only supports life, but can also result in death, be it metaphorical or literal.

Not only does eating encompass both life and death, moreover, the act of cooking can also obviate the divide between the two, creating conditions which allow for, and even encourage, interaction between the living and the dead. For example, the plot of *La Grande Bouffe* revolves around the plans of friends to eat themselves to death -- a feat which three of the four manage to accomplish -- a situation which puts a twist on Nicholson's ideas in a particularly perverse way. Lanchester's *The Debt to Pleasure* also highlights cooking's capacity to kill when the narrator kills his brother as well as his brother's biographer and her husband with poisoned mushrooms. In keeping with Ong's point about food becoming ourselves and blurring the divide between self and other, the narrator observes how the poison progresses: "one of the peculiarities of fungus poisoning, leading to the extreme difficulty of correct medical diagnosis (before the postmortem stage, when it becomes far more straightforward), is that the toxins combine and recombine with the chemistry of the body and present often insoluble problems of identification" (241).

In several texts, the opposition between life and death is also deconstructed by the coexistence of both in contexts whose focus is on food preparation -- restaurants. The bulk of the action of *The Cook, the Thief, his*

Wife and her Lover takes place in a restaurant where thief Albert Spica and his entourage take their meals every day. An indication of the central place accorded to the theme of heterogeneity by the film is the fact that the restaurant has two names, one on the outside, the other inside, a spatial divide which is itself almost erased by the flow between dining area, kitchen, and parking lot, areas which either lack separating walls altogether or are only perfunctorily divided. The cooking of the body of Georgina's lover and Albert's forced cannibalism of it already speak to the coexistence of the living and the dead in the restaurant as does the discovery half-way through the film of a truck full of decomposing, maggoty seafood adjacent to the kitchen. Not only does this evidence of death share space with the preparation of life-giving food, but this hearse-truck is also used to save the lives of Georgina and her lover after Albert discovers their affair, when they use it to escape from the restaurant.

Another restaurant in which the living and the dead appear side by side, in this case in the form of living and dead people, is in Luis Buñuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. Early in the film about a group of friends' repeatedly frustrated attempts to share a meal, a group of guests who have arrived for dinner at the home of the Sénéchals, on what appears to be the wrong date, go instead to a restaurant whose owner has died and is laid out in a room adjacent to the dining room. The restaurant staff tries to encourage the diners to accommodate the specter of death while they eat; those who are uncomfortable with the situation, however, win out and the group ends up not eating at all.

Other works deconstruct the division between life and death by suggesting that cooking has the ability to erase the border between spiritual and corporeal worlds, permitting the dead access to the land of the living.

The most obvious example can be found in *Like Water for Chocolate* where dead nursemaid, Nacha, guides Tita's cooking: "All at once she seemed to hear Nacha's voice dictating a recipe, a prehispanic recipe involving rose petals. . . . So skillful was she that it seemed Nacha herself was in Tita's body, doing all those things: dry-plucking the birds, removing the viscera, getting them ready for frying" (45, 46). Nacha also returns at the end of the story to light the hundreds of candles that welcome Tita and Pedro to the bed in which they achieve their crossing over into paradise. In addition to Nacha, Doctor Brown's dead grandmother, Morning Light, appears and prepares tea for Tita while she recovers from her nervous collapse, and the novel's closing statement that Tita "will go on living as long as there is someone who cooks her recipes" (241), supports the ability of cooking to facilitate crossing the border between the land of the living and of the dead.

Similarly, in *Babette's Feast*, the titular meal takes place on the occasion of Martine and Philippa's father's one hundredth birthday -- actually on "what would have been his one hundredth birthday," for he is long dead, but which is approached as though he were still alive. Juuzuo Itami's *Tampopo* is the story of a single mother's attempt to become the best noodle cook in Japan. In the film, one of the vignettes which accompanies the main story line is a brief glimpse into the life of a family in which the mother is on her deathbed. Attempting to prolong his wife's life the only way he knows how, the husband commands her to rise from her bed and prepare supper for the family, an activity which she miraculously accomplishes, dying immediately afterwards. After her death, the father orders the children to stop crying and to eat their food, for it is the last meal ever prepared for them by their mother. Like Tita's cookbook, the mother's last act of cooking seems to keep her alive if only symbolically for the period of its consumption.

Underlying many of the binary oppositions observed thus far is the division between inside and outside, a pairing which is also intimately related to the distinction between public and private spaces and activities. Foremost among the examples which obviate the private/public divide is Ezra's Homesick Restaurant, where the separation between private family space and public restaurant is called into question. In a discussion of the role of eating in film noir, J.P. Telotte suggests that "the diner represents an alternate source of nourishment, a place to turn to when a home is unavailable. . . . Taken out of the normal locale of the home, the meal and its consumption invariably lose much of their ritualistic and community-affirming properties; instead, they take on the coloring of an automatic, in some instances even desperate, effort simply to sustain life" (399-400). Ezra, however, holds a different view both of his own restaurant which his nephew Luke says reminds him of "someone's home" (243), and even of the local fast-food joint which Ezra describes as being "like a collective farm . . . All these chain places that everyone comes to for breakfast, lunch, sometimes supper . . . like a commune or a kibbutz or something. Pretty soon we won't have private kitchens at all; you just drop by your local Gino's or McDonald's. I kind of like it" (198).

In *Tampopo*, such border crossing is also played out in terms of gender issues. The title character is on a quest to become the best noodle cook in all of Japan, quite a feat especially considering the fact that as a woman her cooking is customarily confined to the home. After she succeeds in developing the ultimate noodle soup, one of her teachers remarks, "I never thought a woman could become a good noodle cook." The film's final scene emphasises the blurring of the realms of public and private, featuring a gradual close-up of a woman on a park bench breast-feeding a baby. Not only

is this woman combining a traditionally private act with a public space, but following on the heels of Tampopo's restaurant triumph, the scene contributes to the idea that Tampopo's cooking has erased the boundary between women's private space of the household kitchen and the public arena of the restaurant.

Even more public than the space of the restaurant as compared to the private space of the home, is the space of the stage where actors self-consciously put themselves on display. In *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, a dinner which starts out at the home of an army colonel is revealed to be taking place on a theater stage in front of a large audience. Although most of the guests leave the table once they realise where they are, others recite the dialogue given to them by the prompter and M. Sénéchal even laments that he does not know his lines. When it is revealed that the entire episode has been a dream, the connection is made between the extremely public space of the theater and the equally extremely private space of a man's subconscious, the shift occurring in a context intimately linked to cooking and food.

A final set of oppositions deconstructed in such works is that between past and present and fantasy and reality. In Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes*, for example, the disruption of linear time is evidenced when Evelyn's cooking and the snacks she brings to Ninny facilitate the movement back into the past of Ninny's life in Whistle Stop to the extent that when Evelyn arrives for a visit bearing barbecue and lemon pie, she notices that "her friend seemed to be getting more and more mixed up about time, past and present, and sometimes called her Cleo. Sometimes she would catch herself and laugh; but more and more, lately, she didn't" (323-24).

In *Babette's Feast*, it is Lorens Loewenhielm who most directly experiences the non-linearity of time. During the meal he is "carried back to that dinner in Paris of which he had thought in the sledge. An incredibly recherché and palatable dish had been served there . . . 'Cailles in Sarcophage'" (38). More remarkably, at his aunt's house in the days before the feast, General Loewenhielm is visited by Lieutenant Loewenhielm, his younger self, who greets him with "a short glance and a smile, the haughty, arrogant smile which youth gives to age" (31). It is his plan on the night of the dinner, to "make up his account with young Lorens Loewenhielm. . . . He would let the youth prove to him, once and for all, that thirty-one years ago he had made the right choice" (33) -- i.e., to put aside his feelings for Martine and leave Berlevaag. In planning this encounter Lorens is reminded of another occasion when a fabulous meal transported him into the past, not coincidentally in Babette's Parisian restaurant, the Café Anglais, when he had, "for a second, seen Martine's face before him" (34).

In *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, past and present are deconstructed by treating time as cyclical; not only is there the repetition of the scene of the dinner party at the Colonel's house and shots of the friends walking down a country road, but the film is also full of aporiae, for example, when the guests who arrive at the Sénéchals are informed that they are there on the wrong day in spite of the Ambassador's protests that it is impossible that they have made a mistake.

Buñuel's film also blurs the line between fantasy and reality in the scenes of the Colonel's dinner party since these episodes and others are later revealed to be dreams, but in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish the "real" from the imaginary. The first version of the party which finds the surprised guests on a theater stage, turns out to be the dream of M. Sénéchal.

The second version, however, which sees the Ambassador murder his insulting host, along with most of what remains of the action of the film, is said to be the dream of the Ambassador, a dream which includes not only the first dream of M. Sénéchal, but also his awakening and subsequent recognition that he had been dreaming, a dream within a dream. The shift from dinner party to theater stage also calls into question the distinction between fantasy and reality, as do the plastic chickens which are served at the meal.

In *The Debt to Pleasure*, Tarquin Winot discusses "a series of dreams which seemed more real than waking life," (211), dreams which have an intimate connection to food: "certain passages in Rilke and Proust, certain poems of Leopardi and axioms of Lichtenberg, a certain bag of hot chestnuts eaten outside the Dominion Theater on Tottenham Court Road two days before the winter solstice -- these are what stand in for my own 'memories'" (211). Or again, in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, Albert initiates a discussion at the dinner table about the true identity of the "prairie oyster." Ordering one of his henchmen to take a bite of bread, Albert leads him through the tastes and textures of an actual prairie oyster and finishes by revealing that what the henchman imagines he has just eaten is in fact a testicle. Although the henchman is eating bread and not the organ being described, when he is informed that what he is imagining is a testicle, he spits out the bread in disgust, undoing the division between what is imagined and what is real.

Thus there exists a clear connection between cooking and the deconstruction of some of the binary oppositions that are fundamental to many cultures, a connection that will be expanded in the following chapters and complemented by the addition of other areas of investigation. Although

food preparation problematises the division between a wide variety of opposed pairs, the way that this destabilisation is played out assumes different forms and achieves different ends, especially in the highly symbolic worlds of literature and film. The near ubiquitousness of cooking and eating in all aspects of culture suggests the likelihood that there are few areas in which the role of food preparation does not have some kind of application.

CHAPTER THREE

COOKING UP FAMILY

Prominent in the discussion and criticism of the role of cooking is its connection to the family. The traditional household structure in which a woman prepares food for her husband and children is seen as sustaining the family on a psychological as well as physiological level, a perception that remains in evidence in articles in women's magazines and advice for frustrated parents which continue to advocate coming together around the dinner table as a way to maintain and strengthen family unity. The responsibility for food preparation still rests primarily with the mother as does the concomitant responsibility for keeping the family together. Mervyn Nicholson's statement that, through breast-feeding, women "*are* food for infants" (*Food* 47), emphasises the close affiliation of women with food, a connection whose central role in the development of early parent-child relationships has multiple dimensions: "The first thing we taste is milk from our mother's breast, accompanied by love and affection, stroking, a sense of security, warmth, and well-being, our first intense feelings of pleasure. Later on she will feed us solid food from her hands, or even chew food first and press it into our mouths, partially digested" (Ackerman 129). Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil note that "women's work of feeding the family, of creating and staging the family-meal-as-event, can be seen as counteracting the centrifugal forces which push apart the activities of the individual family members each with his or her own schedules, commitments, interests and priorities. In this sense . . . feeding literally *produces* family" (82).

One aspect of family which is particularly salient to a discussion of cooking as a deconstructor of binaries is the fact that the family brings

together a number of unique and sometimes very different individuals into a more-or-less coherent group, a group which is not a homogeneous mass but manages to allow for difference. Just as cooking brings together the different senses and a variety of what may appear to be incompatible ingredients, the family too is a collection of disparate elements. In her article on the evolution of the feminist movement entitled "Women's Time," Julia Kristeva discusses pregnancy as a condition which deconstructs the binary self/other through the incorporation of the child-to-be "other" within the mother-to-be's "self." As she puts it, pregnancy "seems to be experienced as the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and of an other, of nature and consciousness, of physiology and speech" (31), a point she further reinforces in "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini": "The maternal body is the place of splitting . . . Through a body, destined to insure reproduction of the species, the woman-subject, although under the sway of the paternal function (as symbolizing, speaking subject and like all others), more of a *filter* than anyone else -- a thoroughfare, a threshold where 'nature' confronts 'culture'" (238). This stage, she argues, is then followed by the

arrival of the child [which], on the other hand, leads the mother into the labyrinths of an experience that, without the child, she would only rarely encounter: love for an other. Not for herself, nor for an identical human being, and still less for another person with whom "I" fuse (love or sexual passion). But the slow, difficult, and delightful apprenticeship in attentiveness, gentleness, forgetting oneself. ("Women's Time" 31)

More than that, she explains,

through the coming of the child and the beginning of a love, perhaps the only genuine feminine love for another . . . one has the chance to accede to that relationship so difficult for a woman, the relationship to the Other: to the symbolic and the ethical. If pregnancy is a threshold between nature and culture, motherhood is a bridge between the

singular and the ethical. ("Un nouveau type" 6)

Thus there appear to be two distinct phases of motherhood; in addition to the splitting of identity there is also "a fantasy of totality -- narcissistic completeness -- a sort of instituted, socialized, natural psychosis ("Women's Time" 31). The second, post-childbirth stage, one which again problematizes the division between self and other, also features an element of joining and completion, this time with the lost mother: "By giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her mother; she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself" ("Motherhood" 239). This is why the desire to reconnect with the maternal body "a contact which the boy may possibly rediscover through his relationship with the opposite sex" is unavailable to the girl "except by becoming a mother herself, through a child, or through a homosexuality which is in itself extremely difficult and judged as suspect by society" ("Women's Time" 29).

The question which remains is the role played by cooking as a potential substitute for pregnancy and/or childrearing. Kristeva's identification of both with a blurring of the boundary between self and other raises the possibility of a certain parallel between cooking and the maternal, as forces which work to create both heterogeneity and continuity. It also raises some interesting questions with regard to the role played by cooking performed by men and by women who have never been pregnant, as well as with cooking's place in the creation of non-biological families in which the holding together of disparate individuals in a family unit may be more difficult to sustain than among families with genetic ties. This possibility seems particularly relevant to a topic currently in the forefront in the mass media and in government: the increased willingness to reconsider how the family has been defined and a move toward greater recognition of non-traditional family structures. For

these groups, the biological connection between mother and child may be absent as may the experience of feeding from the mother's body. For others, the absence of spouse, children, or both sets up a situation in which the desire for some sort of family connection is especially frustrated. Particularly for these non-biological "parents," the possibility that cooking produces family represents a potential avenue for the creation of a familial community which may otherwise prove unattainable.

A number of films and literary works in which cooking figures prominently also contain, and often foreground, non-traditional family structures, structures which include situations in which women do not bear children (either by choice or by decree), homosexual partnerships, as well as the attempts of various characters to create alternatives to dysfunctional or no longer relevant family backgrounds. As a first example, Fannie Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* is the story of life in the town of Whistle Stop, Alabama, during a period stretching from the 1920s until the end of the 1960s. The stories of the Café are told to Evelyn Couch, a woman in the throes of a mid-life crisis, by former inhabitant Ninny Threadgoode, now in her eighties and in a nursing home. Ninny's memories focus on members of the Threadgoode family, in particular youngest daughter Idgie and her partner Ruth Jamison as well as the family of Café cook Sipsey Peavey, living across the railroad tracks in the African American community of Troutville.

In the novel, cooking plays a prominent role in the creation of family for several groups, including the community of Whistle Stop as a whole. Much of the action revolves around Ruth and Idgie's Café; indeed, the local bulletin declares that "after the café closed, the heart of the town just stopped beating" (385). The non-traditional families connected with cooking include

Idgie, Ruth and Ruth's son Buddy; Sipsey and her informally adopted son George; and the "mother-daughter" relationship established between Ninny Threadgoode and Evelyn Couch. Idgie and Ruth support their family, one in which the parents are a lesbian couple, with income generated by the Café although they themselves do not do the cooking, which instead "is being done by two colored women, Sipsey and Onzell, and the barbecue is being cooked by Big George, who is Onzell's husband" (3), as well as being Sipsey's adopted son. Finally, the relationship that develops between Ninny and Evelyn is also signaled and encouraged by the sharing of food: initially this is junk food brought to the nursing home by a constantly snacking Evelyn, but ultimately it takes the form of the "plate of perfectly fried green tomatoes and fresh cream-white corn, six slices of bacon, with a bowl of baby lima beans on the side and four huge light and fluffy buttermilk biscuits" (355), prepared by Evelyn, representing all of the dishes that were Ninny's favourites when she ate at the Café. The significance of their sharing of food is reinforced by the negative reaction to Evelyn's cooking by her husband Ed and his mother, two members of her traditional family with whom Evelyn shares a strained relationship. When Evelyn offers her mother-in-law some home-made chicken, "she didn't want it. She or Ed could care less about food, they just eat to keep alive. Can you imagine?" (190).

For each of these families, the traditional family structure has proven unfeasible or unattainable. A life-long tomboy, Idgie shows no interest in things traditionally feminine, and her sexual experience, strongly hinted at but not absolutely confirmed, has been with Eva, the proverbial woman of loose morals who lives outside of town. For Ruth, the attempt at a nuclear family proves disastrous since her husband Frank physically and verbally abuses her. In Sipsey's case, no one knows "why Sipsey never had any

children of her own. You never saw anybody love babies more than Sipsey did" (48), although the absence of a male partner may be a determining factor. And for Evelyn, although she is married and has children of her own, they have left the nest and appear infrequently in the novel and solely for the purpose of making Evelyn feel inadequate, while her husband shows little interest in their relationship.

Although these examples suggest a fairly traditional conception of the link between cooking and family, with the death and subsequent cooking of Ruth's estranged husband Frank Bennett, *Fried Green Tomatoes* takes the role of cooking to a new level. After Frank comes to Whistle Stop in order to take back his son and is killed, significantly, by a blow to the head with a cast iron frying pan, his body is dismembered and barbecued by Big George and ends up being consumed by a representative of the Georgia police force. This incident plays a particularly significant role in validating the family of which Idgie and Ruth are the heads, first by preserving their non-nuclear family unit and secondly by eliminating any possibility of Ruth's return to the father-mother-child family from which she had fled.

In Jon Avnet's film version of the novel, the plotline follows the story of Idgie and Ruth and that of Ninny and Evelyn fairly closely. As Jennifer Ross Church observes, however, the film balances some of the extremes of the novel through the use of decontextualisation and ambiguity in order to hold on to a mainstream audience which is confronted with "a story about a tomboy's life of playing poker and drinking, defying the Ku Klux Klan, recapturing her lesbian lover from a violent marriage, and murdering and cannibalizing the husband" (193). Germane ways that the film differs from the novel include scenes in which Idgie and Ruth cook, in Idgie's case quite badly, at the restaurant, a more vehement dislike of Evelyn on the part of the

woman whom she and Ed visit in the nursing home, in this case Ed's aunt, who hurls back Evelyn's gifts of food, and a significant change in the ending in which rather than dying in her home in Whistle Stop, Ninny goes to live with Evelyn and Ed.

Although the scene of Idgie and Ruth's cooking appears to serve mainly as comic relief, their presence in the Café kitchen may also represent an attempt to smooth over one of the areas of polarisation which is not successfully deconstructed by the act of cooking -- namely, problematic race relations. While cooking is able to sustain and create families and to bring together the members of the (white) Whistle Stop community, the community remains divided between black and white. Although Idgie defies warnings from the town sheriff, Grady Kilgore, a local member of the Ku Klux Klan, and sells food to African Americans, there remains a spatial divide with the white customers frequenting the restaurant at the front of the building while black customers purchase food at the back door, a divide more or less maintained by Idgie and Ruth who greet and serve customers while Sipsey occupies the space of the kitchen. By locating Idgie and Ruth more firmly in the kitchen, the film may be attempting to mediate the more pronounced divide of the novel. The changes made to the story of Ninny and Evelyn may also serve to make the film more palatable to a mainstream audience since Ninny's going to live with Evelyn not only fulfills the desire for a happy ending, but also foregrounds a family structure which is more acceptable -- i.e., husband, wife and aging "parent," rather than the lesbian relationship between Idgie and Ruth that ends with Ruth's death.

The creation and sustenance of family through cooking in *Fried Green Tomatoes* is intimately connected with the refusal of limits in the form of violating taboos, in this case the taboos of cannibalism and homosexuality. In

her discussion of dietary taboos in the Bible, Jean Soler sums up the purpose of dietary restrictions as, "a matter of upholding the separation between two classes or two types of relationships. To abolish distinction by means of a sexual or culinary act is to subvert the order of the world. Everyone belongs to one species only, one people, one sex, one category" (64), a position supported by Kristeva's presentation in *Powers of Horror* of the concept of abjection -- an idea with many applications to food and consumption -- as rooted in categorisation and division: "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). In *Fried Green Tomatoes*, Grady's assertion that "Nobody wants to eat in the same place that niggers come" (53) also speaks to the fear of the contamination of miscegenation, a variety of the kind of "impurity" that causes Aristotle and Kant to dismiss the sense of taste in favour of the "purer" sense of sight.

Perhaps not surprisingly, it is in the climactic scene of Frank Bennett's murder and the disposal of his body that the violation of categories and taboos is most clearly in evidence, since it is his presence and the evidence of his murder which pose the greatest threat to the preservation of Ruth and Idgie's family. In this scene the division between black and white is obviated as the families work together to cover up the crime, while the separation of self and other is dismantled by the consumption of Frank's body by the Georgian lawman, a process by which food literally "become[s] ourselves" (Ong 28), and by the blurring of the identity of the killer since Idgie and George stand trial for a crime committed by Sipse. It seems fitting that an act of cooking which refuses to respect a system of divisions should prove to be

the savior of two families who themselves fall outside of the definition of the traditional family structure.

A second example, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Installments with Recipes, Romances and Home Remedies*, is the story of Tita de la Garza, a young woman forbidden by a family tradition from marrying, who expresses her passions and emotions through her cooking. Here too there are differences between the novel and Alfonso Arau's film version, although the changes are generally more subtle than those made in *Fried Green Tomatoes*. More problematic, perhaps, is the way that the English version of the text (translated by Carol and Thomas Cristensen) deviates somewhat from the original Spanish. According to Linda Britt, in this case translation, whether deliberate or otherwise, has misrepresented the original text to the extent that "the translators showed their unwillingness to accept the magical powers of Tita's cooking. In fact, they excluded much of the novel's magic in their translation" (12), a serious omission in a text that makes liberal use of the strategies of magic realism. Despite the limits of the English text, however, there exists nonetheless a strong connection between cooking and the creation of family in both the novel and film.

In the novel, the definition of motherhood is treated with a flexibility that attributes greater importance to nurturing than to biology, and centers it on the kitchen. Both family matriarch Mamá Elena and her eldest daughter Rosaura, largely unsympathetic characters, find themselves unable to breast-feed their newborns, in Mamá Elena's case her youngest daughter Tita, and for Rosaura both her son Roberto and daughter Esperanza. As a result, responsibility for Tita's feeding falls to ranch cook Nacha who feeds her with "teas and thin corn gruels" (5), beginning a relationship in which Nacha becomes closer to Tita than her biological mother. In the case of Rosaura's

children, it is Tita who becomes their surrogate mother, again through feeding them. The second child, Esperanza, is fed on tea and gruel like Tita was as a child. The care of Roberto, however, is a situation steeped in magic: Tita, virgin that she is, is nonetheless able to feed the child from her own breasts. As a result, "It was as if the child's mother was Tita, and not Rosaura" (76), an assessment supported by the intense grief which Tita experiences when she learns that Roberto has died as a result of being separated from her.

Although Tita makes a conscious decision to distance herself from Esperanza in order to prevent a repeat of the tragic outcome of her relationship with Roberto, adult and child are thrown together by the fact that, after a difficult delivery, Rosaura is unable to care for her child, whereby "out of sheer necessity [Esperanza] spent the greatest part of the day in the kitchen, since her mother couldn't take care of her and her aunt could only take care of her in the kitchen" (143). Despite Rosaura's protests, Tita and Esperanza develop a close relationship, one that sees Tita fighting to prevent Esperanza from being subjected to Tita's own fate, a life without husband and children of her own since she is forced to care for her mother. It is through cooking that Tita ensures that Esperanza will one day be allowed to create a family of her own, afflicting Rosaura with flatulence and chronic digestive problems which eventually result in her death.

The direct connection between Tita's thoughts with regard to Rosaura's decree that Esperanza will remain unmarried -- that it would be better "to have swallowed them and kept them deep in her bowels until they were putrid and worm-eaten" (146) -- and Rosaura's ensuing flatulence is less obvious in the novel than in the film in which Rosaura begins to belch immediately after eating dinner. It is reasonable to assume, however, that

Tita's angry feelings, expressed while she prepares a meal that the family is to share, should be transferred to those who consume the food much in the same way that this is achieved on occasions when Tita's sorrow, happiness and passion are transmitted by her preparation of a wedding cake, mole, and quails in rose petal sauce and chiles in walnut sauce, respectively. The death of Rosaura not only permits Esperanza to marry and begin a family of her own, but also sets up a situation in which Tita, her lover and Rosaura's husband Pedro, and Esperanza live as a non-traditional family on the model of the nuclear family structure during the years when Esperanza grows up. Finally, Tita's cooking transcends even her own life in order to create a family that extends over several generations through the cookbook that she leaves behind for Esperanza and her daughter.

In the film, evidence of the role of food preparation in creating family, is particularly noticeable in the way that Rosaura's one attempt at cooking for the family occurs after the first time that she and Pedro have sex, suggesting perhaps that her goal is to "cook up" a child for herself and Pedro. Predictably, her lack of success in the kitchen is commensurate with her later inability to feed Roberto and she abandons both activities. Another difference in the film is the reversal of the episode in the novel in which, as a child, Tita takes pleasure in watching drops of water dance across a hot griddle while her sisters look on in terror. In the film version, all of the sisters take part willingly and with apparent joy in Tita's game, softening the novel's alienation of Rosaura and Gertrudis from the kitchen. One interpretation of this change might be that Gertrudis and Rosaura are only later distanced from cooking because they no longer need to cook once they are adults and are able to create families of their own. Therefore, Tita's use of cooking to create family could be seen as the refuge of those to whom a biological family is

denied. Indeed, the ending of both the novel and the film suggest that while cooking has functioned to create the non-traditional family to which Tita belongs, this family represents merely a substitute for the more desirable biological family which Pedro promises her after Esperanza's wedding. Tita's joy at Pedro's suggestion that they marry and have a child of their own coincides with her final act of cooking, whereby she ends her life by "literally cooking herself" (Lawless "Cooking" 232) in the fire which reunites her with Pedro in paradise. Thus the overall suggestion of *Like Water for Chocolate* seems to be that while the creation of family through cooking is a possibility, it remains a less desirable alternative than the traditional structure of mother, father and biological child.

