Hungry for More:
Anthony Bourdain and the Cultural Valorization of Chefs and Cooks

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Abstract

Food, food media, and celebrity chefs make up an increasingly important element of the cultural industries. The craze is not altogether new, but the cultural relevance and ubiquitous appearance of chefs in all forms of popular media is a relatively recent phenomenon. Anthony Bourdain, although by no means the first celebrity chef in the era of cable television and omnipresent chef personae, did introduce a new and important image of chefs in the culinary media industry, what I call the "chef underground." For this brand of chef the kitchen represented an escape from mainstream culture and values. The kitchen was not a sight for self-promotion or entrepreneurism, but rather a space that allowed for a prolonged commitment to subcultural participation. The kitchen was, and is, of course, a space of labor exploitation. Yet, for those travelers in the chef underground the kitchen allowed for the development of a transient existence, relatively free from outside scrutiny as well as normative notions and expectations of workplace and lifestyle behavior. By identifying and detailing the alternative social and cultural dispositions of the chef underground in his writing—and aligning himself with them—Bourdain at once managed to construct a unique anti-establishment media persona for himself as well as render the once nebulous group of outsider chefs and cooks legible in mainstream consumer culture.

This dissertation investigates the cultural influence of the new archetype of chefs following Bourdain's rise to prominence. In the midst of a broad cultural valorization of chefs and cooks, the promotion of Bourdain's anti-establishment persona through multiple mass media created a new popular image of professional chefs. The previously unglamorous career of working in a restaurant kitchen was transformed into a cool and

authentic occupation and subcultural formation. This dissertation explores the cultural significance of this re-articulation of chefdom by employing multiple methodological approaches in order to understand how the re-presentation of chefs and cooks after Bourdain's rise to fame has affected the everyday lives of individuals working in contemporary professional kitchens and influenced the broader culinary and media industries.

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INTRODUCTION

On April 19, 1999, *The New Yorker* magazine catapulted Anthony Bourdain to fame by publishing his article titled, "Don't Eat Before Reading This." The article, an exposé of the New York City food and restaurant industry, was penned in a self-described "moment of marijuana-induced hubris"[1] by a chef admittedly drawn into the restaurant industry because of "the idea of kitchens as an outlaw, pirate life . . . the last refuge of the misfit."[2] In contrast to the staid, viewer friendly chef demonstrations that had come to dominate culinary media, Bourdain presented the life of a professional cook as a gritty, drug-fueled, and crazed existence. In Tokyo at the time of the magazine's release, Bourdain returned home to New York City to a scene he described as "utter madness," replete with a television crew stationed outside the restaurant where he served as chef.[3] A new breed of celebrity chef was born.

Food, food media, and celebrity chefs make up an increasingly important element of the cultural industries. The craze is not altogether new, but the cultural relevance and ubiquitous appearance of chefs in all forms of popular media is a relatively recent phenomenon. Bourdain, although by no means the first celebrity chef in the era of cable television and omnipresent chef personae, did introduce a new and important image of chefs in the culinary media industry, what I call the "chef underground." For this brand of chef the kitchen represented an escape from mainstream culture and values. The kitchen was not a sight for self-promotion or entrepreneurism, but rather a space that allowed for a prolonged commitment to subcultural or subaltern participation and thus provided

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[1] Michael Klein, "He Didn't Set Out to be a Celebrity," *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* June 6, 2001.
[2] Anthony Bourdain, "Don't Eat Before Reading This," *New Yorker,* April 19, 1999, 61.
[3] Necia Hall, "Con Man," *The Age,* March 20, 2001.

marginalized people a way to claim space and assert individual identity. The kitchen was, and is, of course, a space of labor exploitation. Yet, for those travelers in the chef underground the kitchen allowed for the development of a transient existence, relatively free from outside scrutiny as well as normative notions and expectations of workplace and lifestyle behavior. By identifying and detailing the alternative social and cultural dispositions of the chef underground in his writing—and aligning himself with them— Bourdain at once managed to construct a unique anti-establishment media persona for himself as well as render the once nebulous group of outsider chefs and cooks legible in mainstream consumer culture.

This dissertation investigates the cultural influence of the new archetype of chefs following Bourdain's rise to prominence. In the midst of a broad cultural valorization of chefs and cooks, the promotion of Bourdain's anti-establishment persona through multiple mass media created a new popular image of professional chefs. The previously unglamorous career of working in a restaurant kitchen was transformed into a *cool* and *authentic* occupation and subaltern way of life. This dissertation explores the cultural significance of this re-articulation of chefdom by employing multiple methodological approaches in order to understand how the re-presentation of chefs and cooks after Bourdain's rise to fame has affected the everyday lives of chefs and cooks, the culinary and media industries as a whole, as well as those that consume food media or actual foodstuff.

Through political-economic analysis, I trace the development of the food media genre in an attempt to explain the contemporary cultural valorization of chefs and cooks. This analysis includes both a charting of the historical trajectory of the representations of

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chefs in popular food magazines, as well as a critical analysis of the broader social, economic, and political conditions that may also have contributed to a change in the cultural status of specific restaurant employees. I then employ textual analysis of Bourdain's television show *No Reservations* in order to explicate the way in which Bourdain continually constructs an authentic persona for himself by simultaneously authenticating and appropriating the culture of others. This textual analysis is limited in that it can only account for the preferred meanings encoded into Bourdain's myriad texts. For this reason, through in-depth ethnographic research conducted in professional kitchens, I investigate how the valorization of chefs and cooks has altered the everyday lives of those who labor in the environment Bourdain helped glorify.

Food and the act of eating are intensely political. Concerns over sustainable food production, unequal access to the most basic nutritional resources required for human sustenance, and widespread obesity, to name but a few of the growing issues related to food, are all obviously political. However, besides being beyond the scope of this project, these fundamental political issues also fail to address the important and nuanced role food plays in the construction of identity in contemporary society. Food is not only essential to survival, it is also a marker of status and an increasingly important method of social stratification. It is this political function of food within modern society, and specifically the role of mass media in contributing to the cultural knowledge and increasing significance of food as a symbolic means of social distinction that is of primary concern in this dissertation.