Non-traditional families also play a role in Juzuo Itami's film *Tampopo*, a parody of the classic American Western in which the hero rides into town on his white horse and proceeds to save the damsel in distress from the evil villain. The setting is late twentieth-century Japan, and Goro, the hero who arrives in the cab of a tanker truck festooned with ox horns, saves the damsel (Tampopo) by turning her into an accomplished noodle cook in order to save her from Pisen, the villain who wants to marry her and force her to give up her restaurant. The narrative is intersected by seemingly unrelated vignettes each of which has to do with food. As in the other food-oriented works, both Goro and Tampopo's nuclear families have proved problematic, in Tampopo's case because her husband has died, leaving her as an inadequate cook trying to provide for her son, Tabo, whose suffering as a result of his father's absence seems to be signaled by the beatings he receives at the hands of other neighbourhood boys. In Goro's case, his attempts to overcome a dysfunctional upbringing have been unsuccessful, indicated by his estrangement from his wife and children.

For Tampopo, cooking sustains family by providing for herself and her son, and it also creates family by bringing together a group of teachers who instruct her in the finer points of the preparation of noodle soup. Goro is her first teacher, accompanied by his friend Gun, and he acts as a father figure for Tabo who, by the end of the film, has learned to defend himself from his aggressors. Another of the teachers for whom cooking and family are intimately linked is the Old Master, a former doctor who lost his practice and his family due to his obsession with noodle cooking. In this case, cooking has been responsible for the loss of a traditional family, a structure which is replaced by the group of vagabonds whom the Old Master now leads, a group whose common interest is a knowledge of gourmet food and wine truly surprising among the homeless. In addition, the Old Master temporarily joins the family of teachers who work with Tampopo.

Although Tampopo's cooking is the force which brings together the group of teachers, this structure is less clearly a family than some of the other arrangements we have seen. For one thing the alliance is temporary and of a fairly short duration and the various teachers drift away once it is clear that Tampopo has achieved her goal. In this way, the teachers may represent parental figures who must release their children into their own adult lives once they have been prepared for the outside world. Goro's reluctance to leave may be an inverse indication of this, although the suggestion of sexual tension between him and Tampopo makes his role as symbolic parent problematic. Further support for the parent-child structure can be found in the power dynamics which exist between Tampopo and her male teachers. During the period of her education, she is ordered around in a way that leaves little room for protest, placing her in a clearly subordinate position.

In addition to the story of Tampopo's transformation, one of the film's vignettes deals with the connection between family and cooking. In it a man rushes home to his apartment where a doctor is tending to his dying wife. Pleading with her not to die, the husband orders his wife to get up from her sickbed and prepare dinner for the family, a feat which she manages to accomplish in spite of her condition, dying immediately after the meal is served. In this situation, cooking creates family by somehow extending the mother's life -- as long as she is cooking she remains alive. That her being and her memory are embodied in the food she prepares is signaled by the husband's command to his children that they stop grieving and eat, for this is the last meal their mother ever cooked. Finally, the film's closing scene is a gradual close up on a mother breast-feeding a child, creating an interesting juxtaposition with Tampopo's final position as "master chef." The Old Master's comment that "I never thought a woman could become a good noodle cook," raises the issue of gender roles and the traditionally gendered division of public and private spaces. The juxtaposition of Tampopo with the breast-feeding mother deconstructs the public/private binary with respect to the position of women and may reinforce the perception of first the group of teachers, then the community of customers as family structures, since the more traditional picture of family composed of mother and child lends support to Tampopo's non-traditional version in which her customers are drawn together by food.

Babette's Feast, a short story by Isak Dinesen, and the film version directed by Just Betzer and Bo Christensen, relates the experiences of French chef Babette Hersant during her employment by two Norwegian sisters (Danish in the film), Martine and Philippa, who have devoted their lives to piety and care for the poor of their small village. Babette comes to work for

the sisters as a result of her involvement with the Communards and ensuing flight from France after a career as head chef of the renowned Café Anglais. After winning the lottery, Babette convinces Philippa and Martine to allow her to prepare a "real French dinner" to celebrate the one hundredth birthday of the sisters' now dead father. One of the themes of the short story is Babette's status as artist. Her roles, however, also include that of reconciling the increasingly estranged members of the religious sect once headed by Martine and Philippa's father which she accomplishes through the elaborate French meal which depletes all of her lottery winnings.

As in *Like Water for Chocolate*, the sisters remain unmarried and childless due to their father's declaration that "to him in his calling his daughters were his right and left hand. Who could want to bereave him of them?" as well as the opinion of the sect that "earthly love, and marriage with it, were trivial matters, in themselves nothing but illusions" (5). For Babette, it is the death of her husband and child which have deprived her of a traditional family and contributed to the alternative family which is facilitated by her cooking. One especially interesting element of the way that cooking creates family in *Babette's Feast* is the way that, while the sisters minister to the poor of the village before Babette arrives, providing them with a bland ale and bread soup (which appears particularly unappetising in the film), the interpersonal relationships between members of the sect have deteriorated to the point where decades-old grievances threaten the harmony of the group. In contrast, it is Babette's opulent meal of fine wines, turtle soup, and caille en sarcophage, which compels the diners to forgive each other their trespasses and renew their familial affection and care, suggesting a possible difference between good and bad cooking in the maintenance of healthy family relationships. In "Babette Can Cook: Life and Art in Three

Stories by Isak Dinesen," Bruce Bassoff describes Babette's art as one "which recreates miraculously the social harmony that has been lost since the father's death" (388). Reinforcing the ability of Babette's cooking to create family is first of all a comparison of the meal to the wedding of Cana (35) -- an occasion celebrating the beginning of a new family -- as well as the description of Babette's cooking at the Café Anglais as "a kind of love affair" (38). In addition, the description at the end of the story of her attitude toward her former customers at the Café Anglais mirrors a parent-child relationship. Addressing Philippa and Martine, Babette declares that her customers, "had been brought up and trained, with greater expense than you, my little ladies, could ever imagine or believe" (48).

In Ang Lee's Taiwanese films *The Wedding Banquet* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, there is a clear emphasis on food preparation as indicated by the titles of the two films. Both films also feature non-traditional families. In *The Wedding Banquet*, Wai-Tung and Simon are a homosexual couple living in California who enlist the aid of a Chinese woman, Wei-Wei, in an effort to satisfy the desires of Wai-Tung's parents who, ignorant of their son's homosexuality, keep pressing him to get married and produce an heir. The surprise arrival of Wai-Tung's parents to take part in his marriage of convenience to Wei-Wei sets in motion a chain of events that results in the near-dissolution of the relationship between Wai-Tung and Simon, and the impregnation of Wei-Wei by Wai-Tung during a moment of alcohol-induced poor judgement on their wedding night. In *Eat Drink Man Woman*, a family of three daughters, headed by their widower father who is an esteemed chef, comes together every week for an elaborate Sunday dinner in the midst of tumultuous changes in their individual lives, changes that see each of the members leave the family home for new families or job opportunities.

In *The Wedding Banquet*, the occasion that initiates the events leading up to the non-traditional family which emerges by the end and takes the form of Wai-Tung and Simon sharing their home with Wei-Wei and her future child, is the elaborate banquet hosted by a restaurant owner who once served under Wai-Tung's father in the military. Prior to the wedding, it is certainly not Wei-Wei's cooking that creates family since her skills in the kitchen leave much to be desired. She consistently massacres the eggs she fries for breakfast, and the meal designed to celebrate the arrival of Wai-Tung's parents, ostensibly the product of her labour is in fact prepared by Simon when the parents are not watching. It is the excessive eating and drinking which weaken Wai-Tung's defenses and allow Wei-Wei to seduce him on their wedding night, a liaison that creates the child the two will share. It is also cooking which at least superficially influences Wei-Wei's decision not to end her pregnancy, a possibility she seems to have chosen. On the way to the appointment to have an abortion, Wei-Wei is distracted by the smells emanating from a hamburger stand and announces she has changed her mind by saying that she must provide food for her baby.

In *Eat Drink Man Woman*, it is the cooking done by the father, Mr. Chu, that brings the family together every Sunday. As in *Babette's Feast*, however, there is something lacking since the meals often involve disagreement and bickering and very little of the large amount of food that is prepared is actually consumed. In Lee's film, though, the deficiency in the food is not in its quality, although there are occasional complaints from the middle daughter Jai-Chien that a dish has been overseasoned due to Mr. Chu having lost his sense of taste. Instead, the rift between father and middle child originates in Chu's refusal to allow Jai-Chien to become a cook, directing her instead to do something "serious" with her life. Here is an

example not only of how cooking can create family, but also of how its prohibition can create a rift in the family structure, as can bad cooking in the case of Jin-Rong and her mother, both of whom are terrible cooks and both of whom experience serious family discord which, for the mother takes the form of an inability to live in harmony with her eldest daughter and son-in-law, and for Jin-Rong, a divorce. In the end, it is when Jai-Chien prepares the weekly Sunday dinner, a meal attended only by herself and her father, that the capacity of cooking to create family is most clearly illustrated, since her cooking not only succeeds in reawakening Chu's dormant taste buds, but establishes a new closeness between father and daughter.

Although Chu's family is non-traditional due to the absence of the mother, there are other alternative families also influenced by cooking in the film. Much to everyone's surprise, near the end of the film Chu announces his intention to marry Jin-Rong, the much younger friend of his daughter Jai-Jen. Their relationship has been nurtured by his preparation of food for her and her daughter Shan-Shan whose multi-course lunches create a sensation among her friends at school. There is also a non-traditional relationship in the film which does not survive although it is encouraged by Jai-Chien's cooking, an almost entirely sexual connection between her and Raymond, a former boyfriend. To celebrate a promotion at work, Jai-Chien shows up at Raymond's apartment, arms full of groceries, with the intention of preparing an elaborate meal. As the meal unfolds, however, it becomes clear that it is only a substitute for the meal she would prefer to cook, one at home in her father's well-stocked kitchen, an event which is impossible since her cooking runs the risk of stealing her father's thunder. In addition, it becomes clear that Raymond does not understand or appreciate the symbolic significance of the meal when he makes jokes about Jai-Chien's childhood memories and

behaves as though this dinner were the same as any other aside from its size. The failure of cooking to create family here may be explained by the status of the meal as a substitute, but may also suggest a certain conservatism in the film. While the relationships between the other family members and their partners encompass non-traditional situations such as the union of people of radically different ages, religions, and Jai-Ning's pre-wedding pregnancy, each couple does embrace the concepts of love and marriage, unlike Jai-Chien and Raymond's potentially threatening dissociation of sex from its traditional affiliates.

As a final example, in Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, the children of Pearl Tull -- Cody, Ezra and Jenny -- reflect back on their dysfunctional childhoods and how their formative years have influenced their lives as adults. Abandoned by their father, the children have been raised by Pearl, a mother who is often cold and fails to provide the nurturing they need, and each of them adopts mechanisms for coping with this lack. One of the signals of Pearl's inability to give her children what they need is her lackluster preparation of food: "She'd make supper from tins she'd brought home, nothing fancy" (15) which on one noted occasion consists of sliced Spam (51). Nevertheless, her cooking does function to keep the family together as she attempts to protect the children from the knowledge that their father has left by maintaining the daily routine, part of which consists of "cooked oatmeal for the children's breakfast" (10).

In contrast to Pearl, her son Ezra makes the focus of his life the nurturing of even complete strangers through the preparation of food at his "family restaurant": "a place where people come just like to a family dinner. . . He'll cook them one thing special each day and dish it out on their plates and everything will be solid and wholesome, really homelike" (75). In

"Rewriting the Family During *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*," Caren Town states that "Ezra's obsession with food is his way of making order out of chaos, of transforming his unwieldy family into one that sits down together for a multi-course dinner" (18), referring to Ezra's single-minded attempts to gather his birth family together for a meal at his restaurant, attempts which are always thwarted by one member or another (usually Pearl) storming off in a huff.

Ezra's fixation with keeping his mother and siblings together is, however, not an attempt to create a non-biological family, but rather an effort to transform the family he has into the one he wants. The one chance Ezra had to start over with a wife and family of his own is thwarted by older brother Cody's deliberate plan to win the affections of Ezra's fiancée and take her for himself. In addition to recreating the Tull family, Ezra creates other family connections through cooking and food. In his younger years he nurtures his best friend Josiah and his mother -- "he fixed us meals, and made us cocoa" (78) -- establishes a mother-son relationship with Mrs. Scarlatti, the original owner of the restaurant he eventually makes his own, and creates an atmosphere of home for the customers of his restaurant. After a disagreement over changes he has made to the restaurant in Mrs. Scarlatti's absence, Ezra wishes he could re-establish their closeness in the only way he knows how: "He would have liked to fix her a meal -- a sustaining meal, with a depth of flavors, a complicated meal that would require a whole day of chopping things small, and grinding, and blending" (128).

In the end, the family, minus Pearl, does succeed in completing a meal together on the occasion of Pearl's funeral. Overcoming the early flight of Beck Tull, the children's estranged father, the meal proceeds to its conclusion, raising questions about the role played by the much-maligned Pearl in the

bringing together of her often antagonistic family. On the one hand, it is her absence which seems to be required for the rest of the family to coalesce as a group, while on the other, it is the occasion of her death and her explicit instructions to invite Beck to the funeral which pave the way for the reunion. In a text in which one of the central themes is the subjectivity and fallibility of memory, perhaps we are never meant to answer the question of Pearl's role in this event or of either her culpability or laudability as care-giver to her children. I am inclined, however, to give her more credit than have many of the book's critics for reasons which touch on cooking and binary deconstruction.

Although Pearl is portrayed as rigid and one of her primary occupations around the house seems to be maintaining a definite division between inside and outside -- she has "concentrated on making each house perfect -- airtight and rustproof and waterproof" (16) -- after her funeral Beck explains his flight from the family with the words, "it was the grayness; grayness of things; half-right-and-half-wrongness of things. Everything tangled, mingled, not perfect any more. I couldn't take that. Your mother could, but not me" (301). Pearl's ability to live in a world of blurred borders speaks to the acceptance of heterogeneity so necessary to the maintenance of the family structure, as does the aspect of cooking at which she did excel -- the preparation of liquids, the tea she never skimmed on (101), along with the "tea and bracing broths" with which she cares for Jenny after the birth of her first child (210). This connection to liquid, amorphous and boundary-transcending, is something Pearl shares with Ezra who, as a child, declares "I'm trying to get through life as a liquid" (166) in response to his mother's question of why he refuses to defend himself against the neighbourhood

bully, an affiliation which, in light of Ezra's efforts to bring the family together, may provide Pearl with a certain degree of goodness by association.

Having established the use of cooking to create and sustain what are often non-traditional definitions of family, what are we now to make of the connection between cooking and family as informed by Kristeva's discussion of pregnancy and child-rearing? Many of the characters who "cook up" family in these works do not, for one reason or another, experience pregnancy: Idgie and Sipsey in *Fried Green Tomatoes*, Tita in *Like Water for Chocolate*, the sisters in *Babette's Feast*, Simon and Wai-Tung in *The Wedding Banquet*, and Ezra in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Others are involved in raising children to which they are not biologically related: again, Idgie and Sipsey; Tita; Goro in *Tampopo*; and Simon, while still others, Ruth in *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Tampopo*, *Babette*, and Mr. Chu in *Eat Drink Man Woman*, are missing an element from what was originally a nuclear family, in most cases a spouse, and in *Babette's* a child as well.

In these instances it seems to be less a matter of familial heterogeneity, and more of how cooking establishes continuity. In the case of *Fried Green Tomatoes*, for example, cooking establishes continuity between "mothers": the relationship between Evelyn and Ninny is a connection which substitutes for the relationship ended by the death of Evelyn's biological mother and one which is facilitated by Evelyn's efforts to prepare for Ninny the foods she remembers from earlier days, an enterprise in which Evelyn nurtures her "mother" to a greater extent than she seems to with her children, thus exhibiting the "love for an other" which Kristeva describes. A more far-ranging example can be found in *Like Water for Chocolate*, in which the cookbook which Tita leaves behind connects her to her niece, Esperanza, for whom she functions as spiritual if not biological mother, and her grand-niece

long after her death. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, there is also evidence of the continuity between "mother" and "son." Mrs. Scarlatti refers to Ezra as "my boy" and acknowledges that he is "really *better* than my son" since he shows a greater interest in the restaurant than does Mrs. Scarlatti's biological child (93), and by taking over responsibility for feeding others, Ezra enters the continuum of caregivers.

In addition to instances of the continuity between women and between mothers and sons are relationships in which cooking facilitates connections between "fathers" and both "daughters" and "sons." In *The Wedding Banquet*, Wai-Tung's father comes to see Simon, who does the bulk of the cooking, as a son, and it is the cooking at the banquet (in addition to the copious amounts of alcohol) which indirectly leads to the conception of the much-desired grandson, creating a link between generations as well as allowing for the possibility for homosexual men, both Wai-Tung and Simon, to enter into this continuity. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, another three generations are brought together in Ezra's restaurant -- Beck, the absent father, Cody, his son, and Luke, the grandson for whom Cody mistakes his errant father when he remarks that "it wasn't Luke. It was Beck. His silver hair appeared yellow in the sunlight, and he had taken off his suit coat to expose his white shirt and his sharp, cocked shoulders so oddly like Luke's" (299). The recuperation of Beck is the first step in returning him to his place in the continuum of fathers, and in beginning to forgive his own father, Cody sets himself on the path to a more meaningful connection with his son. Although it is not a man who does the cooking in *Babette's Feast*, the effect of Babette's fabulous meal is to restore the connection between the patriarch and his follower "children," whose previous bickering had threatened to disrupt the sect's family structure. Finally, cooking reestablishes the closeness

between Jai-Chien and her father in *Eat Drink Man Woman* when her soup reawakens his taste buds, and establishes her place in the continuity of family chefs as she too takes on the role of family caregiver.

One element which a systematic examination of these family structures makes abundantly clear is the frequency with which biological mothers are either absent or unsatisfactory, and in the case of the unsatisfactory mothers, that the closeness of other family members is facilitated by their deaths. In each of these texts there is some kind of maternal absence: Ninny is an orphan, Evelyn has lost her mother, Wei-Wei's mother is back in China while she lives in the United States, Mrs. Chu is dead, Philippa and Martine have lost their mother, Pearl is an orphan and at the end of the novel is dead herself, and Mamá Elena and Rosaura are tyrants who also die. Most obviously in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, it is the death of the mother that reestablishes the connection between men since her insistence that Beck be invited to the funeral sets the stage for the reunion of estranged father and children, Cody in particular.

Does cooking function then in a positive way as a substitute for the maternal figure who embodies heterogeneity and continuity, in a way that encourages connections between diverse individuals who might otherwise be unable to connect thus democratising the ability to create families, or is it a more insidious attempt to obviate the maternal in favour of a system of continuity in which those who benefit are primarily men? The very fact that we have seen instances of both male and female characters who have used cooking to establish connections leads me to believe that this situation is not as polarised as it might seem and that the function of food preparation with regard to family encourages a diversity which has positive implications for the project of deconstructing rigid definitions and divisions.

CHAPTER FOUR

METAPHOR AND METONYMY

No category perhaps, has given rise to more metaphors than that of food and cooking. Related to cooking specifically, when you are *cooking something up* you should be aware that *too many cooks spoil the broth*. Provided you avoid this pitfall and everything goes well, you should be *cooking with gas*, although be sure to watch your step or *your goose will be cooked*. Also related to food preparation, it may be necessary in the course of your endeavours to *break a few eggs in order to make an omelet*, however if your idea is *half-baked* you may find yourself *out of the frying pan and into the fire*, or *in the soup*, which may leave you *boiling mad*. Turning to the world of eating, it is possible that you have *too much on your plate* and as such are finding things *hard to swallow*, especially in a situation in which *you can't have your cake and eat it too*. If so, perhaps you should turn to the realm of food where you may be comforted by the fact that *life is a bowl of cherries*, or find yourself a *sugar daddy* or a real *dish* which should brighten your day provided that neither turns out to be a *fruitcake*.

Although the subject of metaphors related to cooking and food is a fascinating one, it is not such metaphors *per se* that interest me here, but rather the way that the problems encountered by theorists of metaphor and metonymy are similar to those one faces in trying to categorise food preparation. To begin, a survey of some of the more well-known critical discussions about metaphor and metonymy reveals the problematic nature of these literary categories. In his pioneering attempts to define and clarify the nature of metonymy and metaphor, Roman Jakobson identifies the principles which govern these terms as selection and combination, respectively, and

suggests that the study of metonymy has been grossly neglected in favour of a focus on metaphor. Metaphor, he argues, "corresponds to the selection axis of language, and depends on similarity between things not normally contiguous," while metonymy, in contrast, depends on, "contiguity in space/time . . . and thus corresponds to the combination axis of language" (*Metaphoric* 57). Jakobson expands these definitions when he suggests that metaphoric selection is produced "on the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy" while "the [metonymic] combination, the build up of the sequence, is based on contiguity" (*Linguistics* 39). In addition to his perception of the two terms as binary opposites, Jakobson refers to them as "two gravitational poles," he also describes their respective realms in the world of literature, "for poetry, metaphor, and for prose, metonymy is the line of least resistance" (*Metaphoric* 58, 61).

Building on, or extrapolating from Jakobson's work, other critics have focused their attention on aspects of metaphor. Although Nelson Goodman would seem to disagree with Jakobson insofar as he emphasises the conflict inherent in metaphor -- he believes that "metaphorical application of a label to an object defies an explicit or tacit prior denial of that label to that object" (69) -- his comments regarding "metaphorical truth" suggest a belief in some kind of inherent similarity between the two terms of a metaphor, a similarity which remains to be uncovered by the poet. Goodman contrasts metaphorical truth which "depends upon reassignment" with falsity which "depends upon misassignment of a label" (70), a sentiment echoed by Lévi - Strauss's opinion that "metaphors are based on an intuitive sense of the logical relations between one realm and other realms. . . . Metaphor, far from being a decoration that is added to language, purifies it and restores it to its original nature" (*Raw* 339).

It is only a short leap from the principle of similarity in metaphor to that of equivalence, a perception highlighted by Wayne C. Booth when he indicates how metaphor is sometimes used in practice when advertisers "are hired to make some possessions stand for happiness or well-being" (67). Such approaches to metaphor, in emphasising similarity and equivalence, suggest a leaning toward homogeneity and the proper order of language and of objects. The revelation of metaphoric truth indicates an underlying, transcendental structure whose system of classification remains, in some cases, to be discovered, but nonetheless preexists our efforts to uncover it.

Other critics, however, place greater emphasis on metaphor as embodying conflict and as discrediting transcendentalism. In "Metaphor and Transcendence," for example, Karsten Harries takes on this issue with regard to the New Critical emphasis on the work as self-contained and self-sufficient. As he sees it,

discussions of metaphor have rightly stressed its power to connect, associate, and gather together; metaphor would thus seem to be a force tending toward unity, an agent, perhaps even the chief agent, of the kind of unity demanded of the poem. But the demand that the poem be a self-sufficient whole leaves little room for what I will call the ontological function of metaphor. (72)

Focusing on the way that metaphor demands the introduction of non-textual elements, he argues that metaphors "speak of what remains absent" (82), a concept expanded by Paul Ricoeur's discussion of the traces of incompatibility and disjuncture which co-exist with the recognition of metaphorical meaning, a concept which emphasises heterogeneity and the presence of competing meanings. Ricoeur argues for the continued presence of what some have termed the "literal" and the "figurative" interpretations of metaphor when he says that "metaphorical meaning does not merely consist of a semantic clash but of the *new* predicative meaning which emerges from

the collapse of the literal meaning. . . . In order that a metaphor obtains, one must continue to identify the previous incompatibility *through* the new compatibility" (144-46). For Booth, however, the co-existence of competing forces is still nonetheless possible: "The metaphors criticize each other, in a sense contradict each other, but without the effort at mutual annihilation that logical contradictions imply" (68). In much the same way, Ted Cohen argues that metaphor functions to create and sustain intimacy between people and within groups, wherein "a figurative use can be inaccessible to all but those who share information about one another's knowledge, beliefs, intentions and attitudes" (7). For him, where the element of competition mainly resides is in a response to metaphor: "To *understand* a metaphor is by its very nature to *decide* whether to join the metaphorist or reject him, and that is simultaneously to decide either to be shaped in the shape of his metaphor or to resist" (63).