Previous research has linked food media and celebrity chefs to changes in culinary knowledge and everyday food practices for food media consumers specifically,

and "ordinary" citizens more broadly.[4] Furthermore, research on the behavior of

"foodies," or those "for whom food is central to their sense of self"[5] has indicated that the

consumption of food and food media is a highly politicized act in which the knowledge

of the "right" kinds of food to consume works to obfuscate social inequality while

contributing to the perpetuation of the very inequalities such forms of cultural

consumption conceal.[6] Not surprisingly, for these foodies, food media is a primary means

of acquiring not only a knowledge of what foods are worthy of consumption, but also

provides instruction on how to properly produce these foods in one's home or,

alternatively, didactic training on how, why, and where one should dine in order to get a

proper, or authentic, version of a given food object.[7] Yet, for all the insight generated by

prior research on the intersection of food, culture, and media, a convincing account of the

transformation of professional chefdom from a largely ignored or even derided vocation

to a culturally celebrated and commercially exploitable occupation remains largely

unaccounted for. To clarify, I do not mean to suggest that research into the history of

celebrity chefs and their impact on food culture is unaccounted for. Instead, I contend that

the way in which the chefs and cooks who function on the margins of celebrity culture or

wholly outside of it, but are nonetheless affected by media and cultural valorizations of

chefs, remains unexplained. In other words, the existence of celebrity chefs did not

historically correspond with a concentrated focus on individual chefs and cooks as the

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[4] See Signe Rousseau, *Food Media: Celebrity Chefs and the Politics of Everyday Interference* (London: Berg, 2012).

[5] Isabelle de Solier, "Making the Self in a Material World: Food and Moralities of Consumption," *Cultural Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (2013), 9.

[6] Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[7] Isabelle de Solier, *Food and the Self: Consumption, Production, and Material Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 41.

crux of the culinary industry. In fact, the gradual shift that displaced the aesthetics of a given restaurant and the performance of its front of house staff as the focal point of food media coverage in favor of detailed accounts of the quality or uniqueness of a restaurant's food, and eventually to those that cook it, cannot be attributed to changes in culinary media alone. Instead, I argue that the prominent focus in contemporary food media on chefs—celebrity or not—is the result of a convergence of disparate factors that culminated with Anthony Bourdain's rise to fame and his explication of the chef underground.

The Cultural Emergence of the Chef Underground

Bourdain effectively parlayed his successful article in *The New Yorker* into a book deal, which turned out to be a best-selling memoir denuding the existence of a subaltern community of chefs and cooks dedicated to living an alternative existence outside mainstream society, an existence facilitated by the relative anonymity of life in a professional kitchen. It may appear odd that I point to the publication of a solitary media text written by a then largely obscure individual as a transformative moment in the cultural representation and significance of chefs and cooks. Yet, I argue that the publication of Bourdain's memoir, *Kitchen Confidential,* in the summer of 2000 represents a significant point of articulation in which the previous construction and representation of celebrity chefs in media and popular culture, together with Bourdain's novel elucidation of the existence of a subversive chef underground, coalesced to create a popular cultural formation of chefs as iconoclastic cultural figures. A cultural formation, as Lawrence Grossberg explains, is the result of a historical articulation in which

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"particular cultural practices, which may have no intrinsic or even apparent connection, are articulated together to construct an apparently new identity."[8] I contend that the publication of Bourdain's memoir, and its subsequent popularity and cultural influence, is a specific and identifiable moment in the construction of a new cultural identity of the professional chef. Admittedly, the transformation or rearticulation of the cultural understanding of chefs began long before the publication of *Kitchen Confidential*. In fact, as I will argue, the transformation of chefdom in media and popular culture is the result of a series of historical, political, economic, and cultural factors. However, the long and messy historical trajectory of cultural perceptions of cooking, chefs, restaurants, and food, managed to provide the conditions of possibility that allowed Bourdain to rearticulate the cultural meaning of professional chefdom, and masculine chefdom in particular.

The release of *Kitchen Confidential* coincided with a broader cultural focus on chefs. Following years of financial profligacy and a succession of owners, Food Network, a twenty-four-hour cable network dedicated entirely to food related content, achieved profitability in 2000 by building its programming around—and widely promoting—its lineup of chefs.[9] The culinary exploits of Food Network stars like Emeril Lagasse, Bobby Flay, and Mario Batali soon transcended the cable television station that engendered their fame—they became brand name celebrities, with best-selling cookbooks and celebrated

[8] Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992),

[9] Toby Miller, *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007).

restaurants.[10] Food, while no doubt important, played a subsidiary role in relation to the cultivation of each chef's personality and identity:

> And the new breed of chefs—young, brash, exuberant, physical—made great TV stars . . . by inviting viewers into their kitchen sets, speaking directly to the camera, seeming to offer direct access to their true selves, chefs offered a (performed) sense of real identification and access. Suddenly, everyone was on a first-name basis with the nation's biggest chef-stars.[11]

Unlike Food Network programs focused on the presentation of consumer friendly star chefs, however, Bourdain's memoir glorified the professional kitchen as space of non-normative existence. In an era when chefs were flocking to Food Network in order to escape a labor-intensive and unpredictable life in the kitchen and attempt to cultivate a profitable brand,[12] for Bourdain the professional kitchen was central to his success. His valorization of the kitchen as subaltern space inhabited by a variety of miscreant characters engaged in myriad criminal activities—as well as, of course, cooking—provided the professional kitchen with a mystique mainstream portrayals of star chefs did not. After the success of *Kitchen Confidential*, chefs no longer had to be television stars with recognizable brand names to achieve fame or develop widespread notoriety and a dedicated following. Instead, the kitchen became a stage, and the dining room a site for the consumption of not just food, but also the aura and performance of members of a newly defined and culturally legible subculture with an exciting and exotic allure. Sure, Food Network viewers could eat at a restaurant owned by Bobby Flay or Mario Batali, but the new breed of chefs offered consumers a safe, yet tangible interaction with newly visible chef deviancy in addition to the opportunity to consume food. These kitchen

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[10] Allen Salkin, *From Scratch: Inside the Food Network* (New York: Putnum, 2013).

[11] Gwen Hyman, "The Taste of Fame: Chefs, Diners, Celebrities, Class," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 8, no.3 (2008): 45.

[12] See Salkin, *From Scratch*.

laborers, of course, existed prior to Bourdain's popular cultural exposition of their

lifestyle and career choices. I insist, however, that Bourdain's role in expunging them

from "the dark recesses of the restaurant underbelly"[13] and thrusting them into the

cultural spotlight has altered their everyday lives as chefs and cooks. In so doing, I argue

that Bourdain, by opening up the necessary space for him to occupy a significant and

influential position as an arbiter of cultural values and taste, represents a new form of

cultural intermediary.

Chefs as Cultural Intermediaries

Cultural intermediaries, according to Pierre Bourdieu, belong to a rising faction of the

middle class he termed the "new petite bourgeoisie," and engage in "occupations

involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations,

fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and

services."[14] In an effort to gain legitimacy through the attainment of cultural capital,

cultural intermediaries "invent a new life-style, particularly in domestic life" in order to

"redefine their social co-ordinates."[15] Thus, cultural intermediaries act as social taste

leaders involved in what David Wright refers to as "constant processes of legitimization

and de-legitimization in order to shore up their position."[16] Through this ongoing

legitimization process, cultural intermediaries create a need for their own products or

services while simultaneously contributing to the disintegration of "some of the old

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[13] Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 3-4.

[14] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 359.

[15] *Ibid,* 360.

[16] David Wright, "Mediating Production and Consumption: Cultural Capital and 'Cultural Workers'," *The British Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 1 (2005): 110.

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distinctions and symbolic hierarchies that revolve around the popular culture/higher culture axis."[17] By rendering high-class cuisine obtainable and attractive for middle class television viewers—and attaining a distinct position of cultural and social influence in the process—Julia Child, widely regarded as the first or most significant member of the first incarnation of celebrity chefs, not only contributed to the transformation of American culinary taste, but also legitimated celebrity chefdom as a culturally influential occupation.[18]

The cultural influence and importance of celebrity chefs grew exponentially following the advent and eventual popularity of the Food Network. The chef stars of the Food Network followed the established production conventions of the cooking show, but rather than solely exalting exotic cuisine, they instead combined what Toby Miller refers to as a "crass nativist populism" with "training in embourgeoisement."[19] Male chefs like Emeril Lagasse and Bobby Flay—the former with a masculine bravado and a commitment to Creole and Cajun fair, the latter with an all-American persona replete with a passion for the art of barbeque grilling—aided in the transformation of cooking "from an essentially feminine chore to a glamorous hobby for men, women, and children."[20] More than simply legitimizing the practice of cooking as a viable hobby or form of cultural capital, however, these chefs and their Food Network counterparts contributed to an ongoing alteration of the American food media landscape. As Gwen Hyman explains:

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[17] Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991), 45.
[18] See Dana Polan, *Julia Child's The French Chef* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[19] Miller, *Cultural Citizenship,* 132.
[20] Pauline Adema, "Vicarious Consumption: Food, Television and the Ambiguity of Modernity," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 3 (2000): 116.

> Not very long ago, the term 'chef' had a more or less stable meaning in America. Chefs were imagined as foreign…they were portrayed as haughty, overplayed, ridiculous fops or gorgeously debauched, dissolute, oversensual control freaks…'American' kitchens were among the dark places of the earth: sweaty, slippery environs of dirt and noise, places of filthy physical labor where nothing gleamed. They were run not by chefs but by cooks: fat, sweaty, chain-smokers in funny hats and undershirts.[21]

This characterization is no longer culturally hegemonic. While not entirely a result of the rise of celebrity chefs and the popularity of the Food Network, the cultural legitimation of chefdom in the United States is certainly due in large part to the work of star chefs and food media. These cultural intermediaries, working in and through lifestyle media, glorified cooking as an art form and the professional chef as a virtuoso performer. Yet the original Food Network stars, while still brand names with loyal fan followings, have seen their cultural significance wane in the last decade. As Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann explain, "At the same time the television programming in the Food Network is a significant part of the democratization of foodie culture, television's food celebrities have been critiqued for their populist appeal, thereby reducing the basis for distinction, and rendering them less potent symbols of foodie status."[22] The social status of cultural intermediaries is, after all, characterized by instability.

Bourdain as a New Type of Cultural Intermediary

Bourdain's lurid tale of drugs, sex, and general debauchery in *Kitchen Confidental* painted a much different picture of life in a professional kitchen than the wholesome images promulgated by the established Food Network stars. Rather than exposing working and middle class viewers to the proper tastes of the dominant classes in the

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[21] Hyman, "The Taste of Fame," 43.
[22] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, 53.

fashion of previous chefs in media, Bourdain's work instead exposed the rebellious

countercultural lifestyle extant within the confines of restaurant kitchens dispensing

gourmet cuisine for the middle and upper classes. Bourdain, intentionally or not, became

a new form of cultural intermediary necessitated by a lifestyle culture made up of

individuals concerned with the process of identity construction through consumption.

Rather than legitimating high-class taste, the role of cultural intermediaries in this

stylized culture is to open up new fields for cultural production and consumption. As

Beverly Skeggs explains:

> Where intermediaries used to be arbiters of highbrow taste (boundary
> maintenance) their role is now the *translation and evaluation* of other cultures. A
> corresponding shift occurs in middle-class formation reliant on achieving status
> through hiding and restricting knowledge and practices, to one in which status is
> achieved through the display of this knowledge and practice: exclusivity to
> transparency.[23]

Cultural intermediaries, according to Skeggs, thus operate as makers and markers of cool.