Other critics have given more attention to defining and theorising aspects of both metaphor and metonymy. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, for example, distinguish the terms metaphor and metonymy with the statement, metaphor "is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another" (36). In this case, their focus is on metonymy as synecdoche, represented by examples such as "There are a lot of *good heads* in the university" (36), in contrast to Jakobson's conception of metonymy as combination. In "Metaphor," John R. Searle offers another opinion which suggests, through an abstracted explanation, that metonymy (again, synecdoche specifically) is a sub-category of metaphor rather than an opposing principle:

When one says, "S is P," and means that, "S is R," P and R may be associated by such relations as the part-whole relation, the container-contained relation, or even the clothing and wearer relation. In each case, as in metaphor proper, the semantic content of the P term conveys the semantic content of the R term by some principle of association. Since the principles of metaphor are rather various anyway, I am inclined to treat metonymy and synecdoche as special cases of metaphor and add their principles to my list of metaphorical principles. (107)

Sidestepping the disagreement between Lakoff and Johnson -- supported by others including Bredin and Jakobson -- and Searle -- in whose camp also appear Genette and Levin -- Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. suggests:

Regardless of the debate on definitions, these two figurative types can be distinguished because the connections made between things are different in each case. In metaphor there are two conceptual domains and one is understood in terms of the other. . . . Metonymy involves only one conceptual domain in that the mapping or connection between two things is done within the same domain. . . . Thus, referring to a baseball player as a glove . . . uses a salient characteristic of one domain (the glove part of the baseball player) to represent the entire domain (the player). (258-59)

Another characteristic of metonymy which Gibbs identifies is the importance of context, characterising metonymy as "a kind of contextual expression, words or phrases whose meanings depend on the context in which they are embedded" (260). Citing the example of "the ham sandwich is getting impatient for his check" as a case of metonymy whose intended meaning is difficult to determine outside of a particular context, Gibbs goes on to argue:

understanding contextual expressions involving metonymy requires that a process of sense *creation* must operate to supplement ordinary *sense selection*. For instance, the contextually appropriate meaning of *tuxedo* cannot be selected from a short list of potential meanings in the lexicon because these potential senses are unlimited. Listeners must instead create a new meaning for a word that already has a conventional interpretation. . . . The evidence therefore suggests that understanding contextual expressions involving metonymy requires quick access to common ground information to create novel

interpretations for these nonliteral utterances. (260-61)

Gibbs's conclusion, in short, has much in common with Cohen's concept of metaphor as *building*, and being dependent on, intimacy. The evidence of significant disagreement between critics on the roles and definitions of metaphor and metonymy suggests that these terms are already problematic with regard to their classification within a binary structure. As such, they may share important characteristics with food preparation and the similar difficulties it presents.

Few studies of metaphor and metonymy make reference to cooking, but significant food terminology is sometimes involved. Jerry Morgan, for example, uses the terms "fresh" and "stored" to differentiate novel metaphors from those which have developed a literal rather than a figurative meaning -- "dead battery" being an example of a "stored" metaphor -- and in describing the process by which stored metaphors are employed, he further calls them "a kind of instant metaphor -- just add water and stir" (130). In a similar vein, Donald Davidson invokes alimentary terms when he distinguishes "good" metaphors from "bad": "there are no unsuccessful metaphors, just as there are no unfunny jokes. There are *tasteless* metaphors, but these are turns that nevertheless have brought something off, even if it were not worth bringing off or could have been brought off better" (29 emphasis mine).

While there is little attention paid to cooking in the work of critics whose primary subjects are metaphor and metonymy, other theorists whose focus is on subjects related to cooking have made greater use of metaphoric and metonymic principles. Among critics who have specifically applied the models of metaphor and metonymy to food preparation, often in an effort to construct a semiotics of food, Roland Barthes is a classic example in

organising the restaurant menu into syntagmatic and paradigmatic -- Barthes uses the term "system" in place of paradigm classes -- poles. In a similar vein, in an investigation of food semiotics on the scale of the domestic household, Mary Douglas begins by making reference to the work of Michael Halliday -- "On the two axes of syntagm and paradigm, chain and choice, sequence and set, call it what you will, he has shown how food elements can be ranged until they are all accounted for either in grammatical terms, or down to the last lexical item" (37) -- and then moves on to create her own formula for the English meal system, itself based on a system of substitution and combination. Her formula is based on "a tripartite structure, one element stressed accompanied by two or more unstressed elements, for example a main course and cold supporting dishes" (41):

If I wish to serve anything worthy of the name of supper in one dish it must preserve the minimum structure of a meal. . . . A proper meal is A (when A is the stressed main course) plus 2B (when B is an unstressed course). Both A and B contain each the same structure, in small, a+2b, when a is the stressed item and b the unstressed item in a course. A weekday lunch is A; Sunday lunch is 2A; Christmas, Easter, and birthdays are A+2B. (43)

Perhaps the precursor to all semiotic investigations of food is the work done by Levi-Strauss in "The Culinary Triangle" when he identifies the processes of metaphor and metonymy in the association of food that is boiled or smoked with the nature side of the nature/culture binary. Beginning with the boiled,

the quality of naturalness which language confers upon boiled food is purely metaphorical: the "boiled" is not the "spoiled"; it simply resembles it. Inversely, the transfiguration of the smoked into a natural entity does not result from the nonexistence of the buccan, the cultural instrument [upon which the smoking takes place], but from its voluntary destruction. This transfiguration is thus on the order of metonymy, since it consists in acting as if the effect were really the cause. (594)

More recently, in "Eating Virtue" Paul Atkinson also comments on the semiotic function of food in relation to nature and culture, in this case in contemporary food symbolism. Focusing on transformation and connection, he describes how metaphorically,

the transformation of "natural" foodstuffs into the "cultural" products of the table parallels other general processes whereby the material world is worked on and incorporated into the human domain. . . . At the same time, food furnishes a direct link -- metonymically -- between the human and the natural, between the cultural and the biological: ingested and processed, it thus spans the two spheres. (11)

As a final example, one might note how Jean-Francois Revel in his nineteenth-century treatise on gastronomy distinguishes between regional and international cuisine on the basis of the degree to which each is associated with metonymy and metaphor, respectively. He states,

J'entends par "cuisine" vénitienne, irlandaise etc., un corpus de recettes fixes, essentiellement liées a une région et a des ressources. J'entends par "cuisine internationale," non point un corpus de recettes, mais un ensemble de méthodes, de principes susceptibles de variantes selon les possibilités locales et financières, comme cet ensemble est susceptible de variantes dans un meme pays, selon les possibilités saisonnières. (249)

The connection to the land and local identity places regional cuisine in the metonymic camp, while the possibility for substitution according to certain basic rules aligns international cuisine with metaphor, a system of classification that reflects a not-so-subtle hierarchy of value that Deane Curtin and Lisa Heldke link with the kind of cooking traditionally carried out by women in the home and male restaurant chefs (125). The higher value attributed to male-identified international cuisine, coupled with its parallels to metaphor, may provide a clue as to the underlying ethos that has prompted greater critical attention to metaphor than to metonymy.

Moving away from existing critical opinions, my own feeling is that elements of cooking and of metaphor and metonymy intersect in ways that reveal parallels between the various practices. Some of the characteristics specifically associated with metaphor and metonymy are evidenced in aspects of cooking as well as in attitudes and practices surrounding food preparation. On the side of metaphor, the substitution of ingredients is common practice in food preparation, to the extent that cookbooks such as the comprehensive, *The Joy of Cooking*, provide a list of common substitutions. The variation of what could be termed archetypal recipes which appear in slightly different forms across a range of cultures also speaks to metaphoric practice in cooking as do the methods and principles which Revel describes in his concept of international cuisine. Also making use of the principle of substitution is a trend which is becoming more widespread with the increased attention being paid to vegetarianism and the health merits of lower meat consumption. The use of vegetable products to mimic everything from hamburger patties to ice cream to "tofurkey," a turkey substitute, increases the range of food-fakery begun by such traditional dishes, as mock apple pie.

Metonymic functions of food, I would similarly argue, center mainly on its connection to people either in its preparation or its symbolic function. In "Sensory Factors in Feeding," Valerie Duffy and Linda Bartoshuk point out that the "name of the odor is often derived from the object that produced the odor (eg. minty, smoky, vanilla, lemon, chocolate)" (146), an assessment which also applies to the way we label tastes. Aside from the basics of salty, sweet, bitter and sour, much of the way we describe our taste experience takes the form of "it tastes like (insert food name here)." This process of labeling, however, also has a metaphoric function. The fact that many of the meats considered exotic to the North American palate are described as tasting like

chicken is but one example of the degree to which metaphoric comparisons play a role in the identification of tastes. The process of naming also associates cooking with metonymy in the case of the naming of signature dishes. In his discussion of the metonymic relationship between an artist and his or her work, Gibbs argues that "not any product can be referred to by the name of the person who created the product. I could hardly say 'Mary was tasty' meaning by *Mary* the cheesecake that Mary made . . . we do not normally believe that such a relationship always holds between a cake and the person who baked it" (259). A quick look at the menu of a French restaurant or cookbook, however, reveals that many of the dishes in the French repertoire take their names from a person either responsible for their creation or in whose honour a particular dish was invented. The fact that it is necessary for the restaurant diner to have knowledge of French cuisine in order to understand what one is ordering -- I once ordered *rognons de veau* without the knowledge that *rognons* is the word used in French cuisine to denote kidneys, as opposed to the biological kidney which in French is *rein* -- is also reminiscent of the earlier examination of metaphor as promoting intimacy. In this case, perhaps it is metonymy which produces (or demands) intimacy -- an understanding of the definition of metonymically named French dishes.

In turn, it should be noted that the metonymic function of food preparation is also apparent in the area of food taboos, in particular, in an examination of rules governing who is allowed to cook in various cultures. Jean Soler, in her essay on dietary taboos in Judaism, explains the reasoning behind prohibitions on what can be eaten and by whom it can be prepared. The metonymic connection between a menstruating woman and the food she has prepared contaminates that food, a belief that is also in evidence in

traditional Japanese culture: "Menstruating women had to suffer a number of imposed taboos related to the notion of the impurity of their state. In the past, they were not allowed to cook for the household since their use of the fire would make it unclean" (Loveday and Chiba 123). In this latter instance, the contamination of food is not the result of a direct connection between woman and food, but follows a metonymic chain, moving from woman to fire to the food that it cooks.

A final general way that cooking intersects with discussions of metaphor and metonymy has to do with the terms' problematic binary status, in particular Searle's suggestion that metonymy constitutes a sub-class of metaphor, as well as the fact that cooking's embrace of both practices indicates its resistance to being confined to the realm of one term or the other. In addition, one might note the way that metonymic and metaphoric functions of food reveal problems with separating the two terms in relation to the practice of labeling tastes, for example. While Barthes's food system identifies the listing of available dishes and the combination of dishes a diner chooses as different functions, in other writing he is less insistent on the separation of metaphoric and metonymic structures in food semiotics. Writing about food advertising, Barthes identifies its three principle themes:

The first of these assigns to food a function that is, in some sense, commemorative: food permits a person (and I am here speaking of French themes) to partake each day of the national past. In this case, this historical quality is obviously linked to food techniques (preparation and cooking). These have long roots, reading back to the depth of the French past. . . . A second group of values concerns what we might call the anthropological situation of the French consumer. Motivation studies have shown that feelings of inferiority were attached to certain foods and that people therefore abstained from them. For example, there are supposed to be masculine and feminine kinds of food. . . . Finally, a third area of consciousness is constituted by a whole set of ambiguous values of a somatic as well as psychic nature, clustering around the concept of *health*. (*Toward* 24)

If one were forced to separate these themes into categories of metaphor and metonymy, the argument could be made that the first, the historical function, is metonymic, featuring a connection, by lineage, to the past; the second, the anthropological situation, might be classed as metaphoric, particularly with regard to the example given of masculine and feminine foods; and the third, health, is also metonymic by virtue of the chain of food entering the body and exhibiting health-promoting effects. In each of these cases, however, an "opposite" categorisation could be made. Perhaps, instead, the historical function is metaphoric, *moutarde du Roy* may in fact not trace its creation back to an ancient king but rather substitute for the possibly non-existent original mustard; the association of foods with masculine and feminine may arise metonymically from their traditional consumption by one sex or the other; and the health-giving properties of foods may be merely a matter of marketing or consumer perception, a metaphoric symbol for healthy living rather than a contributor to it.

Turning now to how literary and filmic texts present the similarly problematic nature of classifying metaphor, metonymy and cooking in a binary structure, for the purpose of a more concrete illustration, few examples could provide a better site for discussion than the section entitled "Food" in Gertrude Stein's collection of poems, *Tender Buttons*. Stein's "Food" section is a collection of arguably non-sensical poems, each bearing a title drawn from the realm of the edible, "Breakfast," "Lunch," and "Dinner," and "Milk," "Asparagus," and "Cucumber," for example. The section's opening page sets up a table of contents reminiscent of Barthes's metonymic menu. The order, however, is jumbled and the descriptions of the dishes that follow are unusual, to say the least.

The fact that Stein chooses food items as the medium for playing with the limits of metaphor and metonymy is, I believe, not merely coincidental, but instead reveals some of the parallels between the practices. In the same way that food preparation refuses the opposition between metaphor and metonymy, the "discourse of *Tender Buttons* plays with, and against, the oppositions between similarity and difference, substitution and predication, which correspond to the fundamental operations of language" (136), according to Jayne Walker in her commentary on Stein's poetry. It is evident that one of Stein's primary purposes is to play with language as indicated by such seemingly nonsensical passages as the opening of the poem "Breakfast"-- "A change, a final change includes potatoes. This is no authority for the abuse of cheese. What language can instruct any fellow" (41) -- lines which are characteristic of the whole of the section on "Food."

Although Walker's arguments focus on the role of metaphor and metonymy in the poems rather than on the poems' connection with food, they reflect the difficulty of classifying particular operations as either metaphoric or metonymic that was evident in the preceding disagreements between literary theorists, and thus reinforce the parallel between cooking and metaphor and metonymy as problematic. Walker draws attention to the roles played by metaphor and metonymy in these poems, arguing that "Stein's writing changed from *metonymic* -- characterized by an avoidance of naming (specific nouns are replaced by general ones) -- to *metaphoric* in which speech consists of nothing but names -- conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, auxiliaries -- all the connective signs of discourse disappear" (127). Comparing Stein's style to that of cubism, Walker also argues against the association of the poems with Jakobson's contention that cubism is metonymic, making use of the convention of synecdoche, and instead argues

that in Stein's work individual signs are metonymic, but syntax is metaphoric (127).

Although I agree that the poems place a certain emphasis on experimenting with the principle of substitution, I would disagree with Walker's assessment of the poems' syntax as metaphoric and argue instead that the play of substitution takes place within a metonymic structure which in many cases upholds grammatical rules of combination. There are many instances of clauses which follow the rules of syntax: "The difference is that a plain resource is not entangled with thickness and it does not mean that thickness shows such cutting, it does mean that a meadow is useful and a cow absurd" (Roastbeef 33); "A reason for bed is this, that a decline, any decline is poison" (Sausages 52). Similarly, even entire sentences are often syntactically "correct": "In the evening there is feeling" (Roastbeef 33); "George is a mass" (Eating 56). The organisation of the poems, following a traditional structure of sentences following one another, suggests that metonymy continues to play a central role in Stein's work, a point that would have been more difficult to argue had Stein, for example, placed words randomly on the page without any indication of an order in which they should be read.

Later in her study, Walker herself appears to support my assessment and contradict her earlier statement when she suggests that "in *Tender Buttons*, the play of substitution or combination takes place within the grammatical rules of sentence formation; this is what makes the text so subversive" (141). I believe that what Walker's seemingly contradictory statements indicate is the degree to which attempts to draw a firm line between metaphor and metonymy are inherently problematic. The fact that this possibility is illustrated by Stein's poems about food brings together the similar roles of food preparation and metaphor/metonymy in their resistance

to binary classification. One of the concepts which best illustrates this intersection is that of juxtaposition, a device that Walker sees as "the characteristic method of the 'still lifes' in *Tender Buttons*" (127).

Juxtaposition by its very nature employs metonymy, creating a chain of objects or ideas, and its purpose is usually comparison, often with the aim of proposing similarities. Thus juxtaposition functions both metonymically and metaphorically and the one function is virtually inseparable from the other.

The difficulty of disentangling these two terms and the role played by cooking and food in contributing to the muddle is further illustrated by examples from some of the other films and texts about cooking. Tarquin Winot's enumeration of the various forms of fish soup in *The Debt to Pleasure* -- from the *bouillabaisse* of France to Portuguese *caldeirada*, Greek *kakavia*, and Basque *ttoro* -- is a classic example of the deconstruction of the metaphor/metonymy binary since the contiguous linked steps of the archetypal recipe provide a foundation for the substitution of ingredients indigenous to particular countries and regions.

In the case of *Like Water for Chocolate*, one of its most obviously metonymic themes, and one that appears in several other works, is the continuity of familial and generational lines. In Esquivel's text, the continuum of women, perhaps best represented by the final scene of the film in which Tita, her niece and grand-niece appear in the kitchen together, connected by Tita's cookbook, is inextricable from the metaphoric substitution of women that occurs earlier in the story -- Mamá Elena's substitution of Rosaura for Tita as Pedro's wife, provides one example while another is the substitution of Tita for Rosaura after the birth of Roberto when it is the child's aunt who nurses him rather than his biological mother. This substitution, intimately connected to food and feeding, is similar to the way

that Nacha takes responsibility for Tita's feeding when Mamá Elena is unable to breast-feed, and to Tita's later role in caring for her niece Esperanza under similar circumstances. In the case of Tita and Roberto, the effected substitution is more dramatic since it is from her own virgin body that Tita produces food for the child. In the end, both the substitution of Tita for Rosaura and the metonymic chain of generations is required for the unfolding of the story and the recognition of Tita's efforts in dismantling the oppressive family tradition.

The chain of generations is also a factor in blurring the divide between metaphor and metonymy in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Through the establishment of the Homesick Restaurant, Ezra attempts to create a substitute for family and the space of the home with his menu of family dinners like pot roast, the motherly attitudes of the staff, and the tendency toward nurturing epitomised by the replacement of a customer's order of Smithfield ham with okra stew: "With that cough of yours, I know this will suit you better" (136). The restaurant is not entirely structured on metaphor, however, since one of Ezra's primary goals is to have his own family complete a meal there, using the restaurant as the catalyst for the reconnection of sometimes distant family members. The novel's final scene in which the substitution of the long estranged Beck for the now dead Pearl seems to permit the family to finish an entire meal together for the first time is itself dependent on metonymy through the connection between Beck and Pearl preserved in her address book, and highlights the contiguity of generations by making reference to the physical similarities which link grandfather Beck to son Cody and grandson Luke.

For the father in *The Wedding Banquet*, encouraging the production of a grandchild to carry the family name is his primary preoccupation, a dream

whose realisation is complicated by the fact that his only son is -- unbeknownst to him -- homosexual, an orientation which some may view as itself an example of substitution. In an effort to dissuade his parents from their repeated attempts to find him a wife, son Wai-Tung stages a wedding to Wei-Wei, a tenant in one of his apartment buildings. Thus Wei-Wei acts as a substitute for Wai-Tung's partner Simon and for the "real" wife envisioned by the parents. The occasion that complicates the metaphoric ruse is the parents' insistence that they attend the wedding and the staging of an elaborate banquet, an event that ushers in the intrusion of the metonymic chain in the form of a grandchild conceived on the night of the wedding, partly or wholly due to Wai-Tung's overconsumption of wine. With the announcement that Wei-Wei, Wai-Tung and Simon will all participate in the raising of the future child, the connection between metaphor and metonymy is maintained with the child representing the chain of generations and Simon acting, in the eyes of the parents, as a substitute for the wife they hoped for Wai-Tung.

The film *Big Night* draws particular attention to familial metonymy in the naming of the title characters, Italian brothers Primo and Segundo. The primary instance of substitution in the film is that of cultures, when the brothers attempt to transplant the food of Italy to their adopted America. Segundo, the businessman to Primo's chef, proposes a further substitution, replacing some of Primo's authentic Italian recipes with a collection of dishes more in line with American tastes. In a memorable scene, Segundo suggests removing risotto from the menu, citing its cost and lengthy preparation time and Primo angrily and sarcastically responds that perhaps hot dogs would be a good replacement. In some ways this incident is indicative of the roles played by the brothers throughout the film as Primo seems to be the voice of

metonymic connection to tradition and to Italy while Segundo is more interested in substitution, from the dishes served in the restaurant to his juggling of two girlfriends. Although Segundo ends by siding with his brother's insistence on artistic integrity against the film's chief proponent of substitution, neighbouring restaurateur Pascal whose philosophy is to "give people what they want, then later give them what you want," it is unclear whether the ending of the film suggests an integration of metaphoric and metonymic poles, or, more likely, the triumph of metonymy when Primo proposes a return to Italy and work in their uncle's restaurant.

The status of women as food sets up not only a link between women, food preparation, and feeding, but also suggests the deconstruction of metaphor and metonymy since "woman as food" is both a metaphor and expresses the contiguous link between the female body and life-sustaining nourishment. In *The Edible Woman*, protagonist Marian bakes a cake in the shape of a woman and offers it to her fiancé to replace the self which Marian believes he is attempting to consume: "'You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you,' she said. 'You've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you really wanted all along, isn't it? I'll get you a fork'" (284). Although the cake is offered as a substitute, an offer which fiancé Peter rejects in horror, it does not serve a purely metaphoric function. The fact that Marian has prepared it suggests a metonymic link to her person, and the reintegration of the two selves which Marian became after her engagement when she began to refer to herself in the third person, a reintegration which is actualised by her eating the cake, reinforces the connective aspect of Marian's alimentary substitute.

In the film *Tampopo*, one of the primary examples of substitution is the replacement of the traditional male noodle cook with the female

Tampopo, a change which is highlighted visually by the gradual exit of her male teachers from her restaurant, leaving her as the central focus in a sea of customers. Her position in the chain of women as food preparers and providers, however, is metonymic, a connection which is highlighted by the film's closing scene in which an extended close-up of a woman breast-feeding follows on the heels of Tampopo's success in her attempt to become the best noodle cook in Japan. The juxtaposition of two scenes is itself a cinematic convention which integrates elements of both metonymy and metaphor.

Finally, *Fried Green Tomatoes* also features the substitution of a female character, in this case the elderly Ninny who takes the place of Evelyn's late mother. The development of their relationship is facilitated by Evelyn's cooking when she visits Ninny in the nursing home bearing gifts of food that are both metaphoric and metonymic. On the side of substitution, the food Evelyn prepares stands in for the dishes Ninny remembers from the Whistle Stop Café, "a plate of perfectly fried green tomatoes and fresh cream-white corn, six slices of bacon, with a bowl of baby lima beans on the side and four huge light and fluffy buttermilk biscuits" (355). This same food, however, has a metonymic function, for although it is prepared by different women, generations apart, it is made from the same ingredients, using the same techniques, thereby establishing a link between this particular meal and many others like it that have come before.

Thus, many of the very principles according to which cooking operates appear to bear some relation to the practices of substitution and combination characteristic of metaphor and metonymy. Although Revel's discussion of international versus regional cuisines sets out a distinction between the application of metaphoric and metonymic elements, other models such as those of Douglas and Barthes indicate the degree to which substitution and

combination work together in cooking and eating, and evidence from the literary works suggests how difficult it can be to draw a line between where substitution ends and combination begins, or vice versa. Stein's food poems illustrate the interdependence of both concepts, as does the analysis of virtually any linguistic passage, a situation foregrounded by disputes between critics as to the very definitions of metaphor and metonymy. While the relation of cooking to these literary forms may not be the first or the most definitive example of their deconstruction, such an analysis does provide yet another example of food preparation's capacity to dismantle traditional binary oppositions.

CHAPTER FIVE

COOKING AND ARTISTIC GENRES

The association of cooking by prominent chefs with artistry is not a recent phenomenon. In the nineteenth century, albeit in the context of mocking the then current practice of highly architectural pastry-making, the famous chef Carême pronounced that "*Les Beaux-Arts sont au nombre de cinq, à savoir: la peinture, la sculpture, la poésie, la musique, l'architecture, laquelle à pour branche principale la pâtisserie*" (Revel 256). Films and literary texts which focus on cooking often draw an analogy between cooking and art: i.e., the connection with visual art indicated by the decorative presentation of dishes; the prominent place assigned to visual art and sculpture in the dining rooms of films such as *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* and *Big Night*; and the portrayal of underappreciated cooks as thwarted artists in narratives like *Babette's Feast*. Whether or not cooking is considered a form of artistic expression, it does share certain characteristics with more established artistic genres, and may shed some material light on theoretical debates surrounding the "sister arts" and their relation to one another.

Discussion of the relationships between the various artistic genres, and their proper subjects, techniques, and practices (also referred to as interarts theory), extends back well into the past and encompasses political as well as aesthetic dimensions. One of the founding fathers of this critical approach was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, whose *Laocoön* seeks to define the distinctive realms of visual art and poetry and explain the practical and aesthetic considerations which restrict what the various genres may and may not

attempt to represent. At the heart of Lessing's treatise is the distinction between space and time. As he sees it,

painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time, and if these signs must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while signs that follow one another can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive. (78)

Explaining the process earlier, he argues: "in the one case the action is visible and progressive, its different parts occurring one after the other in a sequence of time, and in the other the action is visible and stationary, its different parts developing in co-existence in space" (77).

Inherent in Lessing's mapping of the spheres of poetry and painting is not only division and classification, but also a fundamental inequality, a hierarchical ranking of the two genres. The language he uses in his discussion categorises poetry and painting as separate and unequal both in terms of the scope of their respective spheres and in the quality of their subjects. As Lessing sees it, "the poet can raise to this degree of illusion the representation of objects other than those that are visible. Consequently, whole categories of pictures which the poet claims as his own must necessarily be beyond the reach of the artist" (76). In terms of the sheer variety of representable subjects, Lessing not only assigns to painting the smaller share, but then goes on to consider the implication of this division: "if the lesser cannot contain the greater, it can itself be contained in the greater. In other words, if not every trait used by the descriptive poet can have as good an effect on the painter's canvas or sculptor's marble, could not every trait of the artist be equally effective in the poet's work?" (41). While he then suggests that this is something that verbal artists should not always attempt, his belief in the greater powers of poetry is reflected in his

observation that painting "must be content with coexistent actions or with *mere bodies*" (77 emphasis mine), a dismissal of those elements connected with the body and with physicality that recalls earlier discussions of the lower status assigned to the proximity senses and their bodily association. As if the "natural" advantages of poetry did not provide it security enough, moreover, Lessing feels the need to add an admonition against coveting, suggesting that if "painting claims to be the younger sister of poetry, at least she should not be a jealous sister and should not deny the older one all those ornaments unbecoming to herself" (54).

While Lessing's unequal distribution of resources may be somewhat troubling, of greater interest to a discussion of cooking and interarts theory is his insistence on maintaining the arts in their rightful places and his concerns about the effects of attempts at border crossing. His lengthy elaboration of the proper spheres of poetry and painting already points to the importance Lessing places on separating the genres. He emphasises this further using the analogy of friendly neighbours who

do not permit the one to take unbecoming liberties in the heart of the other's domain, yet on their extreme frontiers practice a mutual forbearance by which both sides make peaceful compensation for those slight aggressions which, in haste and from force of circumstance, the one finds himself compelled to make on the other's privilege: so also with painting and poetry. (91)

What little room for transgression Lessing permits is described in his reference to the secondary subjects of artistic representation, the ability of painting to imitate actions and of poetry to depict bodies "only by suggestion" (78), possibilities to which he devotes little attention.