The promotion of cool is a distinguishing characteristic of the current capitalist

epoch. In defining what he refers to as "cool capitalism," Jim McGuigan explains that in

the current manifestation of capitalism "[s]igns of cultural difference and rebellion are

embraced by business but not to the detriment of business."[24] This modification

consequently allows for "the incorporation, and thereby neutralisation, of cultural

criticism and anti-capitalism into the theory and practice of capitalism itself."[25] Cultural

intermediaries, functioning as markers of cool, represent a crucial element of the

capitalist system through the production of lifestyle media that provide viewers with

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[23] Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 148.
[24] Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 147.
[25] *Ibid,* 38.

"new rules and traditions for living."[26] Hence, while cultural intermediaries like Bourdain

no longer appear to serve as legitimizing cultural agents for the dominant classes, by

contributing to the naturalization of "consumption-based models of civic agency,"[27]

cultural intermediaries—through the promotion and legitimation of consumer

capitalism—do in fact support those in positions of power who benefit from the status

quo.

      Although Bourdain certainly fits this definition of the cultural intermediary, there

remains, however, another function of his brand of cultural intervention that further

nuances the way he and his work function. Whereas many cultural intermediaries operate

as "arbiters of good taste and style" by providing consumers with "proper" lifestyle

choices, and thereby "reinforcing an aspirational culture of consumer-based class

mobility"[28] that serves to mask class antagonisms, Bourdain instead openly derides

elements of consumer capitalism. As with other cultural intermediaries that espouse

countercultural values, Bourdain works to incorporate "materials that previously seemed

to possess subversive potentials" through "the pre-emptive formatting and shaping of

desires, aspirations and hopes by capitalist culture."[29] In this way, an individual is

encouraged to rebel by aligning oneself with the supposed subversive lifestyle choices

and consumptive practices of cultural intermediaries who promote anti-establishment

values. Consequently, this unique form of cultural intermediary creates new space for

cultural production and consumption through the promotion of seemingly seditious

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[26] Tania Lewis, *Smart Living: Lifestyle Media and Popular Expertise* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 12.

[27] *Ibid,* 11.

[28] *Ibid,* 9-10.

[29] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009), 9.

lifestyles, while in fact actively working to contain dissent within individualized lifestyle politics. By successfully engaging in this form of cultural work, these cultural intermediaries also manage to secure for themselves an exclusive status of cultural distinction.

The distinction acquired by Bourdain in the realm of culinary media has allowed him to build a highly influential brand. Following his successful memoir, Bourdain has participated in a continuous televised global quest for "traditional" cuisine.[30] In addition, he has engendered a transformation in food television—his persona and various media products have unquestionably contributed to significant alterations within the broader culinary industry. All of these transformations are related to the cultural power of the concept of authenticity. More specifically, this power is based on the ability of cultural intermediaries—in this case Bourdain—to actively construct, maintain, or rearticulate specific cultural perceptions of authenticity.

Bourdain and the Construction of Authenticity

Bourdain constructs authenticity in his media fare by deriding artifice. For Bourdain, artifice is always associated with commodified, mass produced culture. Authenticity is thus established as that which is not artificial, or more accurately, that which is not mass-

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[30] *A Cook's Tour*, Bourdain's first television show, premiered on the Food Network on January 8, 2002. The show lasted for two seasons before Bourdain and his production crew left the network to create *Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations,* which premiered on The Travel Channel on July 25, 2005. The Travel Channel aired 134 episodes of *No Reservations* over nine seasons. The show received twelve Primetime Emmy nominations, winning two. For more, see "Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations," IMDb, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0475900/ [accessed April 18, 2013]. On April 14, 2013, Bourdain's third television show, *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* premiered on CNN. At the time of writing, the show is beginning its fourth season. Thus far, it has won two Primetime Emmy awards, as well as a Peabody Award. For more, see "Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown," IMDb, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2845786/?ref_=ttawd_awd_tt [accessed October 1, 2014].

produced by the powerful cultural industries. This works on two levels in Bourdain's

media fare: first, on an individual level, and second on a cultural level. At the individual

level, Bourdain attempts to distance himself from the capitalist cultural industry of which

he is a part. A telling example of his ironic derision of the industry—from which he

profits and in which he exerts significant influence—was expressed in an early interview

with a journalist while promoting *Kitchen Confidential*. In response to a question about

his newfound fame, Bourdain responded:

> I would rather be called a habitual masturbator or a serial arsonist than a celebrity
> chef. I don't want that on my fucking resume. That's not a job. The only thing
> worse is 'television personality.' Is that a job description? Bed-wetter would be
> preferable.[31]

In this way, Bourdain secures his own authenticity by opposing both corporate food

media and the star chefs promoted by the cultural industries.

Likewise, in the process of legitimating or authenticating cultural fare through the

appropriation and subsequent promotion of foreign, immigrant, or working class cultures,

Bourdain showcases their exoticness—and thus authenticity—in order to increase his

own cultural capital, while at the same time effectively flattening the differences between

cultures by fashioning them into palatable, exchangeable parts. In this way exoticism is

rendered legible and approachable, and facilitates the consumption of exotic cultures,

goods, and dispositions for the purpose of attaining cultural capital. Bourdain guides

those in the know, who are trapped in a continuous process of achieving or maintaining

distinction and individuation, to the right kind of conspicuous consumption.

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[31] Anthony Bourdain, quoted in Aaron Hicklin, "'I Don't Think You Can Cook Well if You Don't
Love Sex,'" *The Herald* (Glasgow), February 21, 2004.