W.J.T. Mitchell's *Iconology* is a study of the nature of images and of the ideological foundations which underlie the way the pictorial arts have been classified and evaluated. He believes that the "history of culture is in

part the story of a protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs, each claiming for itself certain proprietary rights on a 'nature' to which only it has access" (43). Among the well-know theorists at which Mitchell takes aim is Lessing, citing, among other things, Lessing's admiration for Simonides of Ceos whose loaded statement, "painting is dumb poetry and poetry speaking painting" can be traced back to the early days of what Mitchell sees as a bias against the image (48). Mitchell believes that the "aim of Lessing's laws of genre, then, is clearly not to make the spatial and temporal arts separate but equal, but to segregate them in what he regards as their natural inequality" (107), an inequality whose origins lie in ethnic and cultural divisions as represented by "the cultural map of Europe [Lessing] draws in *Laocoön*" (105), and in his recourse to "proper sex roles" which situate men as the speaking subject and women as the silent image (109).

The bulk of Mitchell's disagreement with Lessing, however, arises from the very fact of Lessing's argument for the separation of the arts. Mitchell first criticises Lessing's dismissal of painting's depiction of actions through bodies and poetry's depiction of bodies through actions as existing only "by suggestion," a distinction which Mitchell feels hangs "on the slender thread of the difference between primary and secondary representation, direct and indirect expression" (101). Mitchell then goes on to argue that "if it is only a matter of degree of effort that holds poetry and painting in their proper domains, then it is clear that this distinction cannot be the basis for any rigorous differentiation of *kind*" (102), concluding that attempts to argue for an inherent difference between the genres reveals the more political motivations of the painting/ poetry division: "The argument from desire has to be underplayed, of course, because it only makes sense when it is clear that the argument from necessity has failed. There would be no need to say that

the genres *should not* be mixed if they *could not* be mixed" (104). As he sees it, therefore, rather than elaborating some pre-existing categorical distinction, Lessing's division serves as a personally and culturally biased system for maintaining the inequality of the arts by influencing "the formation of value judgments, canons of acceptable works, and formulations of the ideological significance of styles, movements, and genres" (103).

Mitchell, however, would not be satisfied by either the reversal of Lessing's artistic hierarchy or by some kind of equalisation of the status of poetry and painting since the heart of his argument is the impropriety of attempting to posit or maintain divisions between the arts. He believes that a "poem is not literally temporal and figuratively spatial: it is literally a spatial-temporal construction. The terms 'space' and 'time' only become figurative or improper when they are abstracted from one another as independent, antithetical essences that define the nature of an object" (103). More than that, he argues that "the tendency of artists to breach the supposed boundaries between temporal and spatial arts is not a marginal or exceptional practice, but a fundamental impulse in both the theory and practice of the arts" (98).

Although I have been focusing specifically on Mitchell's argument with Lessing, in *Iconology* he also investigates the treatment of the image by a variety of theorists and singles out other writers who warn against the adulteration of artistic genres. For example, Mitchell aligns Edmund Burke's categories of the sublime and the beautiful with the same sex role differentiation that informs Lessing's divisions, arguing that sublimity, "with its foundations in pain, terror, vigorous exertion, and power is the masculine aesthetic mode. Beauty, by contrast, is located in qualities such as littleness, smoothness, and delicacy that mechanically induce a sense of pleasure and affectionate superiority" (129). He also takes issue with Suzanne

Langer for her claim that "there are no happy marriages in art -- only successful rape" (86), a statement he sees as ideologically grounded "in categories of gender" (55), just as he objects to her belief that "the distinction between painting and music, or poetry and music, or sculpture and dance -- are not false, artificial divisions due to a modern passion for pigeonholes, but are founded on empirical and important facts . . . it means that there can be no hybrid works" (Langer 81-82). Mitchell's unequivocal argument in his subsequent book, *Picture Theory*, that "all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no 'purely' visual or verbal arts" (5), leads him to conclude that what motivates Lessing and other theorists of art is the fear that the "adulteration of the arts, of the genres, is an incitement to the adulteration of every other domestic, political, and natural distinction" (109).

My focus thus far on Mitchell's dismantling of artistic genres has obvious connections to the kind of binary deconstruction that is one of the roles of cooking in film and literature. What may be less obvious, and therefore the next subject that needs addressing, is the connection between art and cooking: how can an investigation of the role of food preparation comment on theories of art, and vice versa? Before I make any kind of argument for similarities between cooking and art, I want to make clear that any connections drawn between the two realms are not made with the intention of fitting cooking neatly into the "art box." Expanding on Mitchell's belief that all media are mixed media, I think that the mixture can also include elements of other traditional artistic binaries such as the separation between art and science and art and craft. Some of the critical positions which I will examine conclude that cooking cannot be an art precisely because of the distinction between art and craft, a position which I intend to argue against

not for the purpose of permitting cooking membership into art's exclusive club, but rather with the aim of disbanding the club altogether.

Among definitions of the aesthetic, there are surprisingly few references to cooking and food. Food is obviously an important subject in both the visual and verbal arts, but it seems to exist below the radar of most recent theorists of art. There are, however, a few references to cooking and eating in Lessing's *Laocoön*, including the opinion that the depiction of the gods at a banquet is better rendered in painting than in poetry (72), and a reference to a statement by Alexander Pope in which he calls "a purely descriptive poem a banquet of nothing but sauces" (89-90). More significant perhaps, is the section that deals with the reaction of disgust which accompanies exposure to ugliness, ugliness being, according to Lessing, an inappropriate subject for art. Although he does argue against the idea that repulsive objects become unbearable to the sense of sight "only through the association of ideas in that we recall the repugnance which they cause to our sense of taste or smell or touch" (131), (such a statement is strikingly similar to his argument about painting expressing action by suggestion through bodies, etc.), his ultimate purpose is again to rank the senses. Thus he argues that the level and duration of visually inspired disgust is less than that prompted by the senses of smell, taste, or touch due to the fact that

our sense of sight perceives in them [the disgusting objects] and with them a number of realities whose pleasant images weaken and obscure the unpleasant ones to the point where they can have no noticeable influence on the body. On the other hand, taste, smell, and touch, our lower senses, cannot perceive such realities while they are being affected by something repugnant; hence repugnance is left to work alone and in its full strength. (131)

Two other references in Lessing's writing also connect eating with the ugly, the first directly in a description of how poetry, since it cannot arouse in

the reader the actual feeling of hunger, instead expresses "an extreme degree of hunger only by enumerating all the unnutritious, unwholesome, and particularly disgusting things with which the stomach must needs be satisfied" (135), the second by association in what Lessing perceives to be the "most repulsive effect" of the open mouth in visual art (17). Although the reference to the open mouth is made specifically with regard to the statue of the Laocoön, in which the mouth would be open in a scream of anguish, the open mouth nonetheless has close ties to the practice of eating.

Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* provides another example of references to food made in the context of a treatise on aesthetics. In his "Introduction on Taste," while Burke makes an initial effort to enumerate similarities between the gustatory meaning of the term and the ability to make appropriate judgements on matters of artistic appreciation, by the midpoint of the chapter he is asserting the inferiority of taste in the physical sense, as when he argues that "the pleasures of the sight are not near so complicated, and confused, and altered by unnatural habits and associations, as the pleasures of Taste are; because the pleasures of the sight more commonly acquiesce in themselves; and are not so often altered by considerations which are independent of the sight itself" (15), a reference made after a discussion of acquired taste as a deliberate perversion of what is naturally pleasing.

Burke's comments about the inferiority of the sense of taste introduce another facet of the discussion of the relationship between cooking, food and art, that being critical arguments both for and against the inclusion of food preparation in the category of artistic creation. In "La parole mangée," Louis Martin indicates the reasons for the nineteenth-century inclusion of cooking within the realm of the artistic: "*La relativisation du beau et la contestation*

des vieux canons qui le codifient permettent de canoniser le culinaire. Ce qui est artistement valable est mis en rapport direct avec l'univers des sens. Sensation et sentiment viennent se confondre, et le gout pourra jouer de toute ses gammes, sur tout les fronts" (210). Martin also hints at the kind of boundary blur that is a fundamental aspect of my ideas about cooking when he mentions that "*Sensation et sentiment viennent se confondre*," a situation which sets the stage for the entry of cooking into the artistic sphere.

Another connection between cooking and art is proposed by Lois Banner in an essay entitled "Why Women Have Not Been Great Chefs." As she sees it, the establishment of male chefs in restaurant and estate kitchens arose from a desire for status on the part of the restaurant and land owners, a situation which she compares to that of artisans: "Like artists, chefs have struggled over the centuries to separate their craft from the artisan and servant tradition out of which it grew. To gain increased status and the right to higher remuneration, chefs had to prove that they were different from ordinary cooks and bakers, just as artists had to demonstrate their difference from painters and craftsmen" (206).

Other writers, however, are more concerned with drawing a distinction between the culinary and the artistic. Carl Rietz's *A Guide to the Selection, Combination and Cooking of Foods* is an attempt to establish cooking as a science, to which end he has created the "Gustametric Chart," a kind of culinary graph with which, by starting out with a primary ingredient, the aspiring cook can, merely by drawing a straight line, determine the appropriate seasonings and secondary ingredients to accompany it. From Rietz's perspective, although cookery "is called an art -- this volume considers it as an applied science. Many cookery procedures followed today are not scientific but are based on folklore, customs, habits, and styles. These

bases must be replaced before processors and appreciators of food can be properly trained" (2:15). Stephen Mennell, in contrast, prefers to locate cooking within the realm of craft. In *All Manners of Food*, Mennell suggests that there are "problems in drawing an analogy between a great dish and a great work of art -- fond as chefs have been of the idea -- because dishes, being constantly eaten, have always had to be constantly reproduced" (318). Raymond Gibbs also distances cooking from traditional forms of art in "Process and Products in Making Sense of Tropes," when he discusses the metonymic relationship between a work of art and the name of the artist, as in the example "I saw a Jasper Johns yesterday." Arguing that "not any product can be referred to by the name of the person who created the product," Gibbs points to the inappropriateness of saying "Mary was tasty" in reference to a cake that Mary made (259). As he sees it, the reason for the difference is the widespread belief in our culture that "the distinctive value of a work of art is due uniquely to the genius of the individual who created it. But we do not normally believe that such a relationship always holds between a cake and the person who baked it" (259).

In order to determine if and how cooking can be regarded as an art in the traditional sense, it may be worthwhile to investigate some definitions of the artistic or the aesthetic and the degree to which cooking falls within and deviates from these positions. Let us consider, for example, Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art*, in which he argues that the "aesthetic experience is dynamic rather than static. It involves making delicate discriminations and discerning subtle relationships, identifying symbol systems and characters within these systems and what these characters denote and exemplify, interpreting works and reorganizing the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world" (241). He also states that "the

aesthetic is directed to no practical end, is unconcerned with self-defense or conquest, with acquisition of necessities or luxuries, with prediction and control of nature" (242). Working with these definitions, one can see many ways that cooking and eating could be considered artistic. It is hardly a stretch to argue that the aesthetic experience of eating involves delicate discriminations and discerning subtle relationships, in this case between tastes and ingredients, identifying symbol systems (for example, French cooking), and characters within these systems (champagne, *pot au feu*), and what these characters denote and exemplify (luxury, and the comfort of hearth and home, respectively). In terms of "reorganizing the word in terms of works and works in terms of the world," previous passions for "nouvelle cuisine" and "fusion" styles have left their mark on both restaurant and home-cooked fare throughout the world, although neither was as transformative as the now ubiquitous Golden Arches, while the increase in globalisation through communications technology and economic interdependency is likely in part responsible for the increase in the popularity of "ethnic" foods in various countries.

Goodman's comments about the necessity that the aesthetic be directed "to no practical end," however, seem more difficult to reconcile with a practice as intimately connected with basic survival as is cooking, although actually there are at least two ways to approach this obstacle. First, one can argue that indeed there is an element of cooking that is directed to no practical end, such as the elaborate presentation and decoration as well as the consumption of food for non-nutritional purposes, exemplified by everything from the binge and purge of the Roman vomitoriums to the lovely but unnecessary chocolates presented on special occasions. One of the drawbacks of this approach, however, is that it would appear to maintain a division

between most of the cooking done in the home, and that carried out in restaurants, perhaps assigning the former to the sphere of craft and the latter to that of art. A second converse way of addressing the seeming disqualification of cooking by reason of its practical aspects is put forward by Michael O'Toole in *The Language of Displayed Art*, when he argues that the "most glaring contradiction at the heart of art history is the theory that Fine Art is timeless, use-free and separate from people's everyday needs and concerns -- 'non-functional,' unlike crafts, industrial design and advertising or propaganda posters. And yet art history itself is inextricably linked in all its practices to the values of the market place" (180).

Goodman identifies another element common in definitions of art when in reference to its binary partner, he observes: "the distinction between the scientific and the aesthetic is somehow rooted in the difference between knowing and feeling, between the cognitive and the emotive" (245). In this case, however, Goodman himself deconstructs this perception (in a manner reminiscent of Mitchell's suggestion that a poem is literally a spatial-temporal construction), arguing that "the binary cognitive/emotive prevents us from seeing that in the aesthetic experience, the emotions function cognitively. The work of art is apprehended through the feelings as well as through the senses" (248), a statement whose applicability to cooking is evident to anyone who has experienced the connection between food and memory so central to the writing of someone like Marcel Proust.

Another general definition of the aesthetic is provided by Paul Garvin in "Structuralism, Esthetics and Semiotics" in which he outlines the opinions of the Prague School. According to this formula,

1) In contrast to the practical functions, this [esthetic] function of an object, event, or action attracts attention to itself rather than to the practical purpose it serves in a given social setting. . . . The process

through which the esthetic function manifests itself is that of foregrounding as opposed to automatization. Automatization is the expected occurrence of an object, event or action; foregrounding is its unexpected occurrence, which attracts to it the attention that serves as the defining characteristic of the esthetic function. 2) The esthetic function must be in some way dominant and not just the incidental product of a particular occasion. 3) The kinds of foregrounding that make up the esthetic functioning of an object must be highly structured. (102)

Again, with this example it is not difficult to construct an argument that the more ornamental presentation of food -- the kind found primarily, but not exclusively, in restaurants -- fulfills these requirements from the perspective of visual art. But what if the aesthetic function of food preparation is considered in relation to the other senses? Here again, a case can be made for cooking's admission. For example, various cooking techniques foreground tactility - the necessity that a gravy be smooth rather than lumpy, the desire for breakfast cereal that "stays crunchy in milk." Other aspects of food focus on the sense of smell, for example the aroma of a Roquefort or a Limburger cheese, while food preparation that draws attention to the sense of taste is a commonplace. The very fact that a variety of food preparation techniques have evolved speaks to a concern with matters other than the practical. Why else would roasted meat be chosen over boiled?

In order to make his definition more precise, and perhaps to limit the kind of expansion of what can be considered aesthetic that I have done here with cooking, Garvin makes reference to Mukarovsky's ideas about foregrounding and the aesthetic canon. At the heart of Garvin's argument is another binary opposition since the "notion of foregrounding implies that [the aesthetic function] happens against a background" (103). Beginning with the example of literature, in which "one of the backgrounds is *ordinary*

standard language usage; the other is the particular esthetic canon against which a work is perceived," Garvin goes on to explain:

Mukarovsky's notion of the dual preconditions of foregrounding in literature [which] can serve as the basis for defining the distinction between the "high arts" and folk art, including folk literature. It is reasonable to assume that these preconditions apply not only to literature but to other forms of the "high arts" as well -- it seems that all works of art are perceived as foregrounded against the background of, on the one hand, everyday expectancies, and on the other hand, a given esthetic canon. However, in the case of folklore, the second background of foregrounding would seem to be absent -- in folklore the esthetic canon is usually upheld and not foregrounded, so that foregrounding can be said to occur against a background of everyday expectancies only. (104)

As I see it, however, Mukarovsky's argument appears to hinge not only on the presence of two layers of background, everyday expectancies and a given aesthetic canon, but also on a very slippery definition of both foreground and background. The example of literature given by Mukarovsky seems to set up a system whereby a work which places emphasis on its own aesthetic structure occurs in the context of everyday speech, to which it is contrasted, and the literary canon, to which it is compared and with which it presumably shares some similarities. If we use this same model with the next example, folk art, could it not be argued that its second background is a folk art canon of its own? If this possibility exists, then Mukarovsky's classification of folk art would seem to be specious and the model could in fact be used to create a space for cooking within the sphere of the aesthetic, at least for a kind of specialised cooking which would be foregrounded against the background of "everyday" cooking or perhaps commercially processed foods, and take its place in the culinary canon. If it does not, "because the esthetic canon is usually upheld," then the definition of an aesthetic object would appear to be

tautological -- only those forms of expression already included within the canon of high art are allowed access to the club.

O'Toole provides yet another perspective from which to consider the relationship between cooking and art, when he advances the following definition:

all works of art initiate a never-ending dialogue, and that is why we value them above all other texts produced by our culture. They are always open: open to new insights by different individual viewers, open to new interpretations by different generations and cultures. This openness, however, is not infinite. Our analyses, descriptions and evaluations are to a considerable degree controlled by what is there in the visual text of the painting. Our analysis will depend on a certain degree of technical knowledge and practice at analysing paintings, our description will depend on a certain amount of prior knowledge -- historical, psychological, and philosophical -- and our evaluation will be influenced by our aesthetic training and the sheer amount of practice we have had at relating works of art to certain established norms. (31)

Let us observe what happens when the terminology specific to art is replaced with that of cooking:

all [*dishes*] initiate a never-ending dialogue, and that is why we value them above all other texts produced by our culture. They are always open: open to new insights by different individual [*cooks*], open to new interpretations by different generations and cultures. This openness, however, is not infinite. Our analyses, descriptions and evaluations are to a considerable degree controlled by what is there in the visual text of the [*recipe*]. Our analysis will depend on a certain degree of technical knowledge and practice at analysing [*ingredients*], our description will depend on a certain amount of prior knowledge -- historical, psychological, and philosophical -- and our evaluation will be influenced by our [*culinary*] training and the sheer amount of practice we have had at relating [*dishes*] to certain established norms.

In much the same way, the definition advanced by E.H. Gombrich in *Art and Illusion* -- "art operates within a structured style governed by technique and the schemata of tradition" (376) -- could easily be applied to cooking.

Finally, in *The Limits of Interpretation*, Umberto Eco draws attention to another aspect of "high art" which, in this case, differentiates it from craft. In a distinction that recalls Mennell's opinion that a great dish cannot be considered art because "dishes, being constantly eaten, have *always* had to be constantly reproduced" (318), Eco observes the division set up by the modernists between "art" and "craft":

A good craftsman, as well as an industrial factory, produces many tokens, or occurrences of the same type or model. One appreciates the type, and appreciates the way the token meets the requirements of the type, but the modern aesthetics did not recognize such a procedure as an artistic one. That is why the Romantic aesthetics make such a careful distinction between "major" and "minor" arts, arts and crafts. To draw a parallel with sciences, crafts and industry were similar to the correct application of an already known law to a new case. Art (and by art I mean also literature, poetry, movies, and so on) corresponded rather to a "scientific revolution": every work of modern art figures out a new law, imposes a new paradigm, a new way of looking at the world. (83)

While the issue of repetition would seem to exclude cooking from consideration as an art form, Eco's argument later in the book, that a remake is always a bit different from the prototype and is therefore not a repetition, opens the door for cooking's inclusion in the artistic sphere since differences always arise between versions of the same recipe prepared by two different cooks, as well as between dishes prepared by the same cook on different occasions. Similarly, while the distinction between the correct application of a scientific law and a "scientific revolution" is more difficult to reconcile in the case of cooking, one could argue that actually many canonised works from the realm of "high art" do not meet this requirement either, suggesting that a certain degree of latitude is required in the application of this rule.

Having thus elucidated some of the relationships between cooking and traditional artistic practices, I can now return to the issue with which my

investigation began, namely the degree to which the "art" of food preparation can respond to and inform the debate in interarts theory around the appropriateness of separate genres and domains. By arguing that cooking shares certain characteristics and affinities with "high art," I have hoped to show that these shared characteristics enable cooking to function as an example of how art itself can deconstruct artistic divisions, in particular the opposition between the verbal and the visual. Because cooking is an "art form" that employs not only both time and space but also all of the senses, it provides an excellent point from which to argue against generic divisions, since all of these separations are refused by its practice.

Returning specifically to the distinction between the verbal and the visual, in addition to its appeal to the various senses and its use of both time and space, cooking shares other characteristics with both the visual arts and with writing. In his commentary on the work of Goodman, Mitchell refers to Goodman's idea that the "image is syntactically and semantically dense in that no mark may be isolated as a unique, distinctive character (like a letter of the alphabet), nor can it be assigned a unique reference or 'compliant'. Its meaning depends rather on its relations with all the other marks in a dense, continuous field" (*Iconology* 67). Based on this criterion, cooking shares certain similarities with the visual arts, particularly such practices as baking in which, in the case of a cake, for example, individual ingredients are transformed into a whole in which their individual characteristics are no longer apparent. Gombrich seems to make reference to this condition when he states that every woman "knows that you can no more predict the effect of forms and colors on one another without experimenting than you can know the exact effect of ingredients in a dish without tasting. Both are 'global' impressions that result from the interaction of innumerable stimuli" (310).

At the same time, cooking shares certain similarities with the verbal arts. Commenting on Gombrich's suggestion that "visual images are natural signs" (11), Mitchell discusses his underlying assumption that "in contrast to images which can only represent visible, material objects; [language] is capable of articulating complex ideas, stating propositions, telling lies" (*Iconology* 78), an argument that is reiterated by Maria Renata Mayenowa, in her attempt to distinguish between "Verbal Texts and Iconic-Visual Texts": "Iconic texts seem to be incapable of expressing directly two contents: that of 'it is not true that . . . ' and that of the pronouns 'I' and 'you.'" (134). As I see it, if this distinction is valid, then herein can also be found a way that cooking is allied with the verbal arts. Anyone who grew up in the days of Mock Apple Pie, or Mock Turtle Soup should be familiar with cooking's ability to be duplicitous, as should those living at the dawn of the new millennium when the increasing popularity of vegetarianism in the western world has brought us such products as vegetarian burgers and hot dogs made with vegetable protein, and the holiday favourite, tofurkey. Indeed, cook and cookbook author Bob Blumer has carved a niche for himself in the culinary market by deliberately focusing on the preparation of foods which lie about what they are. His book *Off the Eaten Path* contains a chapter called "Surreal Meals" which features such dishes as "French fries and ketchup" which actually consist of pieces of cake with a raspberry sauce, and "bacon and eggs" made of dark and white chocolate (for the bacon), and "eggs" made of ice cream and tinned peach halves.

If we turn now more specifically to the arts and the way that cooking functions in film and literature, we should note that many works of this kind tend to coordinate cooking and more traditional forms of artistic expression. *Babette's Feast*, for example, draws a parallel between thwarted artists: Babette

who can no longer share the art of her cooking with the audience she had so carefully trained at the Café Anglais, and Philippa who has foregone the promise of a glittering singing career in order to remain with her father and sister. Several films and texts feature cooking in connection with visual artists and their work: in *Big Night* Primo accepts paintings in exchange for meals; Wei-Wei, in *The Wedding Banquet*, trades her paintings for the rent she owes Wai-Tung; and in *The Debt to Pleasure*, Tarquin Winot devotes a good deal of his narrative to discussion of his own and his brother Barry's artistic endeavours. Two other films, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, and *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, deal with a range of artistic forms, the former including not merely culinary concerns but also characters who are involved with music, photography, and computer drawing, while the latter brings together painting, literature and dancing within the restaurant dining room.

Moreover, several of these films undermine Lessing's division between the visual and the verbal arts, and particularly the superior status he assigns to the verbal. Although the ending of *Like Water for Chocolate* suggests that protagonist Tita continues to live through her cookbook, the work also makes clear that it is equally through the *preparation* of her recipes that Tita's memory is preserved, and not merely as a result of their being recorded. The status of writing is further undermined in the novel by the fact that Nacha, Tita's caregiver and first cooking teacher is illiterate, and by the inadequacy of the written word represented by Gertrudis's inability to decipher the recipe for fritters. In *Babette's Feast*, the strategy involves first having one of the members of the congregation refer to the superiority of speech over the more bodily functions of the tongue: "[On] the day of our master we will cleanse our tongues of all taste and purify them of all delight

or disgust of the senses, keeping and preserving them for the higher things of praise and thanksgiving" (27). Babette's cooking, however, negates such a position, first by virtue of its ability to transform the harsh words which the members of the congregation have been using with each other into expressions of kindness and forgiveness, and second, by the fact that eating is able to silence speech, particularly in the case of Lorens Loewenhielm. Remembering his performance as a tongue-tied youth in his attempts to court Martine, Lorens sets out for the feast with the plan to "dominate the conversation" (34) around the dinner table, a feat he accomplishes until the moment when the dishes begin being served, and at which point "he was silenced" (36). When he does regain the ability to speak, he is confronted by the villagers' determination not to comment on the meal, a situation which results in bizarre exchanges in which the logical flow of conversation is replaced by disjointed and unrelated remarks.

Another way that the films and texts work against Lessing's divisions is by bridging the gap between word and image, a practice that is primarily, though not exclusively, the domain of film. The very nature of the filmic medium brings together the verbal and the visual, as well as music and other forms of artistic expression. In *Tampopo*, near the beginning of the film the viewer is presented with the blurring of the visual and verbal realms when Goro reads from a book on the proper way to eat noodle soup, a reading which is accompanied by a visual scene that illustrates Goro's words. *Like Water for Chocolate* provides another example, and in the process demonstrates that this multi-media aspect is not only a function of the film genre. Throughout the novel and, less prominently, the film, can be found a variety of metaphors, many of which compare some aspect of Tita's emotions to a cooking process or food item. A few of the more vivid examples include

Tita's reaction to a smoldering look from Pedro which makes her understand "how dough feels when it is plunged into boiling oil" (14), the anger that causes Tita to feel "her head about to burst, like a kernel of popcorn" (147), and the suggestion that "you can't have a slice without paying for the loaf" (130) in reference to the idea that you have to take the bad with the good. Although some of the metaphors are accompanied by visual representations in the film, it is the metaphors themselves that bridge the divide between verbal and visual, rather than their restatement as images. The combination and interrelation of word and image, so effectively illustrated by the above examples, makes metaphor a "figure" of speech which in and of itself defies the separation of the visual and verbal arts.