Many scholars trace the contemporary quest for authenticity to the rapid "progress" brought about by modernization.[32] Modernity's rapid pace, according to these scholars, has produced aguish and alienation for modern subjects, leading to a desire or nostalgia for a "pure" or "authentic" past and way of being in the world that was lost in the cultural transformations brought about by an unabated pursuit of progress. As such, authenticity is often ascribed to the cultural objects and practices of pre-modern societies.[33] This form of authentication has roots in science, as anthropologists, ethnographers, philologists, and other cultural experts sought out objects produced prior to the penetration of Western influence in a search for civilizations and meanings lost to modernity.[34] In so doing, authenticity came to be associated with handmade non-commercial objects, and in turn, mechanically mass-produced commercial products were marked as inauthentic.[35]

Such expert notions of authenticity and inauthenticity spread beyond educational institutions and museums into broader society, creating two systems of value: cultural and economic. According to Robert Shepherd, cultural value is often framed in everyday life as transcendent, intrinsic, creative, and an end in itself, while economic value is deemed superficial, repetitive, calculated, and a means to an end.[36] This division of value and the valorization of authentic objects created a false binary between consumer

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[32] See Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (New York: Createspace, 2010).

[33] Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 15 (1988): 371-386.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Sarah Banet-Wiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, and Cohen, "Authenticty and Commoditization".

[36] Robert Shepherd, "Commodification, Culture, and Tourism," *Tourist Studies* 2 (2002): 183-201.

capitalist space and an authentic space that exists outside of the capitalist marketplace. Although cultural experts and intellectuals may not have occupied positions of power associated with economic wealth, the process of authentication, while ostensibly aimed at legitimating cultural objects, also served to legitimate the authenticator. The subsequent claim to authenticity by intellectuals and other members of the "creative class" presaged how authenticity would eventually become a means of excluding others.[37]

Travel, Authenticity, and the Consumption of Others

As Sharon Zukin argues, we see authentic spaces only from outside them.[38] Consequently, mobility is central to modernity. Mobility allows modern, Western subjects access to other cultures, to view other locations and people, and judge them in comparison to their own lives and cultures. As such, Caren Kaplan suggests that travel is foundational in the modern production of the self.[39] Like Zukin, Kaplan argues that distance represents the best perspective from which to gain knowledge of one's self and Others. Such a route to self-knowledge constitutes the Western world as the origin against which other locations are evaluated, and the Western subject as a viewer and the rest of the world as that which exists to be viewed and scrutinized.[40] Likewise, Shepherd locates the formation of one's self through Others in the quest for an alternative to modern existence, a search grounded in the belief that in the transition to modernity

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[37] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Urban Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[38] *Ibid,* 20.

[39] Caren Kaplan, "Transporting the Subject: Technologies of Mobility and Location in an Era of Globalization," *PMLA* 117, no. 1 (2002): 32-42.

[40] *Ibid.*

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Western subjects have lost something that can be found in Others more "primitive," natural, and thus authentic than themselves.[41]

Lisa Heldke critiques this search for one's self through the appropriation or consumption of other cultures and cultural goods as a form of cultural colonialism.[42] Perhaps even more problematic than the desire for an encounter with others in Heldke's view, however, is that the Western desire for an authentic other actually serves to instantiate the other. In other words, there are no actual authentic, "primitive" Others that exist outside of—and remain untainted by—the Western world, but instead the Other is a creation of Western subjects for their own purposes.[43] As a result, the Other's culture turns out to be not some "transcendental" or "intrinsic" way of life, but instead merely a cultural commodity which Western subjects utilize to create selfhood through distinction. Whereas some individuals in Western society may structure their lifestyles based on mainstream trends and popular cultural commodities, those individuals Heldke refers to as "cultural adventurers" attempt to distinguish themselves from such "inauthentic" ways of being by demonstrating their knowledge and authority of the "authentic" culture of Others.[44]

Authenticity is central to my reading of Anthony Bourdain. Not only is Bourdain's celebrity status predicated on his own authentic countercultural persona, but also through his various media productions wherein he continuously searches out forms of authenticity in the exotic cultures of others. Understanding that the concept of authenticity is socially constructed and culturally relative provides greater insight into the

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[41] Shepherd, "Commodification, Culture, and Tourism."
[42] Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
[43] *Ibid,* 44.
[44] *Ibid*.

cultural influence of Bourdain himself. Much like scientific expert authenticators, Bourdain works to construct cultural authenticity for himself through the authentication of other cultures and people. The ironic aspect of Bourdain's established authenticity is that he is, in fact, a product of modernity, operating in and through mass-produced and consumed media. Yet, it is through Bourdain's privileged position as a cultural expert with access to others and their "traditional" or "natural" ways of life that remain "unspoiled" by Western "progress"—or at least have been transformed in ways that appear noticeably different from contemporary Western culture in the eyes of Western consumers—that Bourdain is able to maintain an aura of authenticity.

Bourdain, in his position as a celebrated television personality, unquestionably occupies a privileged cultural position. Through his televised travels across the globe in search of authentic people, cultures, and cuisine, Bourdain is able to construct a particular version of selfhood through his experiences and encounters with others. And although he displays a seemingly genuine respect and admiration for the people and places he encounters, his representation of others in mass media is an implicit act of power in which the lives of others are used as a way to enhance one's self, only to be discarded when no longer of use. The use of authentic others reinforces Bourdain's cultural capital, further legitimating his cultural authenticity and authority, while at the same time offering up exotic cultures and cuisines for his audience to consume.

Emblematic of the function of cultural intermediaries, Bourdain has successfully harnessed his cultural knowledge in order to legitimize and disseminate new taste formations. By appropriating aspects of working-class, immigrant, or exotic foreign cultures, he opens up a new space for middle and upper class consumption—whether in

the form of vicarious consumption through his television show or in the creation of new

lifestyle dispositions based on the consumption of exotic cuisine, or both. Yet, he also

manages to expose the inequality inherent in the process of self-formation achieved

through cultural consumption of exotic others. As indicated above, such a process is

predicated on one's mobility and subsequent ability to access other cultures and other

people. Clearly this is a privileged form of power. In fact, the working-class, immigrant,

or foreign others that welcome Bourdain into their homes, restaurants, or other cultural

spaces must necessarily remain fixed. For they are the Others against and through which

privileged selfhood is constructed.[45] Their cultures provide the necessary site for middle-

class cultural consumers to pillage in order to convert the consumption of exotic cultures,

goods, and dispositions into cultural capital that aids in the continuous process of

distinction and self-formation promoted by consumer culture.

An Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 traces the historical transformation of the representation of chefs in food media

in order to provide greater insight into the cultural rise of celebrity chefs. First, through

an analysis of the political economy of the culinary magazines *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit*,

I provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of culinary media. As

Eileen Meehan points out, any proper critical engagement with food media requires an

analysis of the political economy of ownership, an understanding of the role of

advertising in the production and formulation of the content of a media text, and an

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[45] See Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*.

exploration of the broader cultural context in which that text is produced.[46] Specifically, I adhere to Meehan's suggested formula by analyzing the ownership and control of the magazines, the advertisements and brands featured in each of the magazines, and finally, the broader social and cultural conditions that may have impacted the production or content of the magazines. Second, through a discourse analysis of the magazines mentioned above, I intend to more accurately explain the shifting social status of chefs. Situated within broader social, economic, and cultural transformations, then, this chapter combines an investigation of the political economy of food magazine ownership with an examination of the discourse produced within the magazines themselves in an effort to arrive at a greater understanding of the cultural reconceptualization of chefs.

In Chapters 2 and 3, turn to textual analysis in order to explicate the various ways Bourdain constructs his own authenticity through his television programs, as well as the ways in which he appropriates the cultural capital of others to sustain or increase his own cultural capital and authentic persona. Chapter 2 analyzes the way in which Bourdain reproduces "hillbilly" stereotypes in the "Ozark" episode in order to reinforce his own masculine, countercultural persona. Chapter three juxtaposes representations of ethnic minorities and white male chefs through an analysis of the "Brooklyn" and "Paris" episodes of *No Reservations.* Both chapters demonstrate the way Bourdain reinforces his own cool, masculine, and anti-establishment persona through the appropriation of Other people and Other cultures. In so doing, Bourdain engages in unequal cultural exchanges that produce real and divergent consequences for the Others he represents.

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[46] Eileen Meehan, "Culture: Text or Artifact or Action?" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 25, no. 3 (2001).

Chapters 4 and 5 present the results of participant observation completed in three professional restaurants at various levels of the contemporary restaurant hierarchy. Ultimately, by combining this ethnographic fieldwork with the textual analysis of the previous chapters, this dissertation aims to understand how Bourdain's exposure of the chef underground affects the lives of those working in professional kitchens. Is there solidarity between those kitchen workers who, for divergent reasons, do not want to be in the cultural spotlight? How does the valorization of white, mostly male chefs affect people of color who get displaced by the promotion of this archetypal chef by cultural intermediaries like Bourdain? If white men continue to be purveyors of cool and authentic cuisine and culture in food media, what are the implications of this? How does this reflect or reinforce dynamics of cultural power? Is the professional kitchen still a place in which those that disavow the normative cultural practices Bourdain claims to disavow are able to live an alternative way of life? Does the professional kitchen still provide an alternative space or refuge for those that do not experience the privilege of majoritarian belonging?

Chapter One

FROM BACKSTAGE TO FRONT PAGE:
CULINARY MEDIA AND THE CULTURAL RISE OF CHEFS

> Gone are the days when chefs lived and died by their oven doors. Chefs now have to worry about their public images as much as they do their knife skills.
> —Chef Edward Lee, *Smoke & Pickles*

Edward Lee is not alone in recognizing a dramatic shift in the type of labor expected of a chef or cook in the contemporary culinary industry. His status as an acclaimed chef and food media personality[47], however, does endow his individual account of the transformation of chefdom in the past few decades a particular credibility. According to Lee the cultural status currently accorded to chefs alters the everyday lives of those operating in professional kitchens. The anonymous or degraded chef is a thing of the past, replaced with a glorified conceptualization of the lifestyle of a chef that has resulted in a far different occupational experience for those in the restaurant industry compared to when Lee first entered into it:

> Back then, I could never have imagined a world where chefs would become rock stars. All the chefs I worked for in my early days were chained to their kitchens, emblazoned with the scars of battle: fading slash marks from knife cuts, discolored blotches on their arms from old burns, and always a fresh bandage somewhere on their limbs. They were more artisans than artists. I could never have imagined a time when people would recognize me at airports or walking down the street. Truth be told, it is an uneasy experience, especially when you've been anonymous for most of your life.[48]

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[47] Lee is chef and owner of 610 Magnolia in Louisville, Kentucky. His work at the restaurant has earned him three nominations for the James Beard Best Chef: Southeast Award. In addition, Lee finished fifth on the ninth season of *Top Chef* and has made numerous other television appearances, published a book, and written numerous magazine articles. For more see "Bio," Chef Edward Lee, http://chefedwardlee.com/bio/ [accessed October 6, 2013].

[48] Edward Lee, *Smoke & Pickles: Recipes and Stories from a New Southern Kitchen* (New York: Artisan, 2013), 132.

Lee points to the ever-increasing popularity of food media as the impetus for the changes in his profession.[49] This statement is perhaps an obvious one. For in order for a chef to achieve widespread recognition, publicity via media coverage is a necessary antecedent. Yet, the seemingly obvious connection between media coverage, acclaimed restaurants, and celebrity chefs belies the complex way in which the food media genre developed, particularly the role that the valorization of chefs performed in the genre's increased cultural and economic capital. In the current capitalist epoch characterized by the promotion of individualization based upon the act of consumption, the valorization of chefs has simultaneously opened up a new lifestyle formation upon which consumers are able to construct an identity as well as provided a lucrative method of capitalist accumulation in the food industries.