Finally, the negative treatment of characters who embrace the divisions between genres is another way that the films and texts about food refuse Lessing's categories. *The Decline of the American Empire* presents the viewer with a host of characters, all but two of whom are academics, whose focus on verbal expression is signaled not only by their professional emphasis on reading and writing, but also by the fact that the entire film centers on their conversations. Mario, one of the two non-academic characters, remarks that the men are, in fact, all talk and no action since after an afternoon during which the men spend all their time talking about sex one would expect the evening to end in an orgy, whereas instead they sit around the dinner table eating, and, once again, merely talking. Although all of these verbo-centric characters appear to be somewhat unhappy and unfulfilled, Danielle and Pierre have been more successful than the others at finding love, a love that has, at its origins, the combination of verbal and more bodily processes. It is only when Pierre first meets Danielle, as her customer at a massage parlour, that he falls in love as a result of being masturbated while at the same time

listening to Danielle talk about history. Another character associated with efforts to maintain divisions between the arts comes to a far more gruesome end than the pervasive malaise of *Decline's* academics. Albert Spica in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, who repeatedly takes away his wife's lover Michael's books saying, "This isn't a library, it's a restaurant," ends up being shot by his wife after being forced to consume human flesh.

In addition to denying the distinction between verbal and visual arts, films and texts that foreground cooking seem concerned with breaking down barriers traditionally used to separate other art forms as well. In *Eat Drink Man Woman*, for example, Gao Luo's photographs of his grandmother who has lost the ability to speak suggest that communication is not limited to words, as does the karaoke singing of the Chu's neighbours and the meals that the Chu family shares. Jai-Chien's explanation that "we communicate by eating; [the neighbours] do it by singing" expands the forms of information and emotional exchange beyond their traditional verbal limits, just as her attempt to find out who is sending her anonymous love letters leads Jai-Jen to consider the connection between the written messages and Ming Dao's karaoke singing.

In Marco Ferreri's *La Grande Bouffe*, not only are there a variety of art forms featured in the house in which the four men are intent on eating themselves to death, they are also introduced in conjunction with episodes of cooking and eating. The men sing while cooking, view slides of naked women while sitting around the dinner table eating oysters, and quiz each other on the quotations of Brillat-Savarin at the same time. Especially interesting is the film's treatment of the role of women as the object of consumption, which in the case of visual art, is traditionally a function of the male gaze, but which here becomes more literal when the men eat cake off of

the body of one of the whores they have invited to dinner, and when Ugo creates Tarte Andrea, using the imprint of schoolteacher Andrea's buttocks as his mold. This blurring of the divide between the visual abstract and the materiality of the body is also reinforced by the film's closing scenes where Philippe eats a dessert shaped to look like a woman's breasts, while gazing at a photo of his dead mother.

The popularity of such hybrid art forms as film, and the move toward multi-sensory and multi-media presentations using computer programs and the internet, speaks to the degree to which popular culture has questioned and rejected the strict segregation of the arts. That this time in history has also seen a corresponding increase in the popularity of cooking on television, in the print media, and also among certain segments of the general population is, I believe, no coincidence. In some ways, the art of cooking is ideally suited to multi-media forms of representation, a condition that may also explain the greater number of films focused on cooking relative to the number of literary texts. In this respect, and given that the internet is a medium concerned with increasing the range of senses to which it can appeal, it is not surprising as Jeffrey Heller notes in an article titled "We'll soon be able to smell the E-mail" that research is currently in progress to enhance such messages with scents, thus enabling the internet to add another facet to film's use of the sights and sounds of cooking. In the end, however, the issue remains not to which artistic genre cooking belongs, but rather the extent to which it destabilises these various categories of belonging.

CHAPTER SIX
GENDER AND SEXUALITY

In her book *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*, Deborah Cameron identifies a thought experiment in which participants were presented with the following pairs of words:

Knife/fork
Ford/Chevrolet
Salt/pepper
Vanilla/chocolate

and were asked to classify them according to the categories masculine and feminine. "Strangely enough," she observes, "people were able to perform this bizarre task without difficulty. Even more strangely, there was near total agreement on the 'right' classification. *Knife, Ford, pepper* and *chocolate* were masculine, while *fork, Chevrolet, salt* and *vanilla* were feminine" (82). Cameron refers to this phenomenon as "metaphorical gender," the practice of classifying common objects along gender lines. As with all binary systems, the determination of which terms belong in the categories masculine and feminine is invested in a particular ideology, in this case, one that associates those items having connotations of power with the masculine, as in the terms "knife" and "Ford." The remaining food terms in the experiment, however, pose more of a problem in interpretation. On the one hand, insofar as salt and vanilla are connected with everyday use, the association of these terms with the feminine may place the female on the lower rung in a binary whose poles are the mundane and the exotic. On the other hand, insofar as salt and vanilla are food items found in any kitchen or bakery, they could be seen as belonging to the category of the fundamental, whereas pepper and

chocolate could be classed in the realm of the non-essential, reversing their positions in the culinary hierarchy.

Problems related to the coding of food items aside, the gender division as it applies to the classification of food and cooking would seem to be an essential element in any discussion of the semiotics of food preparation. In fact, perhaps the most obvious binary associated with food preparation is that of male and female. The traditional role of women as cooks in the home is one manifestation of the degree to which cooking is gendered, as is the higher status assigned to restaurant chefs, most of whom are male. As I have already discussed, the gendered status of cooking has academic as well as social implications; the traditional neglect of cooking as a subject worthy of scholarly investigation is no doubt due in part to its classification primarily as a female activity. A complement to this, as a character in the film *The Decline of the American Empire* bluntly suggests, is the popular stereotype that "gays are better cooks," a statement that likely represents an effort to feminise male homosexuals and that is an extension of the categorisation of home cooking as "women's work." Another recent example of this stereotyping is evident in an episode of the television show *Seinfeld*, wherein the principal male character is suspected of being gay, partly as a result of his penchant for neatness. These examples suggest the important role played by food preparation in issues related to gender and sexuality, as do images in both novels and films that depict women as food, and the ubiquitous metaphorical and literal references to sex as food and vice versa.

The kind of gendering that informs attitudes toward cooking is of course also evident in the hierarchical ranking of the senses in general. In *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, for example, Constance Classen discusses how it was "not just perfume which became feminized in the

nineteenth century, however, but the whole sense of smell" (84), an association which comes into play in a sensory hierarchy that functions in such a way that while "groups in the centre -- politicians, businessmen -- are characterized by a symbolic lack of scent, those on the periphery are classified as odorous. Women, for example, are either 'fragrant' or 'foul'" (161). Similarly, in "Sounding Sensory Profiles," Classen and David Howes identify the larger gender ideology when they observe that women and men "are commonly held to perceive the world in different ways, with the male way usually being normative and the female way a complementary adjunct at best, and an aberration at worst" (272), a situation that doubtless informs Howes's opinion that the "opposition between the sexes is, therefore, partly expressed and partly constituted by an opposition between the senses" ("Sensorial Anthropology" 189). Not only does an association with particular senses create a division between men and women in many cultures, but this division is often also used to maintain a gender-based power structure. The supremacy of the male gaze is one example in Western cultures, as is the practice carried out by the Desana people of South America in which the men "maintain their dominant status within their society by claiming transcendent vision and denying women the hallucinogens which are the means of attaining sensory and cultural superiority" (Classen, "Two South American Cosmologies" 254).

If we turn now more directly to the degree to which the structure of gender has been applied to food and cooking, a good example is the appearance and subsequent popularity a decade ago of a book entitled *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche*, just as another example can be found in an episode of *Seinfeld* in which the principal male character is forced to consume a meal of greasy mutton in order to confirm his masculinity after his gender affiliation

is called into question by an earlier occasion when he ordered salad as a main course. More academically, in "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," Roland Barthes discusses elements that must be kept in mind when undertaking a semiotic analysis of food consumption, including that "there are supposed to be masculine and feminine kinds of food" (24), a fact reinforced by Deborah Lupton's listing of foods coded as masculine and feminine in *Food, the Body and the Self*. Lupton provides several examples of the gendering of food, including the categorisation of sweet foods such as chocolate and sugar as feminine, and the typical association of men with "red meat and large helpings of food" (104). As a final example, the association of women with fine food and eating in particular is suggested by Brillat-Savarin when he mentions *Gasterea*, "the tenth muse . . . [who] presides over the enjoyments of taste" (238), and explains that the love of good living is related to good eating:

[It] is in some sort instinctive in women, because it is favourable to beauty. It has been proved, by a series of rigorously exact observations, that by a succulent, delicate, and choice regimen, the external appearances of age are kept away for a long time. It gives more brilliancy to the eye, more freshness to the skin, more support to the muscles; and, as it is certain in physiology that wrinkles, those formidable enemies of beauty, are caused by the depression of muscle, it is equally true that, other things being equal, those who understand eating are comparatively four years younger than those ignorant of that science. (108)

Various other critics have also noted how the gendering of food preparation extends to class discriminations. For example, in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, Deane Curtin and Lisa Heldke note that in many, "if not most cultures, food production and preparation activities are women's work and/or the work of slaves or lower classes" (xiii), a situation also recognised by Mervyn Nicholson in "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others," when he states that women "are

food for infants, and the role of food-provider seems to go along with being servants or power-subordinate figures" (47). Although one might assume that providing food for others would place the cook in a position of power, insofar as it involves controlling that which sustains life, this does not seem to be the case with women who cook in the home. In *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society*, Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil argue that "women are, in effect, in a position of responsibility without authority in relation to food" since, although they are in charge of preparing the family meals, the choice of dishes tends to be dictated by the likes and dislikes as well as the nutritional requirements of the male head of the household (79). Beardsworth and Keil also note a study by Ellis which found that "physical attacks by husbands on their wives are frequently triggered by some aspect of a husband's dissatisfaction with his wife's culinary performance" (84).

As I have already noted, the male/female binary is also evident in the extent to which women have traditionally been, and in most cases continue to be, responsible for food preparation at home, while the vast majority of restaurant chefs are men. Drawing attention to this economic dimension in her introduction to a special issue of *Mosaic*, entitled *Diet and Discourse*, Evelyn Hinz observes that, "when the production of food was shifted to the marketplace, women suffered a decline in power" (vi), a shift also discussed by Stephen Mennell in *All Manners of Food* when he points out that "after the French Revolution, the gap between professional and domestic cookery widened as did the gap in prestige between male and female cooks" (134). Although Mennell attributes the rise of male supremacy in the professional kitchen and the kitchens of the aristocracy to "the origin of the social institution of the court not as a 'private' or 'domestic' household, but as a

military establishment" (201), earlier critics explained the situation by detailing the shortcomings which make women unsuitable for the role. For example, Mennell cites Chantillon-Plessis who, in the nineteenth century, stated that "certainly a woman cook can never give a table the attractive style that a male chef can bring to it. The profession involves fatiguing work that only a man can undertake, and elements of ingenuity which a woman will never know how to carry off" (203). Nor have such arguments totally disappeared, according to Lois Banner, who in her 1973 article "Why Women Have Not Been Great Chefs," suggests that 1970's commentators on culinary matters have similarly argued that "women do not have that taste sensitivity essential to the creation of exquisite soups, sauces and soufflés, that they do not have the managerial skills necessary to oversee a large kitchen, or that they are too concerned about their figures ever to attain fine taste discrimination" (200).

Other suggested reasons for the division between home cooking and restaurant fare involve similar gendering of the public and private spheres. Curtin and Heldke comment on Jean-Francois Revel's distinction between regional and international cuisines (cited earlier in this study), characterising the division as gender based. On the one hand there is that prepared by the "peasant mother," a popular cuisine which,

has the advantage of being linked to the soil, of being able to exploit the products of various regions and different seasons, in close accord with nature, of being based on age-old skills, transmitted unconsciously by way of imitation and habit, of applying methods of cooking, patiently tested and associated with certain cooking utensils and recipients prescribed by a long tradition. . . .

On the other, there is the kind prepared by the "galloping father," a cuisine "based by contrast on invention, renewal, experimentation . . . something in which one is trained or educated, is exportable; it is a true international

cuisine" (125). Another example is from the research of historian Page Smith, who shows how the presumed differing attitudes that men and women have toward sex can also be applied to the culinary realm: "woman's cooking is personal. She cooks for those she loves and wishes to nurture; her cooking is thus sacramental. The famous chef is a culinary artist which is something quite different. He takes pride in the food per se and is able to detach it from the eater" (313).

The association of women with home-cooking also frequently involves regarding them as both a socializing force and in need of such conditioning. In *The Raw and the Cooked*, for example, Lévi-Strauss notes that the metaphorical cooking of individuals is seen as having "the effect of making sure that a natural creature is at one and the same time *cooked and socialized*," and he makes particular mention of "the newborn child, the woman who has just given birth, or the pubescent girl" as members of society who require this kind of processing (336). Similarly in "The Woman Who Came to Dinner: Dining and Divining a Feminist 'Aesthetic'," Eileen Bender draws attention to Simone de Beauvoir's suggestion that "it is in the kitchen that the woman is tutored in 'patience and passivity,' and hypnotized into thinking that cooking is a form of magic or alchemy over which she has no control" (318). To the same effect, in "Japanese Mothers and *Obentos*: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus," Anne Allison discusses the degree to which the demands placed on the mothers of school-aged children in Japan, including preparing an elaborate and carefully presented box lunch, prevented them from working outside the home:

[Such women could not] afford to work in even part-time or temporary jobs. Those women who did tended either to keep their outside work a secret or be reprimanded by a teacher for insufficient devotion to their child. Motherhood, in other words, is institutionalized through the

child's school and such routines as making the *obento* as a full-time, kept-at-home job. (307)

In a somewhat bizarre way, Mennell also inadvertently touches on the socialization issue when he first observes that for "the full-time housewife, and still more for the working wife who in practice usually still has to carry the main responsibility for feeding the family, cooking is certainly not part of 'free time.' It is necessary, unavoidable activity." Then, however, he goes on to qualify such labour: "Yet eating is generally a pleasurable activity, and cooking in anticipation of that pleasure *can* itself be pleasurable" (263). Thus, after first acknowledging that cooking is work, Mennell then seems to distance it from real labour on the grounds that cooking is "fun." As I see it, such arguments constitute a way of trying to convince women that their, in most cases, unpaid and unacknowledged responsibilities constitute hobbies rather than work. Nor can I recall anyone ever arguing that the enjoyment of one's job in such traditionally male-dominated fields as, say, construction or medicine makes them any less like work.

In such a context, then, it is profitable to turn to creative works which attempt to deconstruct such gender binaries, of which Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* provides a particularly instructive example. In this novel, the kitchen is a site of transcendence and transformation as well as the central location for meal preparation. Through the use of magic realism, Esquivel gives a supernatural quality to the cooking carried out by Tita, the novel's protagonist, allowing the preparation of food to move across corporeal boundaries and transfer the emotions of the cook to those whom the meal sustains. Tita's cooking ignores the limits of time and space, life and death, and self and other, and creates an environment in which rigid definitions are replaced by more fluid and hybrid conceptions of the world. It

is in large part through her cooking that Tita is able to resist and present alternatives to hierarchical patriarchal tradition as well as the rigid practices of the de la Garza family.

How successful such attempts at promoting hybridity are in the novel, however, remains a contentious issue. Several critics view the ending of *Like Water for Chocolate* as a return to the status quo of patriarchal discourse since Tita seems willing to sacrifice herself on the altar of heterosexual romance. Is the matriarchy which rules on behalf of patriarchy, as Joan Cammarata describes the social ethos of the novel, a deconstruction of the male/female binary, or does it constitute merely an act of capitulation to a traditional patriarchal order? The glimpse of heaven that is the result of Pedro and Tita being able to consummate their love freely may suggest either that a man is necessary for ultimate fulfillment, or it can be seen as an attempt to overcome the division between male and female.

In order to address such issues, instead of seeing things in terms of the male/female binary it may be more useful to focus on that of masculine/feminine. In terms of their presence in the novel, female characters not only outnumber men, but they are significantly more developed and central to the action. In a text, however, in which behaviour that defies traditional gender roles has a prominent place, I believe that attention to the socially constructed binary masculine/feminine may be more productive than the biologically driven male/female. Although female characters are foregrounded, they run the gamut from those like Rosaura who seem to restrict themselves almost exclusively to the traditional female roles of wife and mother, to Mamá Elena's more masculine behaviour. In keeping with its concern with deconstructing binaries, the novel seems to favour those characters who exhibit a mixture of characteristics rather than

those who rigidly adopt either a masculine or feminine role. In this case, however, the ability of cooking to mediate between roles is less prominent than the indication that those characters who refuse heterogeneity are unable to access the secrets of feeding and the kitchen.

In addition to being unsympathetic characters, Mamá Elena and Rosaura seem to be fairly closely aligned with stereotypical masculine and feminine behaviour respectively. One manifestation of the unsuitability of their polarised roles, one that links gender with food, is their inability to feed and sustain their children. While feeding and nurturing are behaviours traditionally associated with the feminine, the inability to carry out these tasks seems to cross gender lines in the text as Mamá Elena and Rosaura both find it impossible to breast-feed. In the case of Mamá Elena, it is the shock of her husband's death, a situation that propels her into the traditional male role of head of the household and provider for her family, that causes her milk to dry up. She is only too happy to have Nacha take over the feeding of the infant Tita, for "she had enough to do between her mourning and the enormous responsibility of running the ranch -- and it was the ranch that would provide her children the food and education they deserved -- without having to worry about feeding a newborn baby on top of everything else" (5). For Rosaura, the absence of milk is not connected to masculinity since her status as recent wife and new mother instead foregrounds her femininity. Thus it may be her association with rigidity and division which is the cause of the inability to nourish rather than her particular gender identification, a reliance on rigid gender roles which also applies to Mamá Elena.

Another character who is closely aligned with both traditional gender roles is Gertrudis who alternates between feminine and masculine lifestyles as she moves from dutiful daughter to whore, on to army general, and finally

ends up as wife and mother. Her lack of skill in the kitchen is evident during both her masculine and feminine phases. As children, both she and Rosaura spend little time in the kitchen: "they were terrified of it" (6). In the case of Rosaura, the situation persists into adulthood where her one documented attempt to cook after her marriage results in a meal in which "the rice was obviously scorched, the meat dried out, the dessert burnt" (46-47), while Gertrudis's inability to make sense of cookbooks and make the syrup for her fritters is further evidence of the incompatibility of cooking and rigid gender identification. Similarly, the fact that it is the cooperation of Gertrudis and her subordinate Treviño which is necessary for culinary success can be seen as an indication of the importance of the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics in an accomplished cook. What is especially notable in this case is the fact that the sex of the characters who exhibit gendered behaviours is the opposite of what one would expect. Gertrudis's position as an army general codes her as masculine, and although the story of the revenge killing paints him as a cold-blooded killer, Treviño's subordinate position as well as the description of him as elegant and emotional (190) lend a feminine element to his character.

While arguments can be made for the gender alignment of Mamá Elena, Rosaura and Gertrudis, what are we to do with Tita? One might argue that she is able to accomplish an integration of both genders insofar as she exhibits feminine behaviour when she nurtures the members of her family, and masculine traits when she attempts to defy her mother's authority, complemented by situations in childhood when she bests the boys in a swimming competition and bravely rescues her sisters from runaway horses (36). In this way, her composite character seems to support the argument that those who are accomplished in the kitchen embody hybridity.

The suggestion also exists, however, that her hybrid status is achieved at the expense of her sexuality, raising the possibility that it is, in fact, not polarised gender identification but rather the expression of sexuality which interferes with the ability to cook. Maria de Valdes attributes Tita's repressed sexuality to Mamá Elena's "imposition of a routine and continuous work in the house [which] has the superficial result of desexualization of the highly charged situation that comes about when the newly wed Pedro and Rosaura take up residence in the ranch with Mamá Elena and Tita" (*Questioning* 235). In any case, regardless of the origins of the repression, the result is that throughout the text, Tita's sexuality is largely suppressed or else manifested in problematic ways. The desire she seems to express is often a reflection of Pedro's feelings: the heat that invades her body the first time they meet is caused by "the look Pedro gave her . . . That look!" (14), and his gaze is also responsible for transforming Tita's breasts "from chaste to experienced flesh, without even touching them" (65). As well, the metaphors used to describe her feelings are most often those in which she is an agent acted upon by outside forces. For example, under Pedro's gaze she understands "how fire transforms the elements, how a lump of corn flour is changed into a tortilla" (65). Tita also expresses fear of objects intimately connected with sexual reproduction -- the testicles of the castrated roosters (another example of the association of desexualization with food), and chicken eggs (26, 25). Finally, the situation which distances her most tellingly from sexuality is also one which is closely tied to food -- the fact that she is able to breast-feed Roberto in spite of never having given birth.

Rather than serving as an example of cooking's ability to mediate between the sexes, Tita *herself* represents the medium, the vehicle through which Pedro's sexual feelings are reflected and through which the guests at

Esperanza's wedding are propelled to express their desire. Her liminal status, however, does not appear to fashion her as hybrid, partaking of elements of both male and female sexuality, but rather as sexless. Although Gertrudis is declared to be the medium during the incident involving the quails in rose petal sauce, she is not the bridge transferring desire from one party to another, but rather the final repository for Tita's feelings. It is Tita through whom desire passes and then emerges elsewhere in another form. According to De Valdes, "the preparation of food is directly linked to her thwarted sexuality" (*Questioning* 236), just as one should note that as the virgin mother, Tita remains connected with femininity, yet is distanced from female sexuality. Thus, the choice seems to be between exercising her own sexuality and feeding others, a decision which she is not alone in having to make as illustrated by the fact that both Rosaura and Mamá Elena seem to trade off bearing a child for the ability to feed it once it arrives. If there is a binary to be overturned here it is perhaps that of cooking/sexuality, and while it can be argued that by choosing cooking over sexual expression Tita reverses the hierarchy, it is much more difficult to find evidence that the text moves on to a stage where a heterogeneous mixture of the two elements is the result. Tita's final decision to express her sexuality openly and follow Pedro into eternity results in her removal from the kitchen and from life itself.

Cooking also plays a central role in Ang Lee's film *Eat Drink Man Woman*, not surprisingly since food preparation of course has a long history within Chinese culture. In an article on food in early Chinese literature, David Knechtges states that the "proper preparation of food certainly has been a major preoccupation of the Chinese since remote antiquity" (49), and K.C. Chang brings out the importance of food and its preparation as a highly-coded system when he asserts that the Chinese "inevitably use food -- of which

there are countless variations, many more subtle and more expressive than a tongue can convey -- to help speak the language that constitutes a part of every social interaction. Within each subsegment of the Chinese food culture, food is used again differentially to express the precise social distinctions involved in the interaction" (16). An essay by Madeleine Leininger entitled "Some cross-cultural universal and non-universal functions, beliefs and practices of food," also identifies several ways that food and cooking are used as tools for social interaction:

(1) for nutrition; (2) to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships; (3) to determine the nature and extent of interpersonal distance between people; (4) for expression of socio-religious ideas; (5) for social status, social prestige, and for special individual and group achievements; (6) to help cope with man's psychological needs and stresses; (7) to reward, punish, or influence the behaviour of others; (8) to influence the political and economic status of a group; (9) to detect, treat, and prevent social, physical and cultural behaviour deviations and illness manifestations. (166)

One of the important sign functions of cooking and eating is the role they play in establishing and maintaining power relations, as can be seen in the words of Chan, a Taiwanese man who has divided up his property among his sons and now must depend on them to support him, as reported by Lung-Sheng Sung in "Property and Family Division":

Chan told me that old people are of no use at all. He pointed out that once a father loses control of the family estate he loses his power in the family and sooner or later becomes a burden to his sons. He complained that feeding one's children when they are young is not the same thing as being fed by them when one is old. Eating in a son's home, for example, 'shows you that to receive kindness from sons is more difficult than to give kindness to them. For in your sons' families, you have to watch and listen for what they want you to do. You are not the boss at all. Only when they call you to eat, do you go to eat. (Sung 373)

As this passage illustrates, the role of the eater is associated with powerlessness, while the feeder is the one who controls the situation.

Significantly, the person who wields power in this case seems to be the son and not his wife who does the cooking, a condition that mirrors Beardsworth and Keil's description of woman's role as cook being one of "responsibility without authority" (79).

Such an absence of authority is evident in the powerlessness associated with the role of the eater which is, moreover, closely tied to women in Chinese culture, particularly in the context of the Buddhist religion. The eater is under the power of her senses which are engaged by eating in a way that few other activities are able to equal. Overcoming the power of the senses is one of Buddhism's tenets since the senses, referred to as the five obstacles, are considered impediments to achieving purity, a prerequisite for being reincarnated as a god or Buddha. These five obstacles, viewed in this religious context, are specifically located in the domain of women, and are classified as the "physical limitations" that "made it impossible for a woman to become a Buddha":

The first desire is of the eyes, which desire to gaze upon sensual forms, whether male or female, forms good and beautiful, things jeweled and precious. Or wondrous colors, black, yellow, red and green. The heart engenders pleasure and thus arises the joy of loving. Selfish thoughts arise in one's innermost heart. *Be firm and think! Do not give in to this desire!* Giving vent to reckless rage arouses the Obstacle of Confusion.

The second desire is that of the ear to hear sounds. The rustling of silk or bamboos, or the tinkling of jades. Whether man or woman, singing, chanting, humming, tolling bells, clashing cymbals, gongs, and drums, every kind of sound. Because they all come from the external world, they arouse material desires, and by setting the heart in turmoil, they hide the entrance to the way, thus creating the Obstacle of Ignorance.

The third desire is to smell. The smell of male and female scents, of things to eat and drink, and all grass, trees, flowers, fruit, and forests. All kinds of scents lead the mind to take delight. Thus arises the attachment of desire, which can obstruct the way to enlightenment. Tumultuous thoughts are aroused, and thus is engendered the Obstacle

of Confusion.

The fourth desire is tasting. Sensuous eating and drinking, of milk, sauces, fishes, and meats: boiled, fried, steamed, or raw. Turtle, carp, shrimp, goose, duck, chicken, whether from the water, the land, or out of the sky, sweet, smooth, spicy, soft. In order to feed mouth and stomach - painful slash of the fat flesh -- death at knife's edge upon the chopping block, and passing to the boiling fire, the cause of suffering extreme.

Linked in eternal enmity, through eons and untold eons, hate is harbored in the heart. After death, these feuds and fights are resolved by rebirth, to be fought out in another form, alternately sent to chew and tear at one another. (Seaman 386, emphasis mine)

The initial admonition -- "Be firm and think! Do not give in to this desire!" - is presumably directed at men since we have already been told that it is impossible for a woman to overcome these sensory desires. The fact that women are so closely linked to the senses, however, combined with the obvious power the five obstacles wield (as indicated by the vehemence of the author's command to resist them), suggests a link between women and power that contradicts the powerlessness of the eater. In *The Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva brings out the connection between the abject and the female, specifically drawing a parallel between the fear of "polluted" food and the fear of women's reproductive bodies. In a discussion of Leviticus, Kristeva states that "Dietary abomination has thus a parallel -- unless it be a foundation -- in the abomination provoked by the fertilizable or fertile feminine body" (100). In this way the association of women with eating, and eating (and women) with powerlessness is shown to be a problematic set of classifications, as are many of the divisions that involve food preparation.

The suppression of the female as it is associated with the senses leads us into another contradictory aspect of the semiotics of Chinese cooking since it theorises the removal of the feminine from a practice which at its most

fundamental level is anchored in the principle of balance. In Chinese cooking, the maintenance of an equilibrium between *yin* and *yang* (a system of classification under which many foods, as well as the sexes, are organised) is essential, for "when yin and yang forces in the body are not balanced, problems result" (Chang 10). Not only is the denial of the feminine at odds with the art of cooking, but the very existence of a doctrine advocating sensory deprivation in a culture which, to a large extent, revolves around food, once again highlights the extent to which the status of food preparation is resistant to binary classification.

Turning now from theory specifically to *Eat Drink Man Woman*, we have a telling example of how cooking serves to delineate structures of power in the family and along gender lines. Set in Taiwan, this story of a master chef and his three daughters explores love and relationships within the family and between each of the main characters and a romantic partner. Not only does the title itself indicate that food preparation is an essential component of the film, but also the opening scene which features Mr. Chu at work in his elaborate kitchen in which are arranged the tools and media of his art.

Taking place for the most part in a household consisting of a male parent as sole authority figure and his three adult daughters, *Eat Drink Man Woman's* depiction of cooking is informed to a great extent by issues of gender. While cooking and gender division are problematized in *Like Water for Chocolate*, in the case of *Eat Drink Man Woman* we initially have a fairly strong polarity between who cooks well and who does not. From the very beginning of the film, Chu establishes a strong connection between cooking and the traditional male realm, setting up a framework in which the power to cook (well and under "legitimate" circumstances) is part of the male domain.

Not only is he, the only man in a family of women, the cook at home, but also the restaurant kitchen where he works lacks any female presence. Most of the film's female characters further contribute to Chu's dominion over the art of food preparation, since they either refuse to cook, or undertake the challenge with disastrous results. The poor culinary abilities of his future wife, Jin-Rong -- who herself exclaims, "no one ever finished an entire portion of my short ribs before" -- is surpassed only by those of her mother. Similarly, the lack of distinctiveness in the dishes served by Jai-Ning at the fast-food restaurant is comically suggested when one of her customers returns his food with the words "Hey, I ordered chicken!" -- only to be told "That is chicken," much to his surprise (5). The women also fulfill their roles as eaters, which is particularly evident in the Sunday dinner scenes and in Jin Rong's comment that "we're always taking food home" from the Chus (22).

The only woman in the film who demonstrates any skill in the kitchen is the middle daughter, Jai-Chien, whose ability is indicated when she appears at her boyfriend Raymond's house armed with the ingredients for a sumptuous feast. Also evident from her conversation with Raymond during the meal, however, as well as from a later scene in the hospital with her father's colleague, Old Wen, is the extent to which Jai-Chien's cooking talent has been discouraged by her father. In the hospital, after Old Wen reminisces about her cooking skills, Jai-Chien accuses Chu of banishing her from the kitchen, and although Old Wen insists that Chu has done this for her own good, forcing her to "do something serious with [her] life," Jai-Chien herself attributes her father's actions to his refusal to "conceive of a woman being a real chef" (46).

Among other things, Chu's treatment of Jai-Chien is suggestive of the repression of the "other" by the dominant order. As sexual other, Jai-Chien is

prevented from entering the male bastion that is her father's kitchen, not only an arena for the practice of food preparation, but also a site of power and control. Moreover his mastery is evident not merely in his handling of his tools and ingredients, but his cooking also exerts power over the women around him, as when he is able to bring them all together for the family meal despite their private protests. It is in turn the mastery Jai-Chien demonstrates that ironically necessitates the repression of her cooking abilities. Unlike the other women in the film who cook badly and unhindered, Jai-Chien possesses "power over" food, as emphasized not only by her control over ingredients, but also by her ability to resist eating -- she participates only minimally in the consumption of Sunday dinners and eats nothing at Raymond's house -- and to expel food from her body, as in the scene where she vomits after meeting with Raymond in the restaurant.

Thus, if food preparation's status as signifier of power means that whoever cooks is able to influence those who eat, then just as Chu's cooking is able to maintain (for a time) the traditional family structure -- although the mother is absent, she has been dispatched in a fashion that is "acceptable" to a traditional conception of marriage and family, and Chu has maintained the family in her absence -- so there exists the possibility that Jai-Chien's cooking could derail the entire process. Unlike her father's cooking which seems designed to uphold the family unit, until the end of the film, Jai-Chien's meal preparation takes place illicitly in a context that has an undermining quality. Chu feeds his family at Sunday dinner, a wedding party at the restaurant, and his future daughter, Shan-Shan, at school, and at the restaurant when he sees another chef throwing out untouched dumplings, Chu asks "why don't you take some of that home to your kids?" Jai-Chien's cooking, in contrast, occurs in the home of her lover Raymond, hidden from

the eyes of her family, in the context of a relationship which refuses traditional definitions of both marriage and that of boyfriend and girlfriend since the couple has eschewed love for an almost exclusive focus on sex.

The alliance of cooking with the masculine as embodied by Chu is itself, moreover, seriously undermined by the way that he himself is distanced from the traditional male realm. Not only is he desexualised as is Tita in *Like Water for Chocolate* -- Old Wen tells him "You're as repressed as a turtle" (23) -- but his association with "women's work," as in the scene where he desperately tries to sort out his daughters' laundry (which consists primarily of lingerie), also removes the possibility of classifying him unproblematically as masculine. Moreover, his daughters' resistance to participating in the Sunday meal initially foreshadows the disintegration of Chu's authority, which is later played out when each of his children leaves the house to pursue her own life. Chu's preparations for the dinner at which he will announce his intention to marry Jin-Rong in turn indicate the climax of his loss of control when he drops a wok full of food on the floor and massacres a melon he is attempting to carve. The final straw is Chu's loss of control over himself as he downs cup after cup of wine trying to build up his courage to make the announcement.

Chu's loss of authority, however, does not signal his descent into a position of subservience, but rather frees him to once again act on his desires and enables Jai-Chien to assume a place in her father's kitchen. Just as in the artistic arena, as W.J.T. Mitchell argues, the repression of the other inevitably leads to its return, so a similar situation is signaled by Jai-Chien's return to the kitchen for the preparation of the film's final meal. Her cooking not only releases her from her own status as exile -- in preparing the meal she appears to be happier than she has been throughout most of the film -- but also allows

Chu to stop repressing his own senses, as when Jai-Chien's soup miraculously restores his sense of taste. In this way the film's final scene sets the stage not only for a reunion of father and daughter, but also the restoration of each person to him/herself: the balancing of yin and yang within each of the characters. As Jai-Chien stands beside her father, their hands touch as each holds the precious bowl of soup that has brought them together, a relationship that is emphasised in the film's final words: "daughter" and "father." The image the viewer is left with centers on the return of the prodigal daughter achieved through the medium of food preparation, setting up cooking as a site in which former rivals can rediscover the level of their connection.

By way of now considering more generally the extent to which *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Eat Drink Man Woman* succeed in deconstructing the gender binary, it is helpful to turn to Kristeva's 1981 article, "Women's Time," wherein she discusses the various phases of the women's movement as they relate to the conception of time. She sees liberationists of the first phase as aspiring "to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history" (18) while for the second group, "linear temporality has been almost totally refused" (19). For feminists contemporaneous with the publication of her article, Kristeva sees a third option, "the mixture of the two attitudes -- *insertion* into history and the radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time on an experiment carried out in the name of the irreducible difference" (20). Focusing, then, more broadly on the process of binary deconstruction, she see it as a combination of the first two perspectives which need to be expanded to encompass the conception of difference as a whole:

[What is needed is] the demassification of the problematic of *difference*,

which would imply, in a first phase, an apparent de-dramatization of the "fight to the death" between rival groups and thus between the sexes. And this is not in the name of some reconciliation -- feminism has at least had the merit of showing what is irreducible and even deadly in the social contract -- but in order that the struggle, the implacable difference, the violence be conceived in the very place where it operates with the maximum intransigence, in other words, in personal and sexual identity itself, so as to make it disintegrate in its very nucleus. (34)

Commenting on Kristeva's objective, Thomas Foster observes that "her third moment is one of heterogeneous mixture, not final unity. This departure from traditional dialectics focuses on the category of contradiction as a permanent feature of historical process, not merely a strategic moment within it" (83). Likening this departure to Derridean deconstruction, Foster then goes on to highlight the importance of Derrida's initial phase of *overturning*:

To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a *neutralization* that *in practice* would leave the previous field untouched . . . We know what always have been the practical (particularly political) effects of immediately jumping beyond oppositions. (83)

Thus the process of demassifying difference, of deconstructing binary oppositions, involves two stages, the first of which is the reversal of hierarchies.

Some critics of *Like Water for Chocolate*, Jerry Hoeg in particular, see the reversal of hierarchies as being the ultimate end in the Esquivel text. Others, like Lawless, interpret the text as setting up "not a room of one's own, not a merely public or private self, not a domestic realm -- it is a space in the imagination that accommodates the inside, the outside, and the liminal elements of in between -- a site of community for those who read recipes and those who use them" (233). This emphasis on the incorporation of opposing

elements seems to have the support of Cammarata who concludes that "*Tita sobrepasa los papeles tradicionales femeninas a la vez que ejemplifica una perpetuacion de la tradicion*" (97). Still others view the demassification of the problematic of difference in the novel through the medium of androgyny. Ksenija Bilbija, for example, establishes a link between cooking and alchemy, and suggests that "both activities have a common androgynous [sic] origin in the past" (151), while de Valdes describes Gertrudis as adopting an androgynous lifestyle (*Verbal* 80).

As I see it, however, the specter of androgyny is problematic because of its suggestion of asexuality rather than a heterogeneous mixture of genders, a situation already observed with regard to Tita's repressed sexuality and the initial status of Chu as sexless. Significantly, Kristeva herself draws attention to this kind of danger when she observes: "I am not simply suggesting a very hypothetical bisexuality which, even if it existed, would only, in fact, be the aspiration toward the totality of one of the sexes and thus an effacing of difference" (34). That such a push toward totality does indeed inform de Valdes's discussion of Gertrudis's androgyny can be seen from the extent to which the examples she employs are not indicative of a mixture of gendered behaviours, but rather those exclusively associated with masculinity:

[Gertrudis] leaves home and her mother's authority, escapes from the brothel where she subsequently landed, and becomes a general of the revolutionary army, taking a subordinate as her lover and, later, husband. When she returns to the family hacienda, she dresses like a man, gives orders like a man, and is the dominant sexual partner. (*Verbal* 80)

As for whether the novel itself achieves Kristeva's objectives, insofar as overturning existing hierarchies is a necessary first step toward dismantling them altogether, there are many examples of such overturning throughout the text. Gertrudis's status and role, Tita's rebellion against her mother and

against restrictive sexual mores, and Esperanza's escape from the prohibition of marriage for youngest daughters all represent the overturning of traditional practices in which the greater value was placed on male action, female subservience and chastity, and obedience respectively.

The question of a lasting heterogeneity or demassification of difference is, however, more problematic. In the last encounter with Gertrudis her role is that of wife and mother; in the end, Tita appears to give up everything, including her life, in favour of spending eternity with Pedro; and although Esperanza escapes the family tradition, the alternative she chooses can be seen as merely a change of masters, since she exchanges a lifetime of caring for her mother for one in which husband and children are her charges. Attempting to salvage what she can from Tita's actions, Lawless interprets her self-immolation as "the ultimate female sacrifice of self. This is a consumption of the idea of home, not a consummation. Ultimately, *Like Water for Chocolate* subverts the idea of home as interior/inferior space for women by actually devouring both the home as house and as woman" (232). If we accept this interpretation we could liken it to Kristeva's call for the disintegration of personal identity as well as the overturning if not complete dismantling of the hierarchical binaries connected with the home as woman's place. Lawless supports her position by making reference to the fact that the eternity to which Tita and Pedro travel with the help of the matches is "the divine origin we had lost," a place she likens to Frederic Jameson's "'utopian impulse' that represents a longing for a transformed world where men and women would live together harmoniously" (231). Insofar as Jameson's own view is concerned, however, he too exhibits the dangerous push toward totality, since he goes on to elaborate the values of such a utopia as "the

traditional female values of love, family, and community," values whose gendered status undermines efforts at deconstruction.

In *Eat Drink Man Woman*, the treatment of the demassification of difference is similarly problematic. Although the film does see the overturning of some binary structures, in particular that of male cook and female eater by featuring the reconciliation of father and daughter as its final scene, its ability to sustain such a structure is questionable. The closing scene in which Jai-Chien prepares the family meal is framed by the "Sold" signs which cover the house and which signal that Jai-Chien's presence in the kitchen is temporary, as does the fact that she has accepted a job in Europe and will soon be leaving the country. The status of the three newly formed families at the end of the film also points to the same kinds of problems with regard to sexuality that exists in *Like Water for Chocolate*. Since Jai-Chien, the character most aligned with cooking as the film closes, is also the only family member without a partner or romantic relationship, it would appear that the transfer of the mantle of family cook from Chu to Jai-Chien carries with it the absence of sexuality that is also obvious in Tita's case. It is especially interesting that in both cases, cooking seems to function to control "dangerous" or illicit sexuality in particular, since Tita's desexualisation aims to prevent her from becoming involved with her sister's husband while in Jai-Chien's case, denying her sexuality protects the traditional family structure from the dangers associated with her and Raymond's separation of sex from love.

The seeming impossibility, in these two works, of reconciling cooking and sexuality for both male and female heterosexuals does not, of course, rule out the possibility that other works might integrate cooking and sexual expression, and here we might especially consider those which feature

homosexual characters who are cooks, as in the case of Simon in *The Wedding Banquet*, and Claude in *The Decline of the American Empire*. Although at the outset of the former film, Simon and Wai-Tung are enthusiastic lovers, a situation which might suggest a reconciling of cooking and sexuality, the arrival of Wai-Tung's parents and his "pretend" bride, Wei-Wei, prevent the men from exercising their sexuality, a restriction that is signaled in part by the "de-gayng" of the house before Wai-Tung's parents arrive, part of which involves the removal of objects referring to sex. In *The Decline of the American Empire*, that Claude has an active sex life at first seems to be suggested by his talking about the strong level of desire which sends him out cruising sometimes in the middle of the night. Ultimately, however, the presence of copious amounts of blood in his urine and a later discussion about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases raises the possibility that Claude's sexual adventures have in all likelihood been curtailed by, and may have resulted in, the kind of disease (not only AIDS, but other sexually transmitted diseases as well), which is conventionally regarded as punishment for illicit sexual behaviour.

As much as all these works then seem unable to sustain the demassification of difference and the integration of cooking and sexuality, there is one last possibility that might be explored -- i.e. the degree to which the described objective is postponed but not closed to a future generation. In the case of *Like Water for Chocolate*, for example, although Tita not only abandons her life, but also her kitchen, the site of so much of the deconstruction and border-crossing throughout the novel, the potential for further attempts at binary deconstruction is passed on in the form of the cookbook, an object which permits Tita to cross the border between life and death when others engage in the preparation of her recipes. Perhaps, rather

than representing the devouring of home as Lawless sees it, the fire may be more constructively seen as Tita's final act of cooking, one which transcends the division between life and death not only in the ensuing fertility of the earth, but also in the cookbook which is left behind. It exists as a heterogeneous mixture of the spoken word, transformed into writing and then back into speech as Tita's grand-niece reads the recipes, crossing the borders of time and space, life and death, allowing the reader to discover for him or herself the limits which cooking can transcend.

In the case of *Eat Drink Man Woman*, although Chu has chosen to abandon the kitchen in favour of expressing his sexuality, this choice does not result in death as it does for Tita, just as the transfer of cooking and the deconstructive ability it represents to the next generation is effected by Jai-Chien's movement into the kitchen as well as by the possibilities that exist with the impending birth of Chu and Jin-Rong's child. In his discussion of Kristeva's theories, Foster makes reference to "the repetitive and cyclic character of deconstruction," as well as "contradiction as a permanent feature of historical process" (83). Thus, the legacy of both Tita and Chu is perhaps not a world in which heterogeneity is the norm -- norms, after all, suggest their own hierarchy of value -- but rather the possibility of rediscovering and recreating a fluid conception of time and space, life and death, love and hate, and gender and sexuality through the cooking that brings these seeming polarities together.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Although cooking and eating are most closely related to the preservation of life, since the time of Adam and Eve, and no doubt even before their time in other cultural traditions, eating has also carried with it overtures of death. The binary life/death is one that is fundamental to most cultures, and one that structures many aspects of our daily existence. Our mortality is one of the distinctions that separates us from various deities, as does our need to sustain ourselves by eating. Thus the need to eat, while an essential element of our self-preservation, is also one of the most notable markers of our mortality. Ironically, therefore, one of the elements of Heaven that may not appeal to Christian gastronomes is the absence of food, which, no longer being encumbered with earthly bodies, we will presumably no longer need.

In addition to the story of Adam and Eve, another of the early biblical stories that deals with food and mortality is that of Cain and Abel and the definition of what constitutes an appropriate sacrifice to God. The significance of this story is its introduction of cooking into the life/death binary. As the story goes,

it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and unto his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. (Genesis 4:3-5)

Owing to his disappointment over God's rejection of his offering, Cain ends up killing his brother and being condemned to wander the earth with the mark of the murderer upon him. The fact of having to kill another living

thing for food is one of the hallmarks of the Fall, and in this story, the killing and burning of a sacrificial animal ironically represents the only appropriate way of making atonement for original sin. Unfortunately for Abel, killing begets killing, a pattern commented upon by animal rights activists, among others.

As one might expect, a significant number of critics have studied the seemingly contradictory association of eating with both life and death. For example, referring to the case of Adam and Eve and their eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Carol Dietrich suggests that this "act of disobedience, of eating the fruit, of knowing good from evil, of recognizing their sexuality, led to their expulsion from the garden, their distance from God, and the beginning of Culture" (131). Marta Dvorak in "The Ethno-Semiotics of Food" also connects eating and being distanced from divinity when she discusses the different relationships of gods and mortals to nourishment: "By living on odors and scents, the gods reflect their divine nature -- immaterial and immortal -- whereas by eating meat, humans behave like other animals, behave like and become 'stomachs.' Their need to feed on dead flesh links them to the corruptible, to aging, disease and death" (23). As we have seen in the example of Cain and Abel, however, food and cooking can also function to recuperate mortals into relationships with the gods.

Another example, drawn from Hindu culture, illustrates the role played by cooking and eating in maintaining a productive relationship between gods and human beings, and in the preservation of human life. In rituals that involve presenting gods with offerings of food which are later consumed by the presenters,

human beings ensure the co-operation of the gods in the agricultural

cycle by feeding the gods (which induces them to provide the necessary rainfall and favorable ecological conditions) and eating their leftovers. There is a further sense in which "food is the cosmos" in Hindu thought. This is found in the notion that the individual attains liberation by making him-or herself both eater and eaten. (Pinard 226)

Significantly, the Hindu ritual rests on the kind of binary deconstruction that is the focus of this study.

One of the dilemmas that plagues humans as feeders is known as the omnivore's paradox. As Diane Ackerman observes, on the one hand, we have an advantage over animals which rely on only one food source: "A poor season for eucalyptus will wipe out a population of koala bears, which have no other food source. But human beings are Nature's great ad libbers and revisers. Diversity is our delight"; on the other hand, however, "omnivores are anxious eaters. They must continually test new foods to see if they're palatable and nutritious, running the risk of inadvertently poisoning themselves" (133). A quick glance at the sheer variety of foods regularly consumed in North America suggests that we owe a great debt to our forefathers and foremothers whose experimentation added new foods to our repertoire, sometimes, no doubt, at the expense of a few casualties. Who would have first thought to eat a lobster or uncover the edible parts of the prickly artichoke. Indeed the omnivore's paradox is indicated in the very word "taste" which "has always had a double meaning. The word comes from the Middle English *tasten*, to examine by touch, test, or sample, and continues back to the Latin *taxare*, to touch sharply. So a taste was always a trial or a test" (Ackerman 128).

Obviously what makes the testing of food especially significant is the fact that "man knows that the food he ingests in order to live will become assimilated into his being, will become himself" (Soler 55). The expression "you are what you eat" is literally accurate, and according to Mervyn

Nicholson, while sex "is the means of species reproduction -- the method that a species uses to perpetuate itself. . . . eating is the means of *self*-reproduction - - consuming food is what the individual does in order to reproduce himself. Living and eating are thus metaphorically equivalent" (37). Nicholson also goes on to note that in the same way, food and death

are dialectically related. Food makes you grow, food makes you live, the absence of food makes you die. It is the primal material means of exercising power: withholding it causes death, just as food itself comes out of killing another life-form. Food, power and death are metaphorically intertwined like the outline, color and shadow of an object. (46)

It is not only the absence of food, however, which can lead to death. Dietrich and Dvorak have already pointed out the link between eating and mortality viewed from the perspective of mythological and Christian traditions, a connection Dvorak reinforces when she discusses how the reliance of human beings on the consumption of "dead flesh links them to the corruptible, to aging, disease and death" (23). Beyond the realm of carnivorous consumption, the possibility of killing ourselves with food exists in our approach to issues of nutrition. Prominent in an age of ever increasing research into the impact of various elements on the human body is the connection between nutrition and a variety of diseases. At various times, avoiding fat, nitrites, or red meat, or increasing the consumption of oat bran, flax seed, or red wine, have been touted as ways to improve and prolong life. In *The Sociology of Taste*, Jukka Gronow introduces another element of the shift toward an emphasis on food chemistry when she states that although

the New Nutrition understood the need for nutrients to be natural, and in this respect unproblematic and universal, a new problem emerged. Individual people could no longer know or recognize their "natural needs." These could only be recognized with the help of

experimental science, and with the help of new kinds of specialists, the nutritionists. (8)

This apparent inability of individuals to make appropriate decisions about their own food consumption once again calls into play the omnivore's paradox, this time on a more subtle level, setting up a situation in which the direct link between eating the wrong foods and death is obscured. The connection between the decline of gastronomy and inappropriate food choices, however, is frequently felt to be more transparent. In an article entitled "Semiotic Play at McDonalds: Food, Fakes and Fun," Scott Sneddon, Kathleen McDougall and Stephanie Moskal Fysh lament the absence of pleasure from taste in most examples of fast food, and thus suggest that, "fast food is a puritan phenomenon inasmuch as it fuels the body but denies the flesh at the same time" (275).

Although less obvious perhaps, there is also a definite connection between cooking and the binary life and death. At the most basic level, cooking contributes to life by expanding the range of edible foodstuffs and by increasing their safety. According to Peter Farb and George Armelagos, cooking

destroys the toxins, bacteria, and parasites in food, and it makes the protein in meat and fish easier to digest. Whereas the human digestive system cannot cope with the cellulose and raw starch that make up the bulk of most plant foods, the cellulose walls of plant cells are broken down by heat and the starch is changed chemically into more easily digested sugars. (53)

Farb and Armelagos see the process of cooking food as not only increasing the number of foods consumable by human beings, but also as originating in a practice that saw cooked food carry with it benefits beyond those of nutrition. They suggest that in many societies, "fire is considered to be a spirit capable of suffusing food with supernatural powers that are thereby passed on to the

humans who eat them. Many religious rituals call for animals to be sacrificed, burned, and then eaten -- a practice that would have allowed the gradual development of a taste for roast meat" (54).

On the side of cooking and death, aside from the obvious danger of poisoning someone with improperly prepared food, the link between cooking and decomposition, itself a characteristic of death, has been discussed by Claude Lévi-Strauss who describes how "the cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw, whereas the rotted is a natural transformation" ("The Culinary Triangle" 587). From a linguistic perspective, Michael Halligan notes the often violent nature of cooking terms:

Look at this list of verbs associated with the preparation of food: pound, beat, strip, whip, boil, sear, grind, tear, crack, mince, mash, crush, stuff, chop. Images of torture occur: *sauter* is to make jump in the pan while applying heat, there is skinning and peeling and bleeding and hanging and binding, not to mention skewering and spitting, topping and tailing. (118-19)

As a further example, in their investigation of research into sociological studies involving cooking, Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil bring out the extent to which the day-to-day reality of women who cook in the home can be associated with the possibility of death on a very literal level. They discuss research by Ellis (1983) and Dobash and Dobash (1980) which demonstrates that, "physical attacks by husbands on their wives are frequently triggered by some aspect of a husband's dissatisfaction with his wife's culinary performance" (84).

The contradictory position that cooking occupies with regard to the promotion of both life and death is a topic that is not only of concern to the general public, but also a particular preoccupation of writers and film-makers. Although the link between cooking and death is a recurrent focus, a number of works do focus or at least include emphasis on food's life-giving properties.