Food Media

Newspapers in the United States began publishing food related articles in the 1840s.[50] In 1896, *The Boston Cooking-School Magazine of Culinary Science and Domestic Economics* became the first mass disseminated food publication. Later known as *American Cookery,* the Boston Cooking School's publication proved an instant success and became America's most important food magazine for over four decades. The introduction of *Gourmet* magazine in 1941, however, altered the food magazine landscape. In contrast to the *American Cookery*'s small black and white pages filled with

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[49] Lee explains that when he first entered the restaurant industry chefs were hired merely to cook and do so in complete anonymity. Lee credits Food Network for bringing about a wider media and cultural interest in food that transformed chefs from unrecognized laborers to the rock stars of a new era. See Lee, *Smoke & Pickles,* 131-133.

[50] Toby Miller, *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007).

traditional American recipes*, Gourmet* featured large, color pages focused on French cuisine, cosmopolitan cities, and artistically written food articles. *American Cookery* eventually folded before the conclusion of World War II. Although *Gourmet,* too, struggled during the war years—in part due to rationing and travel restrictions that limited what Americans were able to eat—its editor later claimed that the war actually proved beneficial to the magazine's success.[51] The formula established by *Gourmet* had a large influence on subsequent food related media. Not only did it inspire similarly themed food magazines *Bon Appétit* and *Food & Wine*, but it also counted among its avid early readers a woman who would go onto become the first true celebrity chef created by mass media: Julia Child.[52]

Although James Beard and Dionne Lucas pioneered television cooking shows in the late 1940s and Julia Child perfected the art of television food personality in the 1960s, most scholars attribute the rise of the modern celebrity chef to the 1993 advent of Food Network, the first 24-hour cable channel dedicated entirely to food.[53] Neither profitable nor popular upon its launch, the deliberate cultivation of celebrity chefs and a change in the network's ownership in 1996 managed to turn around Food Network's fortune. By 1999, Food Network personalities like Emeril Lagasse, Bobby Flay, and Mario Batali had achieved star status and the network was available in 30 million households, up from only 11 million in 1995. In 2001, the same year the network added Rachael Ray to its

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[51] Andrew F. Smith, *Eating History: Thirty Turning Points in the Making of American Cuisine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[52] *Ibid,* 189-191.

[53] See Paula Adema, "Vicarious Consumption: Food, Television and the Ambiguity of Modernity," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 3 (2000); Gwen Hyman, "The Taste of Fame: Chefs, Diners, Celebrity, Class," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 8, no. 3 (2008); Christine M. Mitchell, "The Rhetoric of Celebrity Cookbooks," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43, no. 3 (2010).

programming lineup, Food Network increased its reach to 66 million households.[54] Other

networks followed Food Network's lead, building programming around food and chefs,

notably Fox's affiliation with Gordon Ramsey and Travel Channel's promotion of

Anthony Bourdain.

A number of media and food scholars have linked the elevated cultural status and

economic influence of the food media genre to the deliberate cultivation of celebrity

chefs. As media scholar Signe Hansen argues, food media in general, and food television

in particular, is not actually about food or cooking, but is instead focused on creating an

appetite for food media consumption that can never be sated. The lack that is created by

the continual absence of fulfillment, Hansen argues, creates a driving ideological force

that maintains the audience in a position of always wanting. The role of the star chef,

according to Hansen, is to perpetuate that constant desire.[55]

American studies scholar Paula Adema, like Hansen, draws attention to the

important role celebrity chefs play in encouraging vicarious consumption through food

television's production of illusory gustatory pleasure. Adema, however, ultimately

attributes the success of celebrity chefs to their ability to translate for a broad audience

the techniques and cuisine traditionally associated with elite taste and culture, thereby

narrowing the divide between high and low culture.[56] In a conclusion similar to that of

Adema, cultural studies scholar Toby Miller argues that the power of food television lies

in its ability to offer chefs from diverse backgrounds that produce mutable culinary

content capable of attracting viewers from all classes. As Miller explains:

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[54] Miller, *Cultural Citizenship.*
[55] Signe Hansen, "Society of the Appetite: Celebrity Chefs Deliver Consumers," *Food, Culture, & Society* 11, no. 1 (2008).
[56] Adema, "Vicarious Consumption."

Food TV normalizes the exotic for suburbanites, and eroticizes the normal for the hip. It caters to both middle-class home-workers and late-night revelers, in what amounts to bread-and-circus recipes for incorporating difference into everyday life.[57]

While these varied explanations all point to the critical role of celebrity chefs in the growth and popularity of food media, significant questions regarding the altered perception of chefs in media and culture remain. First, while the creation of the celebrity chef may indeed have sparked the growth of food television and an increase in the cultural and economic capital of television networks airing food related content, the extant critical analysis of the celebrity chef phenomenon fails to examine its broader cultural implications. By limiting critical analysis to close readings of food television texts, such research is necessarily limited in its understanding of the cultural conditions that contributed to the extensive veneration of chefs. Celebrity chefs attract television audiences, sure, but what other cultural, economic, or even political functions might a broader valorization of chefs serve? The ability to answer this question necessitates a turn to a different theoretical approach. As communication scholar Eileen Meehan points out, any proper critical engagement with media requires an analysis of the political economy of ownership, an understanding of the role of advertising in the production and formulation of the content of a media text, and an exploration of the broader cultural context in which that text is produced.[58]

Furthermore, as a critical scholar I am invested in scholarship committed to analyzing the everyday lives and material conditions of ordinary citizens, or what

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[57] Miller, *Cultural Citizenship,* 129.

[58] Eileen Meehan, "Culture: Text or Artifact or Action?" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 25, no. 3 (2001).

political economist Vincent Mosco refers to as moral philosophy.[59] This understanding of

critical scholarly engagement, along with a broader interest in food media and its cultural

implications, led me to conduct ethnographic research in kitchens staffed by, for lack of a

better term, "ordinary" chefs and cooks. While the people I met in these kitchens were by

no means ordinary, they were also not celebrity chefs. The fact that the chefs and cooks I

met were not famous, however, did not render them immune to the effects of an increased

media and cultural focus on their profession. Although celebrity chefs may be the most

visible result of the improved social status of chefs in U.S. culture, my experience

showed that the ramifications of a newfound cultural (and sometimes economic) capital

for chefs extend far beyond the cultural nexus of celebrity in which only a select few

chefs will ever belong.