In *The Wedding Banquet*, for example, cooking is associated with the conception and rearing of children. Wei-Wei and Wai-Tung's child is conceived after the elaborate wedding feast that leaves Wai-Tung drunk and disoriented and thus more susceptible to Wei-Wei's advances. Another factor which may have symbolically contributed to the conception is the lotus soup fed to the couple by Wai-Tung's mother with the intention of increasing their chances for a "quick first son," the practice of encouraging the timely presentation of an heir with the help of various kinds of food and drink being one that is common to many cultures. There is also a connection between cooking and Wei-Wei's decision not to have an abortion when she uses the excuse of a hamburger craving to both miss her appointment at the clinic and let Wai-Tung know that she has changed her mind about the procedure.

Similarly, in *Like Water for Chocolate*, the link between cooking and conception is suggested more indirectly by the energetic coupling of the guests at Esperanza and Alex's wedding who, influenced by the passion Tita puts into the meal, leave the celebration early to indulge their own desire in any private place they can find. The responsibility for sustaining the children of the de la Garza family after they are born is one that is also attributed to cooking since both Mamá Elena and Rosaura find themselves unable to breast-feed once their children arrive. In Tita's case, she is cared for by Nacha and "grew vigorous and healthy on a diet of teas and thin corn gruels" (5), while, as an adult, Tita then cares for Rosaura's daughter Esperanza "with the same diet Nacha had used with her when she was a tiny baby: gruels and teas" (142). In "Verbal and Visual Representation of Women: *Como agua para chocolate/Like Water for Chocolate*," Maria de Valdes draws another connection between cooking and life, in reference to Tita's ability to put herself, as it were, into her cooking, thus conveying her passion and

emotions to those who consume the meals she prepares. De Valdes suggests that the "transubstantiation of Tita's quail in rose petal sauce into Tita's body recalls the Roman Catholic doctrine of the communion wafer's becoming the body and the blood of Christ" (81), a connection that also carries with it the belief that partaking of communion commemorates the access to eternal life granted to believers by Christ's crucifixion.

The connection between cooking and life is, of course, not restricted to the sustenance of children. Examples from both *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* point to the ability of cooking to benefit those who are sick, be it mentally or physically. When Tita undergoes her period of depression and "madness," there is apparently nothing that can relieve her pain and return her to her normal condition until Chenchu arrives armed with her home-made ox-tail soup and the possibility that soup "can cure any illness, whether physical or mental -- at least, that was Chenchu's firm belief, and Tita's too, although she hadn't given sufficient credit to it for quite some time" (119). Not only does Chenchu's cooking have curative powers, but it also permits Tita to "remember a recipe, once she had remembered the first step, chopping the onion" (120), and it is the return of Tita's ability to cook that restores her fully to her old self. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, cooking is also associated with the treatment of illness, although in this case its preparation benefits the cook as much as, if not more than, the consumer. When Mrs. Scarlatti, the owner of the restaurant Ezra will one day inherit, is sick in the hospital, Ezra wishes there were something he could do to help: "He would have liked to fix her a meal -- a sustaining meal, with a depth of flavors, a complicated meal that would require a whole day of chopping things small, and grinding, and blending" (128).

While other examples of the link between cooking and life exist in the films and texts, they are certainly less numerous than those that elaborate the link between cooking and death. Perhaps because the contribution of food preparation to sustaining life appears self-evident and thus banal, while the link with death is more like its seamy underbelly, many literary and filmic narratives appear more interested in cooking's potential for destruction. John Lanchester's novel of gastronomy and murder, *The Debt to Pleasure*, includes a story about the dangers of culinary ignorance. The novel's protagonist, Tarquin Winot, reveals how a lack of knowledge related to cuisine proved fatal when "the ignorance of the Marquis de Chamfort, fleeing the French Revolution, caused him to be captured and guillotined when he blurted out that he thought it took a dozen eggs to make an omelette" (73).

One of the preferred relationships between cooking and death in literary and filmic narratives is that of poisoning, a tendency that Farb and Armelagos explain when they observe that because "food is essential for all human beings, offering it to someone is usually considered to be a 'pure gift' -- not trade, not barter, no strings attached" (158). Perhaps as a result of this association with disinterested gift-giving, the presentation of food that is poisoned or deliberately adulterated is particularly loathsome. The protagonist of *The Debt to Pleasure*, Tarquin Winot, is an especially virulent example of one who murders by cooking. Although the death of his parents is caused by the unfortunate "coincidence" of a house filled with gas and a "sparky, malfunctioning" light-switch (225) and thus is not directly the result of cooking gone bad, the fact that several mentions are made of Tarquin's deliberate interference as a child with the gas cylinders used for cooking serves to establish at least an indirect connection between kitchen activities and the gas that occasions the parents' demise. Moreover, if the deaths of his

parents are somewhat removed from food preparation, the murders of three of Winot's other victims definitely are not. Both the untimely deaths of his brother Bartholomew and the anticipated ends of Bartholomew's biographer Laura and her husband Hywl are the result of deliberate poisoning with the mushroom *Amanita phalloides*, or the Death Cap, which causes "vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps, accompanied by other symptoms such as pronounced anxiety, sweating, and bodily tremors" (241).

Other examples of poisoning are found in Luis Buñuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* when a soldier recounts a story from his childhood describing how, at the suggestion of his mother's ghost, he kills his father with poison concealed in a glass of milk. Or again in *Like Water for Chocolate* when Tita's wish while she is preparing the family meal -- that Rosaura had never uttered the words of the family tradition that will keep Esperanza in servitude to her mother, but instead had "swallowed them and kept them deep in her bowels until they were putrid and worm-eaten" (146) -- results in Rosaura's death from chronic flatulence and digestive trouble.

The connection between food preparation and murder, however, can also take different and more subtle forms than poisoning. For example in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, Michael is killed by being force-fed the pages of a book on the French Revolution, a situation that is contrasted with the beautiful meals prepared by restaurant chef Richard which kept Michael and his lover Georgina alive while they were in hiding from Albert. The link between cooking and murder is also found in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, with the discovery of a gun in a soup tureen, and another in a bag of groceries.

Another fundamental aspect of eating and food preparation that may account for the apparent fascination of literature and film with death is the importance of learning to distinguish between those potential foodstuffs which are considered edible, and those which are not, a distinction which is often culturally determined. Peter Falk argues that "one of the most fundamental distinctions made by human beings is that between *edible* and *inedible*" (51), categories which include such near universal taboos as that against cannibalism as well as those more specific to a culture or religious practice such as abstaining from pork or shellfish. Two works in particular which deal with the question of cannibalism are *Fried Green Tomatoes* (both the literary and film versions) and *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife, and her Lover*. Interestingly enough, in each work the cannibalism takes place after a murder has been committed, signaling perhaps the "anything goes" mentality that accompanies a foray outside of the limits of the law and acceptable social behaviour. Another interesting characteristic of these scenes is the fact that those who undertake the cooking of the bodies leading up to the episodes of cannibalism are characters for whom we feel a great deal of sympathy, a sympathy that I warrant is not diminished by their unusual culinary practices, whereas those who actually eat human flesh are not accorded the same level of understanding. In *Fried Green Tomatoes*, we feel a sense of justice when Big George barbecues the body of Ruth's estranged husband, Frank Bennett, as a way of disposing of the evidence of Frank's murder, and we feel that it is only right that the unwitting consumer of the late Mr. Bennett is the Georgia law man who is investigating the crime. The cannibal in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover* is Albert, the most hated character of the film, who is forced to consume part of the body of Michael, his wife Georgina's lover, whom he killed. Again in this case, the sympathies of the audience are

with Georgina who arranges for Michael's body to be cooked, and definitely against Albert. Although these are but two examples and thus not enough on which to base a general theory, the possibility that cooking people for the right reasons is alright, while eating them is not, is an interesting one to consider.

Other examples of the transgression of the division between edible and inedible center mainly on the disgust associated with eating "flesh," especially meat that is rotten. The process of decomposition, particularly as it relates to meat, is one that hits close to home when we consider our own mortality. In *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*, Carolyn Korsmeyer suggests that much art and literature "arises out of an awareness of the ever-awaiting disintegration of bodily integrity" (182). Referring to the theories of Mary Douglas about why decaying food so disturbs us, Korsmeyer explains:

The objects we turn into food are not always immediately edible; once they are edible, they don't stay that way very long. . . . Food becomes a part of us; we are what we eat, and we are subject to the same process of decay, though our decline is slower. . . . The depiction of this decay at certain advanced stages evokes a violation of order and classification that may be disturbing to the point of nausea. These objects are food and not food, no longer whole, disgusting. They represent rot and decay and uncleanness that challenge our conception of order in the world and in our lives by violating the boundaries of living forms. They occupy the borderland of ambiguous identity, terrible transformation, what Mary Douglas characterizes as the essence of the unclean -- that which violates its natural category by becoming its opposite. (181)

The threat to identity which such reversal involves is very similar to Kristeva's concept of the abject which she illustrates using the example of the corpse:

[The corpse] seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. . . . It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules, The in-between, the ambiguous,

the composite. (4)

Also recognising the important role food plays in the concept of abjection, Kristeva provides several instances of this kind:

loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk -- harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring -- I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms, in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. (3)

The passage of food items from one state to another signals the immanent transformation of our own bodies as we pass from life into death and decomposition.

Not surprisingly, the disgust provoked by food and cooking is frequently used for dramatic effect in films and literary texts. According to Lessing, disgusting elements have no place in the arts, whose goal is pleasure, for, "the disgusting bears exactly the same relation to imitative art as does the ugly. In fact, since its unpleasant effect is more violent, it is even less capable than the ugly of becoming in and of itself a subject for either painting or poetry" (132). The interest of modern film-makers in presenting disgusting images would thus seem designed specifically to challenge this traditional taboo. An especially gruesome scene in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, for example, sees Michael and Georgina escape from Albert in the back of a truck full of decaying, maggoty meat and seafood, a scene of death and decay which foreshadows Michael's ultimate demise. In both the literary and film versions of *Babette's Feast*, the sisters, Martine and Philippa, have nightmares about the kind of dishes Babette is planning to prepare, nightmares populated with flying cow's heads and heretofore unknown turtles, and plagued by fears of witches and damnation. In this case, the

connection between cultural or religious practice and food taboos is particularly evident since the suggestion is not that the sisters fear having to eat something that tastes bad or that might render them ill, but rather that their concern is for the state of their immortal souls.

Marco Ferreri's *La Grande Bouffe* utilizes a somewhat different tack by addressing the constraints placed on consumption, not in terms of kind, but in terms of amount. Rivaling *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover* in its use of disgusting images of food and eating, *La Grande Bouffe* is the story of four men who attempt (successfully) to eat themselves to death by overconsuming gourmet dishes prepared by the chef among them, Ugo. Although one man changes his mind and ends up dying of exposure instead, the other three gorge themselves until their bodies can no longer keep up. The extremely thin Michel is done in by digestive problems, winding up dead in a pool of his own excrement, while Ugo eats a huge volume of paté, pausing to bang his stomach against the edge of the table in an effort to pack down what he has consumed and create more space. For his part, Philippe dies of a diabetic reaction to the huge sugary desert prepared for him by his fiancée Andrea.

Another context in which cooking and eating figure prominently is that of the funeral or the occasion of the living finding themselves in the direct presence of death. As narrator Tarquin Winot suggests in *The Debt to Pleasure*, "There's something about inquests and funerals that never fails to sharpen the appetite" (Lanchester 179). One possible explanation for this phenomenon may be found in Nicholson's observation that eating is "the means of *self-reproduction*" (37) -- i.e., the idea that we are keen to ensure our own continuity especially in the face of evidence of our unavoidable end. Highlighting this notion, Richard, the chef in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife*

and her Lover, tells Georgina that he can charge high prices for anything he serves that is black since "eating black food is like eating death," and this gives his patrons an opportunity to conquer what may be their greatest enemy or fear. An interesting extension of this idea can also be found in works where cooking and eating are organised around another person's death. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, for example, the Tull family comes together on the occasion of the death of family matriarch, Pearl, to share a meal at son Ezra's restaurant. What is remarkable about this scene is the fact that this is far from being the first time such a family meal has been attempted. Over the course of the novel, Ezra tries repeatedly to have his family complete a meal together, always with disastrous results. On the day of Pearl's funeral, however, not only do the Tulls finish their dinner, but the children are also reunited with their estranged father for the first time in decades.

Cooking and eating in the actual presence of the deceased, however, does not have the same results. In *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, the transformation of a restaurant into a veritable funeral parlour has, instead, a negative effect on the patrons' appetites. Upon discovering that the restaurant's owner is dead and laid out on a table in a room adjoining the eating area, some of the potential diners decide they would prefer to take their business elsewhere. In *Tampopo*, one of the vignettes interspersed with elements of the main plot shows a family in which the mother is on her death bed. At the husband's insistence, she gets out of bed to prepare dinner for the family then promptly dies. The scene ends with the husband ordering the children to stop crying and eat their food because "this is the last meal your mother ever cooked." Also linking these two examples again seems to be the concept of the ability of food to be suffused with supernatural powers and to pass on these external elements to those who consume it. What is

particularly interesting in turn is the way that food seems to carry with it life as well as death. In the case of the restaurant with the dead owner, it is likely that it is the notion that food cooked in the presence of the corpse will take on the essence of death that encourages some of the patrons to have dinner elsewhere. In the case of *Tampopo*, however, the children are encouraged to eat based on the belief that the mother's cooking is able to pass along some element of her life, a possibility that we have seen played out more explicitly in Tita's cooking in *Like Water for Chocolate*.

A further and especially intriguing connection between cooking and death in the films and literary texts is the lament for meals not prepared or consumed because death has precluded their enjoyment. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, when Ezra visits Mrs. Scarlatti in the hospital he often sees a family who speaks a language he doesn't understand and one day one of the men translates a poem he has been reciting: "O dead one, why did you die in the springtime? You haven't yet tasted the squash, or the cucumber salad" (122). Another of the vignettes in *Tampopo* which also features a similar regret, is that in which the man in the white hat, who has appeared at various points throughout the film, is shot and as he lies dying, he tells his female companion about the pleasure of hunting wild boar in the winter; explaining how their intestines are filled with yams and how the hunters roast the intestines over the fire, slice them and eat them hot, he says to the woman, "I'm sorry I never got to share them with you." All is not lost for those who pass on, however, provided that they have been sufficiently virtuous as to find themselves in the kind of Heaven presented in *Fried Green Tomatoes*. At the end of the novel, one of the characters who is absent from the film version, Artis Peavey, experiences a version of Heaven that includes the favourite foods of his childhood:

Then, the old man, who had been agitated just a moment before, begins to smile and relax. He is out in the back of the café, helping his daddy barbecue . . . and he is happy . . . we know a secret. His daddy gives him a barbecue and a Grapico, and he runs way back up in the woods to eat it, where it's cool and green and the pine needles are soft . . . (373)

While the various examples of the relationship of food preparation to the processes of both life and death provide a good indication of the degree to which cooking strongly resists containment within one pole of the binary, this last example, in which cooking heralds the transition into the afterlife, may be the binary deconstructor *par excellence* in the way that it takes apart several oppositions beyond merely those of life and death. In addition to highlighting the association between cooking and both mortality and life everlasting, Artis's vision incorporates elements of the body and the soul, and erases the division between the physical and spiritual worlds. *Like Water for Chocolate's* description of the ability of both Nacha and Morning Light to cross the border between these planes by giving recipes to, and preparing food for Tita after the older women's respective deaths also speaks to cooking's capacity to overcome this traditional and somewhat hierarchical divide. Given such examples, perhaps my earlier concern about the gastronomic shortcomings of Heaven are unfounded. Instead of being devoid of food and culinary delights, paradise may be a place where the steak is always medium-rare and flasks of Chateau Mouton Rothschild grace every table.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FURTHER DIRECTIONS

If my study has thus far been successful, it should now be clear that while eating is a routine aspect of daily existence and while sometimes depictions of eating and food preparation in film and literature may function mainly as "realistic" atmosphere, more often than not -- in life as well as art -- food preparation and consumption have a highly charged symbolic function. This function enlists social and hierarchical binaries even as the act of cooking and eating in themselves ultimately deconstruct such boundaries by reason of their multifunctionality and resistance to clearcut divisions. What should also by now be clear from my study is that many of the issues I have raised call for further exploration and/or problematization.

Consider first the role of cooking in the creation and maintenance of families. Although this is an idea that is neither new nor particularly representative of variability based on social context, the examples I found from literary and filmic texts tended to involve non-traditional families, a situation that perhaps highlights the family, rather than cooking, as contextual. A further study which may shed more light on this topic would involve the question of whether the kind of cooking undertaken varies between more and less traditional family structures. Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* is especially interesting on this question since it contains both more traditional (mother and children), and less traditional families (Ezra's attempts to create a family out of the patrons of his restaurant). At home, Pearl's cooking is perfunctory and revolves around warming up canned items, while Ezra's restaurant fare conforms carefully to the traditional (ironic?) definition of "home cooking," a situation which may

indicate that the creation of non-traditional families requires a level of culinary practice greater than that needed to maintain relationships between family members with biological ties. Perhaps related to this is a report in *The Times of London* that "for 35 percent of male adulterers in Britain, their mistresses cook better than their wives, 'and that food had been a decisive factor in their adultery as well as sex'" (*The Montreal Gazette* Dec. 16, 2000 F4).

One might also want to look more carefully at how food functions with respect to the metaphor/metonymy complex. While metaphors involving cooking are well-known, the way that cooking operates *vis-à-vis* substitution and combination is less well documented. The way that substitution and combination co-exist in cooking (as do, by extension, metaphor and metonymy), points to the problems inherent in the attempts of some literary theorists to separate the two terms. One aspect I find particularly interesting is the current emphasis on substitution, a practice found especially in attempts to prepare "healthier" food. Many of the products which encourage the substitution of healthier or lower-fat ingredients for their traditional higher-fat cousins maintain a metonymic connection with the original product in their naming, packaging, and marketing. Soy-milk is packaged in the traditional milk-carton shape, and tofurkey and Garden Burgers® maintain a linguistic connection to their meaty precursors, turkey and hamburgers, respectively. Perhaps no one is more adept in playing with the metaphoric and metonymic aspects of food than cookbook author Bob Blumer who has made his name with recipes that are profoundly metaphoric, including presenting food in the guise of such non-edible items as a "bed" of polenta, covered with a "sheet" of pasta and ravioli "pillows." While many of his meals seem to involve an emphasis on substitution -- he also introduces new cooking techniques such as poaching salmon in the

dishwasher and cooking shrimp on a car engine -- illustrations in his cookbook, *Off the Eaten Path*, connect the "new" versions of meals with their more conventional inspirations, as when he employs such metonymic objects as the traditional paper french fry cup and red, restaurant ketchup squeeze bottle in order to display pound cake "fries" with raspberry "ketchup."

Along the same lines, it might be profitable to consider further how the multi-sensory aspects of food challenge the traditional division between the visual and verbal arts, insisted upon by critics such as G. E. Lessing. While the multi-sensory aspects of food appreciation suggest that eating undermines divisions based on the exclusive reliance on one sense, the use of all of the senses in cooking may be less obvious to those who do not spend much time in the kitchen. A simple example reveals the extent to which each of the senses comes into play when cooking something as basic as a steak. First, hearing is important when determining whether or not the pan has reached its required temperature for searing; listening for the sizzle that accompanies the proper amount of heat. Smell can serve as a warning that the meat is burning (I have been told by experienced cooks that the way to tell when a variety of things, such as vegetables, are cooked is also through smell -- when the smell begins to waft through the room, it's done), while vision and touch can both function to assess the level of doneness. A common chef's trick for determining the cooking stage a steak has reached involves comparing the texture of the meat to that of the fleshy part of the hand below the thumb. The texture that accompanies the open hand signals that the meat is rare, that produced by touching the thumb and first finger together is medium, and touching the thumb and second finger mimics the feel of steak that is well-done. Finally, the role of the sense of taste in cooking requires little

elaboration and in the example of the steak is responsible for the level of seasoning as well as helping to determine the doneness, (or overdoneness), of the dish.

Another topic calling for further investigation is the connection between food and death as well as life. The connection between cooking and life is obvious, while at the very foundation of the Christian tradition is the story of Adam and Eve, in which eating, if not cooking, is the means by which humans first encounter death and ensure the mortality of future generations. The apparent interest of literature and film in the connection between cooking and death speaks to the impossibility of confining cooking to one of the poles in the binary life/death, but also raises questions about the motivation behind this seemingly prevalent interest. One of the marks of the decline of the Roman empire was the increasing popularity among the upper classes of hedonistic excess, in the case of cooking and food taking the form not only of elaborate dishes, but also of the vomitoriums associated with the practice of deliberate overconsumption. This connection between excessive consumption and decline may be one of the motivating factors behind such films as *La Grande Bouffe*, and others which suggest the decline of Western civilization in the late twentieth century.

Equally demanding more attention and research is the relationship between cooking and gender/sexuality. The gendering of cooking -- the fact that, until recently, those who cooked at home were almost exclusively women while restaurant cooks, especially those in high-end establishments, were almost always men -- is the issue that first drew me to this project because of its problematisation of the assignment of cooking to the female pole in the male/female binary. Several male chefs I have spoken to have told me that at home it is their wives who do the cooking, and while my

evidence is purely anecdotal and drawn from a very small sample group, this tendency was also confirmed by a recent presentation by renowned American chef, Charlie Trotter, who reported his wife's complaint that he spends his whole day cooking and then doesn't "bring a damn thing home to eat." While creating a subdivision of food preparation using the hierarchical binary of restaurant vs. home cooking would explain the gendering of cooking without undermining a reliance on binary structures, such a division does not necessarily bear out in the examples from films and literature where the polarisation of who cooks at home versus who cooks for customers is less clear. Texts such as *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* undo the home/restaurant separation altogether, while films such as *Eat Drink Man Woman* and *Babette's Feast* feature cooks who devote equal care to restaurant and home cooking. Although cooking undermines the opposition male/female, it does seem to set up another binary system in which food preparation and sexuality occupy the two poles. This situation requires further investigation, in particular with regard to questions about the characteristics of cooking and sexuality which may render them mutually exclusive, as well as the underlying symbolism of this particular division.

Approaching the end of a study on the effects of the application of cooking to a variety of sometimes widely divergent topics, my first instinct is to attempt some kind of synthesis or summing up of the role of cooking (an instinct which is, I suppose, already present in the characterisation of food preparation as blurring the borders between binary oppositions). In order to remain true to the idea of multifunctionality, however, or at least as true to it as is possible under the circumstances, it may perhaps be more productive to allow the disparate roles of cooking in literature and films to remain as they are and instead turn my attention to some other possibilities for the

application of cooking in future studies. Aside from topics like the previous which invite more exploration, there are also three major slants on food preparation which I have mentioned only indirectly but which definitely merit sustained attention.

Of these, the first is the connection of cooking -- via the senses -- to technology, and a closer look at the theories of Marshall McLuhan who indirectly as well as directly raises a number of issues that might be explored. Directly, McLuhan is interested in the effect of new technologies on sensory ratios, that is, on the degree to which the value of a particular sense is raised or lowered by the introduction of technologies such as the phonetic alphabet. In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, he argues that if "a technology is introduced either from within or from without a culture, and if it gives new stress or ascendancy to one or another of our senses, the ratio among all of our senses is altered" (24). Not surprisingly considering the time in which he was writing, McLuhan has a fair amount to say about the "new" medium of television, a technology which shares many of the characteristics of currently emerging advances in computers. Of television, McLuhan says that it "has opened the doors of audile-tactile perception to the non-visual world of spoken languages and food and the plastic arts" (*Understanding* 45), a phenomenon which is eminently apparent in today's popular television-viewing behaviour. As much as he seems to regard television as a multi-sensory medium, however, McLuhan also sees it as channeling perception into a single sense:

Most technology produces an amplification that is quite explicit in its separation of the senses. Radio is an extension of the aural, high-fidelity photography of the visual. But TV is, above all, an extension of the sense of touch, which involves maximal interplay of all the senses. . . . The mosaic form of the TV image demands participation and involvement in depth of the whole being, as does the sense of touch.

(*Understanding* 333-34)

Thus he sets up a situation in which competition exists between the idea that television and computers as multi-sensory media, and the possibility that such technologies continue to favour vision as the primary sense.

McLuhan's ideas in turn provide a framework for approaching more recent advances in media technology, among them the increase in multi-sensory computer applications. An article in *The Montreal Gazette* of May 17, 2000 begins with the headline "We'll soon be able to smell the E-mail," and goes on to describe how the Israeli-based high-tech company SenseIt Technologies Ltd. is currently in the process of developing a cartridge which would be attached to a home computer and which would be capable of decoding numerical sequences in order to produce a variety of specific smells (G1). The idea behind the invention is that everyone from perfume manufacturers to video-game companies would be able to enhance their products with smells generated by the combination of scents found in the cartridge.

This innovation would endow the computer with yet another sense, complementing its current reliance on the senses of vision and hearing and, in some cases, touch. Unlike McLuhan, I am less convinced that the sense of touch is constituted by the interplay of all the senses, and would associate it instead with tactility. Even so, I would argue that although the sense of touch is employed in any computer-related activity that involves keyboarding or the use of a joystick, in terms of a specific interaction with the objects portrayed on the screen -- for instance, the ability to access not only visual images of a porcupine, but to feel its prickly quills as well -- most home computer systems do not permit this kind of tactile experience. Arcade-style games which involve sitting on a motorcycle that shifts position or standing

on a platform that mimics the movements of skiing come closer to making use of this sense.

The introduction of yet another level of computer-generated sensory experience, one that even goes beyond the combination of senses McLuhan attributed to television, places the computer firmly in McLuhan's category of the cold medium in which audience participation and completion is said to be high. As McLuhan sees it, a "hot medium is one that extends one single sense in 'high definition'. . . . On the other hand, hot media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience. Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience" (*Understanding* 22). The idea that a hot medium, one that stresses an individual sense, is low in participation, while something like television or computers is high, is problematic in itself, particularly when compared with Lévi-Strauss's seemingly opposite connection of the cooked (hot) with culture and the raw (cold) with nature, culture being a concept that places less stress on individual participation and more on collectivity. On the one hand, it seems to me that the possibility of filling in or completing a medium would in fact be greater in a situation where the focus on a single sense leaves the kind of perception available to the other senses open to the imagination. On the other hand, McLuhan's belief is that exclusive focus on one sense apparently distracts us from even the possibility of considering other senses. In the case of the new multi-sensory computer, my instinctive reaction is to see it as serving an isolating function rather than encouraging participation. Although its proponents may suggest otherwise, computers and the internet have the effect of distancing individuals in a very physical sense from one another, this focus on individual autonomy being one of the characteristics McLuhan attributes to the phonetic alphabet. When McLuhan

suggested that by "imposing unvisualizable relationships that are the result of instant speed, electronic technology dethrones the visual sense and restores us to the dominion of synesthesia, and the close inter involvement of the other senses (*Understanding* 111), it is likely that his focus was on the technology of television rather than on the computer's reliance on the alphabet. Following McLuhan's formulas, then, possible questions related to the senses and technology include whether computers represent a hot or a cold medium, related to the possibility that the computer's continued reliance on phonetic writing and repeatable type trumps its multi-sensory aspects, and the likelihood that a difference exists between what could be called intra- and inter-personal participation.

The possibility of adding smells to the sensory repertoire of computer technology also draws attention to the remaining, missing sense, that of taste. Although it is possible to imagine the aroma of a freshly brewed cup of coffee emanating from your Mac or PC, it is significantly more difficult envisioning some kind of computer-generated appeal to the sense of taste. One of the concerns raised in the article on SenseIt, the possibility that "mischief makers would send 'stink bombs' through cyberspace," raises one of the characteristics of both smell and taste that has been fundamental to the resistance of cooking to categorisation, that being the ability of smells and tastes to transgress borders, especially the border between the physical inside and outside of the human body. Both smells and tastes are invasive, a characteristic which seems at odds with what may be classified as isolationist computer technology.

Bringing together McLuhan's ideas and the question of the absence of taste from the computer's sensory repertoire also raises a number of other interesting possibilities. First of all, how would our conception of computer

technology have to be reconfigured to allow it to incorporate the sense of taste and, if such a rethinking were possible, how would the addition of taste influence the isolationist tendencies computer technology now exhibits? In turn, in a confrontation between a fully multi-sensory capability and the tendency toward visual domination that arises from print, one wonders which would win? Closer to the specific focus of my study, one might note that if there are potential difficulties related to the intersection of computer technology and the sense of taste, computer-generated representations of cooking seem much less problematic. Does such a situation then suggest that the representation of food preparation is, in fact, somehow distanced from the sense of taste that seems such an integral part of its practice? Has cooking, in some cases, abandoned its connection with the physical body to exist instead as some sort of multi-media spectacle?

The second major slant on food preparation which I have touched on only briefly is how the presentation of cooking and eating in literate cultures might differ from similar food-based narratives in oral cultures. As indicated in the discussion of sensory hierarchies in Chapter One, anthropologists such as David Howes and Constance Classen have put forward the idea that the hierarchy of the senses which underlies a particular culture has a significant influence on the attitudes and approaches of its members toward a large variety of day-to-day experiences. In "Sensorial Anthropology," Howes suggests that "the more a society emphasizes the eye, the less communal it will be; the more it emphasizes the ear, the less individualistic it will be" (178), while George Devereux breaks down the activities related to the ear even further in "Ethnopsychological Aspects of the Terms 'Deaf' and 'Dumb'" when he discusses the difference between cultures that emphasize speech and those with a greater focus on hearing. As he sees it:

[the] "speech" group would seek self-expression and the imposition of the self upon reality -- which is fairly characteristic of Western Europeans and of Malays. The "hearing" group would, in that case, seek selflessness rather than self-expression. This characterization is certainly applicable to the Buddhists -- who ultimately seek to overcome selfhood by merging with the world and ceasing to exist. (45)

One of the ways that differences in sensory focus manifest themselves in a culture is obviously in narratives. In "Fusion of the Faculties: A Study of the Language of the Senses in Hausaland," Ian Ritchie discusses how the proverbs of the Hausa people of Nigeria indicate the higher status assigned to other senses than to that of sight. For example, the proverb "Seeing is not eating" indicates the importance of the sense of taste: "it would appear that eating is taken as the most trustworthy way of testing reality, for it goes beyond seeing, revealing the inner nature of a thing, its flavour" (196).

While the system by which status is assigned to the various senses plays an influential role in a culture's ethos, foregrounding some senses while the others play more of a supporting role, critics like McLuhan argue that in some cases, in particular those of cultures which rely on the phonetic alphabet, one sense, in this case sight, becomes so dominant as to marginalise all others. In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan protests that the "phonetic alphabet reduced the use of all the senses at once, which is oral speech, to a merely visual code" (45), a situation that is especially relevant to a discussion of such a multi-sensory practice as food preparation.

Armed with these two ideas, 1) the fact that writing focuses on one sense alone while oral communication is multi-sensory, and 2) the status of cooking as multi-sensory, it would seem that an interesting area for further study would be a comparative analysis of the roles of eating and cooking in literate cultures in contrast to their roles in oral cultures. My hypothesis is

that representations of culinary activities probably differ significantly in cultures that emphasise reading and writing and which seem to privilege the sense of sight, from representations of eating and cooking in oral cultures whose preferred form of communication involves a variety of senses. McLuhan identifies some of the characteristics of representation in literate and oral cultures, suggesting that the visual "makes for the explicit, the uniform, and the sequential in painting, in poetry, in logic, history. The non-literate modes are implicit, simultaneous, and discontinuous" (*Gutenberg* 57). The ability of cooking and eating to be both sequential and simultaneous speaks to the difficulty of wedding these activities to one or the other set of criteria. The possibility that differences in emphasis exist between literate and oral cultures, however, seems likely. Among the trickster narratives of the Cree and Ojibwa, Coyote's adventures often revolve around the search for food and attempts to steal it from others, as well as the ultimate end of the process of consumption which is rarely mentioned in "literary" texts, the often humorous references to excrement and flatulence, (and thereby smell) that are an integral part of Coyote's experiences.

The third major slant on food preparation that I have scarcely addressed pertains to whether differences in genre affect the way that food preparation is treated. In a project such as this one, that examines the roles of cooking in both written works and films, a question that naturally arises is whether differences exist between how food preparation functions in each of these media. Originally I thought that the way to approach this question would be to examine examples of literary texts that have been adapted into films, for example the written and film versions of *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, and *Babette's Feast*. Following this strategy, it would obviously be difficult to separate changes made for reasons of length, visual

appeal, or other factors related to the constraints of the filmic medium, from differences which may relate specifically to the ways that cooking is portrayed in literature and film; however it stands to reason that a medium that appeals to a variety of senses would perhaps devote more time to cooking than would a medium forced to rely on verbal description. In the film version of *Babette's Feast*, cooking does play a more prominent role than in the short-story, however its role as elicitor of disgust is more memorable than its appeal to the appetite. A scene in which Babette is instructed in how to prepare the bland soup of soggy bread that Martine and Philippa have been serving to the poor is one example, as are the nightmares of flying cow heads that haunt the sisters as they anticipate Babette's exotic and potentially heretical feast. This association of cooking with disgust is also evident in the film version of *Fried Green Tomatoes*, which features a fairly small number of scenes of cooking. One prominent scene, however, is that of Big George barbecuing the "hog" that we know to be the body of Ruth's estranged husband Frank Bennett.

What a study of literary texts and their film versions would omit, however, would be narratives which were perhaps strongly suited to one format and not the other; that is, representations of cooking that work well in written form but not in film, and vice versa. It seems to me that evidence of patterns in the treatment of cooking predominantly restricted to literature or to film may provide a clearer picture of possible differences between the genres. Thus, after removing the textual/filmic combinations from the list of narratives that feature cooking, what I noticed first was again a certain tendency toward the grotesque in some of the films that remained. In particular, *La Grande Bouffe*, and *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife, and her Lover* are two films in which cooking (and eating) function in an especially disgusting way: *La Grande Bouffe* revolves around a group of men who try

(successfully) to eat themselves to death and involves a lot of vomiting and defecating in addition to conspicuous overconsumption, while *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife, and her Lover* features the cooking and eating of a human being, the murder of this same man by force-feeding him pages of a book, as well as the presence of a van full of rotting, maggoty meat and seafood. The first explanation that springs to mind for this phenomenon, one that deals with eating moreso than cooking, is the argument that Lessing makes against the use of the open mouth in the visual arts: "The wide-open mouth, aside from the fact that the rest of the face is thereby twisted and distorted in an unnatural and loathsome manner, becomes in painting a mere spot and in sculpture a cavity, with most repulsive effect" (17). This association of the open mouth with the grotesque may have something to do with the treatment of cooking and eating and their relations to the open mouth in the two films.

Another potential approach to the difference between literature and film, again one that may disproportionately affect eating rather than cooking, involves the impossibility of depicting tastes directly in either genre. Although more research would be needed to state this with conviction, my suspicion is that in literature, the verbal description of taste is often dependent on metaphor, at least in part due to the very limited number of words for describing tastes -- "this tastes like X" -- while in film, it is the effects of the taste which are foregrounded (a grimace or smile of delight) which involves a metonymic connection. The film and novel versions of *Like Water for Chocolate* provide a good illustration. In general, I would say that the structure of the plot of both the novel and the film tends to emphasise the metonymic effects of cooking with its focus on Tita's ability to transfer her emotions through the food she prepares. The novel, however,

differs from the film in the degree to which it relies more on metaphoric description. In the scene where Gertrudis becomes the medium for Tita's love for Pedro, the novel describes the event in metaphoric terms:

It was as if a strange alchemical process had dissolved her entire being in the rose petal sauce, in the tender flesh of the quails, in the wine, in every one of the meal's aromas. . . . With that meal it seemed they had discovered a new system of communication, in which Tita was the transmitter, Pedro the receiver, and poor Gertrudis the medium. (48)

In the film version, however, the evidence of Gertrudis's transformation takes the form of smoldering glances and the sweating and flapping of clothes that accompany the heat generated by Tita's passion. Unfortunately for any attempt to create a clear-cut alliance of, and distinction between novel/metaphor and film/metonymy, the choice of the metaphor "romantic passion is heat" alongside the metonymic representation of being overheated through the flapping of clothes, once again reveals the near impossibility of separating the two linguistic practices, sending us back to the point from where we began. Obviously the question of the difference between the treatment of cooking in films and literature warrants significantly more attention than I can give it here and thus would be a good subject for a future study.

Ultimately, however, the largest and most vexing problem that demands to be resolved is how one can foreground and deconstruct the binary thinking to which food preparation has been subjected without oneself enlisting a binary framework. One of the perversities of this project has been the attempt to demonstrate the capacity of cooking to deconstruct binaries in a study founded on its own binary opposition(s). Ironically enough, the male-restaurant-chef/ female-home-cook polarity that launched the study sets up its own binary subset within the category of food preparation. Also, although I

have endeavoured to illustrate the capacity of cooking to undermine such traditional binaries as male/female, art/craft, and self/other, the very fact of asserting this sets up its own binary structures. Indeed, the central assumption around which the study revolves is itself the opposition between affirming binaries and denouncing them -- binaries bad/deconstructing binaries good. Thus it would seem that I have now entrenched cooking on one side of the binaries multifunctional/ unifunctional and perhaps even binary-upholding/binary-busting, and it is clear that a hierarchy has been created which favours one member of each of these pairs of terms. Throughout the writing of this study, I was plagued not only with concerns about this inherent contradiction, but also by what seemed to be an impulse toward invoking a variety of binary systems such as oral vs. written, and literature vs. film.

Rather than an attempt to "reconstruct human nature" by eliminating binary structures altogether, perhaps it is more productive to think of this project, then, more as a form of "consciousness-raising" with regard to the possibility that, in the case of food preparation, binary oppositions are being enlisted in a social/racist/sexist/aesthetic agenda. It is also possible, as Roland Barthes suggests, that the practice of binary organisation may be a sign of the times, as it were, "a classification which is both necessary and transitory: in which case binarism also would be a metalanguage, a particular taxonomy meant to be swept away by history, after having been true of it for a moment" (*Elements* 82). This idea of binarism as a stage also calls to mind Julia Kristeva's notion of deconstruction's cyclical structure in her discussion of "Women's Time," where she calls for a

demassification of the problematic of *difference*, which would imply, in a first phase, an apparent de-dramatization of the 'fight to the death' between rival groups and thus between the sexes. And this is not in

the name of some reconciliation -- feminism has at least had the merit of showing what is irreducible and even deadly in the social contract -- but in order that the struggle, the implacable difference, the violence be conceived in the very place where it operates with the maximum intransigence, in other words, in personal and sexual identity itself, so as to make it disintegrate in its very nucleus. (34)

One might similarly find other possibilities in Derrida's initial deconstructive phase of *overturning*:

To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a *neutralization* that *in practice* would leave the previous field untouched. . . . We know what always have been the practical (particularly political) effects of immediately jumping beyond oppositions. (41)

If nothing else, I can perhaps justify my own creation of, and reliance on binaries by making an appeal to Foster's reference to "the repetitive and cyclic character of deconstruction," as well as his belief that "contradiction [is] a permanent feature of historical process" (83).

Finally, although I am not entirely convinced that it is not an intellectual cop-out, it dawned on me that perhaps the surest indication of cooking's multifunctionality is, in fact, its applicability to both the upholding and the dismantling of binaries. Perhaps this is the closest we can get to the "demassification of the problematic of difference"; the acknowledgment that cooking cannot be contained by any of the categories to which we choose to assign it. In this way, Kuipers's "social context of use" (112) which determines the type of function that cooking will exhibit encompasses not only the variety of social groups within cultures, but also the ideological streams upon which cultures are founded.

CONCLUSION

One of the more notable features of cooking in contemporary North America is the degree to which it is becoming an important component of entertainment and popular culture. There has recently been an explosion in the number of so-called "celebrity chefs" -- restaurant owners such as Emeril Lagasse, Charlie Trotter, and Alice Waters, to name but a few -- in large part as a result of the increased presence of cooking shows on such television stations as The Food Network, and others. Perhaps paradoxically, along with this increased attention to, and knowledge of fine cuisine, there seems to be a decrease in the population's level of actual cooking skills. At a recent book-signing in Montreal, Charlie Trotter commented on the degree to which today's consumers are more interested in gourmet foods, yet at the same time, are unable to prepare much of anything for themselves at home, a statement that places contemporary gourmet enthusiasts in an interesting position with regard to Deane Curtin's argument that the knowledge required for cooking involves

an artful blending of the mental and physical, of "theory" and practice. As sustenance, food is as much mental and spiritual as it is physical. Far from supporting the model of radical dualism, cooking provides as clear an example as we have of what might be called a body/mind working together in unison, engaged in a thoughtful practice which ministers to the whole person, an ordinary being in an ordinary context. (10)

The positioning of haute cuisine as spectator sport reflects the kind of passive entertainment for which television is so renowned, and speaks to issues of the dominance of the visual function, although, in the case of television, hearing is an important component of culinary entertainment as well. What the current trend of gastronomic "couch potatoes" seems to suggest is a

continued separation of the "abstract" senses of vision and hearing from the "proximity" senses of taste, touch, and smell.

Academic interest in cooking, food and eating is also becoming more common and more interdisciplinary. "Hot off the press," for example, is philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer's investigation of the sense of taste and its relation to science and art entitled *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*, and historian Joy Parr's examination of such domestic items as stoves and kettles in her book *Material Goods*. Plans are also underway for an upcoming issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* on the topic of food, cooking and eating in Canadian literature. More universities as well are beginning to offer courses related to various aspects of cooking and food, including McGill professor Nathalie Cooke's course "Consuming Passions in Canadian Literature," offered during the winter of 2001 which deals with topics such as "Consuming Women," "Cake," and "On the Fiction Herself, Betty Crocker."

Significantly, too, there are manifestations of an increased interest in cooking in such areas of popular culture as practical or business applications. An article in the *Globe and Mail* of 6 April 2000 features the headline, "Latest recipe for team building: cooking classes," and goes on to discuss one of the business world's latest inspirations in the quest to develop work-related interpersonal skills: "Just as survival simulation games and outdoor adventure courses were once popular team-building techniques, the kitchen exercises are supposed to foster trust and communication." In a somewhat less verbose manner, Chris Ray, the chief executive officer of an ad agency which has tried to encourage teamwork through cooking classes, reiterates my conclusions about the ability of cooking to build family when he says, "'There's something cool and cosmic about food' . . . 'People bond over it'" (B14).

Other evidence of cooking in popular culture includes a recent proliferation of films about cooking, or featuring protagonists whose jobs in food preparation feature prominently in the story. One of these released last year is the Canadian production, *The Five Senses*, in which the senses are embodied by a variety of characters. This film presents a wonderful possibility for analysis in the context of both the hierarchy of the senses, and debates over relationships between the arts. In particular, there is a female character who creates beautiful, artistically presented cakes that taste just terrible. Her outlook is altered when she meets an Italian man who speaks little English and whose preferred mode of communication is through his cooking. Things seem to be working out between the lovers until the woman sees the man speaking warmly with another woman without having access to what the two are saying. Based entirely on what she has seen, the protagonist decides that her lover is unfaithful and the film ends with little hope for the survival of their relationship. If we consider the lovers as symbols of the senses of sight and taste, the way their relationship plays itself out suggests some interesting possibilities for the relative values and strengths of these two senses.

Another interesting film is Bernard Rapp's *Une Affaire de Gout* (1999), a French production in which an eccentric businessman takes a young waiter under his wing and, under the pretense of teaching him everything there is to know about gastronomy and the appreciation of wine, transforms him into a version of the businessman himself. Especially notable here is the fact that the process of transforming one man into a copy of another begins with alterations to the former's sense of taste and particular appetites. One of the businessman's idiosyncrasies is his absolute distaste for all kinds of cheese and seafood, and he cultivates a similar aversion in his protégé by feeding

him a huge meal of these items after a prolonged fast, and lacing the meal with an emetic that leaves the younger man to experience three days of extreme illness.

Equally instructive is Roland Joffe's *Vatel* (2000), a film that centers on the experiences of maitre d'hôtel Francois Vatel as he prepares his employer's estate for a visit from Louis XIV. An actual historical figure, Vatel is famous for having killed himself, supposedly because of the impending ruin of a banquet due to the delay of a delivery of fish. In the film, however, his motivation is more complicated, and involves, among other things, his realisation that "I was not the master of pleasure, but its slave." Like several of the other films that deal with food preparation, *Vatel* illustrates the role played by cooking in conspicuous consumption and excess. The concept of the chef as artist is also very apparent here, since the royal banquets are staged as spectacles rather than meals, complete with scenery, dancers, and even fireworks. Reminiscent of Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil's comments about women's home cooking involving responsibility without authority, Vatel's situation in his employer's household is such that near the end of the film, the chef is gambled away, albeit reluctantly, in a game of cards.

Another example of cooking and its affinity with popular culture is in the area of jokes about food, eating and cooking. The jokes I remember from childhood (What's green and red and goes a hundred miles an hour? A frog in a blender) are obviously less sophisticated and less semiotically inclined than examples like this one, taken from the internet:

Seven New York City bartenders were asked if they could nail a woman's personality based on what she drinks. Though interviewed separately, they concurred on almost all counts.

The results on women:

Drink: Beer

Personality: Casual, low-maintenance; down to earth.

Your Approach: Challenge her to a game of pool

Drink: Blender Drinks

Personality: Flaky, annoying; a pain in the ass.

Your Approach: Avoid her, unless you want to be her cabin boy.

Drink: Mixed Drinks

Personality: Older, has picky taste; knows what she wants.

Your Approach: You won't have to approach her. She'll send YOU a drink.

Drink: Wine - (does not include white zinfandel, see below)

Personality: Conservative and classy, sophisticated.

Your Approach: Tell her you wish Reagan had had four more years . . . Alzheimer's and term limits be damned.

Drink: White Zin

Personality: Easy; thinks she is classy and sophisticated, actually has no clue.

Your Approach: Make her feel smarter than she is . . .

Drink: Shots

Personality: Hanging with frat-boy pals or looking to get drunk . . . and naked.

Your Approach: Easiest hit in the joint. Nothing to do but wait.

Then there is the male addendum . . . The deal with guys is, as always, very simple and clear cut.

Domestic Beer: He's poor and wants to get laid.

Imported Beer: He likes good beer and wants to get laid.

Wine: He's hoping that the wine thing will give him a sophisticated image to help him get laid.

Whiskey: He doesn't give two shits about anything but getting laid.

Tequila: Piss off, all you wankers, I'm gonna go shag something.

White Zin: He's gay.

On the more sophisticated class level, one might consider the import of the following menu from the namesake restaurant of renowned American chef Charlie Trotter. The prices attached to the first two selections, and, more tellingly, the absence of a price tag on the third, speak to the fact that fine food, like fine art, is often found only in the possession of the rich.

Charlie Trotters

Grand Menu \$115

Amuse Gueule

Grilled Japanese Hamachi with Waterchestnuts, Manila Clam, Razor Clam

Littleneck Clams and Horseradish

Steamed Casco Bay Cod with Saffron Infused Cauliflower Puree,

Wilted Arugula, Spicy Cucumber and Chive Emulsion

Muscovy Duck Breast with Duck Leg Confit, Collard Greens, Porcini Mushrooms & Roasted Parsnips

Millbrook Farm Venison Loin with Braised Savoy Cabbage, Rice Beans, Lentils & Braised Veal Sweetbreads

Roasted Baby Pumpkin Broth with Almond Milk Sherbet & Candied Almonds

Chocolate-Coconut Cake with Caramel Ice Cream

Mignardises

Vegetable Menu \$110

Amuse Gueule

Duet of Terrines: Fingerling Potato with Watercress & Yukon Gold Potato, Scallion Relish & Alba White Truffles

Vidalia Onion Broth with Minnesota Wild Rice, Black Mission Figs & Brussel Sprouts

Ragout of Braised Artichokes, Porcini Mushrooms, Cipolline Onions & Black Pepper Infused Porcini Mushroom Emulsion

Tart of Caramelized Sweet Potato, Red Onion, Chanterelle Mushrooms & Red Wine-Pearl Onion Sauce

Lemon-Honey Sorbet & Fennel Gellee with Asian Pear

Molasses Spice Cake with Nutmeg Semifreddo

Mignardises

Kitchen Table Menu

Grilled Hamachi with Asian Pear & Horseradish
An Assortment of Fall Squash
Marinated Blue Fin Tuna with Sunchoke & Endive
Tempura of Marsutake Mushrooms with Organic Soy
Terrine of Fingerling Potato & Scallion
Normandy Belon Oyster with Braised Pig Tail
Steamed Casco Bay Cod with Cauliflower & Saffron
Seared Foie Gras with Chestnut & Persimmon
Poached Poussin Breast with Collard Greens & Carmelized Parsnips
Whole Roasted Duck Breast with Braised Legumes
Niman Ranch Veal Tenderloin with Trumpet Royale Mushrooms
Indiana Amish Blue Cheese Bread Pudding with Currants & Port Wine
Chilled Feioja Guava Soup with Passion Fruit-Coconut Sorbet
Dessert Service
Mignardises

What this menu also serves to suggest is the classification of dishes within the binary of time and space. The metonymic connection to place that we see in entries like "Niman Ranch Veal Tenderloin" and "Indiana Amish Blue Cheese," as well as the increasing interest in Europe and elsewhere in "produits de terroir," indicate the way that food products are tied to the place of their invention and to the place where the ingredients that go into them are produced. From another perspective, however, the style of cooking known as "fusion" brings together influences from various parts of the world, with a particular interest in various Asian cuisines, and poses interesting questions about multiculturalism, globalisation, and the preservation of diversity. The Slow Food Movement's interest in local products similarly seems to associate cooking with space, while its very "temporal" name (like that of its arch-enemy, fast food), points to the link between cooking and time.

Insofar as my ultimate purpose in this study has been to suggest the resistance of food preparation to easy categorisation, an appropriate way of concluding might be to introduce two final examples of works I myself found

difficult to appropriate at the same time that they persisted in fascinating me. One is a quotation from Brillat-Savarin's *Gastronomy as a Fine Art: or, The Science of Good Eating*, which states that those "to whom nature has denied an aptitude for the enjoyments of taste, are long-faced, long-nosed, and long-eyed: whatever their stature, they have something lanky about them. They have dark, lanky hair, and are never in good condition. It was one of them who invented trousers" (115). In any case, whatever point he was trying to make, it is equally clear from the title of the book that attempts to fit cooking into an established binary framework were problematic long before post-structural theory made such difficulty an object of inquiry.

Another difficult to incorporate but nonetheless fascinating piece of information related to cooking is the work of Carl A. Rietz, in particular his astonishing Gustametric Chart. Fundamental to Rietz's philosophy is the belief that cookery "is called an art -- this volume considers it as an applied science. Many cookery procedures followed today are not scientific but are based on folklore, customs, habits, and styles. These bases must be replaced before processors and appreciators of food can be properly trained" (2:15). Mathematical in appearance, the Gustametric Chart is a grid which purports to solve once and for all the cook's dilemma of what to serve with a particular main dish. Beginning with the meal's chosen meat and its seasonings, the cook has only to draw a straight line between viand and herb and then rest secure in the knowledge that any of the accompaniments that match up with that line will be appropriate ways to complete the meal.

Invoking a conception of cooking that seems so exclusively rooted in one pole of the art/science binary may seem like an unusual way to end this study, but also thereby suggests that the multi-functionality of cooking is such that it permits assertions of definition and role in a variety of areas and from

different perspectives. Moreover, and in keeping with the way that categorical distinctions often self-deconstruct, one might note that while Rietz's chart may be scientific in its purpose, it also resembles artistic formulas such as those for mixing pigments of various shades in order to arrive at a certain colour, or even the no-longer-popular paint-by-number kits that can turn those without talent or training into "artists." If, as the saying goes, we are what we eat -- if eating determines who we are -- then perhaps food preparation represents the flip-side -- who we are determines cooking and how we perceive its role. As a term whose meaning is socially determined, cooking thus functions to tell us about ourselves as much as it performs any other role we choose to assign to it.

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