Moreover, the chefs I interviewed argue that the shifting public perception of

chefs did not begin with the creation of the Food Network, but instead began long before.

Indeed, while the focus at the time was not necessarily on the chef, the origins of *haute*

cuisine in the U.S. can be traced to New York City and the opening of LePavillion in

1941.[60] *Haute cuisine* subsequently spread across the country and continued into the

culinary boom of the 1970s. Although not widespread, during this boom some individual

chefs managed to attain a greater social status through an increased cultural and critical

focus, including Berkeley chef Alice Waters. In addition, according to sociologist Gary

Allen Fine, in the 1980s a combination of factors coalesced to render critically acclaimed

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[59] Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication* (London: Sage, 2009).

[60] Gary Allen Fine, *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

restaurant food a prestige good, thereby effectively increasing the cultural capital of

individual chefs, even if they were not yet the culinary industry's main attraction.[61]

This chapter, therefore, has two aims. First, through an analysis of the political

economy of the culinary magazines *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit*, I intend to come to a more

comprehensive understanding of the evolution of culinary media. Specifically, I adhere to

Meehan's suggested formula by analyzing the ownership and control of the magazines,

the advertisements and brands featured in each of the magazines as well as any potential

relationship or influence the advertisements may have had on the content of the

magazines, and finally, the broader social and cultural conditions that may have impacted

the production or content of the magazines. Second, through a discourse analysis of the

two magazines mentioned above, I intend to more accurately understand the shifting

social status of chefs. This greater understanding includes both a temporal tracing of the

representations of chefs in the magazines, as well as a critical analysis of the broader

social, economic, and political conditions that may have contributed to a change in the

cultural status of specific restaurant employees.

Food Culture

Food is a fundamental element of human survival. It is also an important cultural

signifier, for, as food studies scholar Warren Belasco explains, "Food identifies who we

are, where we came from, and what we want to be."[62] Culinary tastes and codes of dining

etiquette function as markers of distinction, not only between geographically diverse

cultures, but also in hierarchical class formations within specific national cultures as well

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[61] *Ibid.*

[62] Warren Belasco, *Food: The Key Concepts* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 1.

as across cultural divides. What food people eat and the method in which they consume it, as well as what foods certain people refuse to eat and the methods of consumption they consider abject are essential expressions of personal and group identity.[63] As Belasco rightly points out, these cultural norms often taken to be "timeless and universal are in fact highly variable and only recently 'constructed'."[64] To point out the constructed nature of contemporary culture is to assert that cultural formations are not separate from the social, economic and political conditions in which they emerge.

Contemporary culture is a capitalist culture.[65] Therefore, as media scholar Lynn Spigel notes, "[C]ultural changes take place within a framework of unstable power hierarchies in which different social forces must constantly reinvent their authority through the mechanisms of control at their disposal."[66] Discourse and representation, according to Spigel, is one such method of control. The theoretical notion of discourse and representation as a mechanism of asserting power or control in the production of popular culture is central to this chapter. For, as cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall argues, there is no "true" or fixed meaning in a given culture, but instead meaning or shared cultural knowledge is the product of a continuous social and cultural struggle for power particular to a specific historical context whereby this constructed or arbitrary meaning becomes naturalized as "common sense."[67] As Hall explains:

> [T]hings and events in the real world do not contain or propose their own, integral, single and intrinsic meaning, which is then merely transferred through

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[63] *Ibid.*

[64] *Ibid,* 19.

[65] Jim McGuigan, *Cultural Populism* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[66] Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 8.

[67] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997).

language. Meaning is a social production, a practice. The world has to be *made to mean.*[68]

The social production of meaning is not a neutral phenomenon, but instead, the representation of things or events is struggled over, as well as influenced by, extant meanings shaped by previously established and longstanding historical discourses that any emerging struggle over representation is necessarily subject to.[69] Media, as "the dominant means of social signification in modern society,"[70] form a key public arena in which the struggle over meaning takes place. Thus, according to Hall, media do not simply reflect a naturally occurring social world, but rather, by transmitting representations of "reality," media actively select and present information and thus make things mean in a social formation already structured—and therefore limited—by dominant ideological discourse.[71] Consequently, analyzing media representation offers insight into both emergent as well as historical discursive formations in which the struggle over the power to control or produce new meaning or knowledge takes place. As Hall, explains, "[Knowledge] did not and could not meaningfully exist outside specific discourses, i.e. outside the ways they were represented in discourse, produced in knowledge and regulated by the discursive practices and disciplinary techniques of a particular society and time."[72] Tracing these discursive shifts allows for the ability to decode the social, economic, and political forces actively struggling to reinforce or produce new meaning through media representation in a specific historical period.

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[68] Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," I n *Culture, Society and the Media*, eds. Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran, and Janet Woollacott (London: Routledge, 1982), 67.
[69] *Ibid,* 73.
[70] *Ibid,* 83.
[71] *Ibid*.
[72] Hall, "The Work of Representation," 47.

In order to understand the transformation of chefdom in American popular

culture, I analyze magazine content—both articles and advertisements—in order to

"begin to reveal a general set of discursive rules that were formed for thinking about"[73]

food, cooking, chefs, cuisine, and dining etiquette in three distinct historical periods. The

decision to focus on three specific periods in the cultural history of the United States is

driven by both theoretical and practical reasons. While focusing on three relatively brief

moments in time cannot possibly account for all of the subtleties involved in the gradual

transformation of popular notions of food, it does offer snapshots of precise historical

moments that, taken together, are able to effectively illuminate the trajectory of role of

food and chefs popular culture.

The selection of three historical moments in time is also tied to the political-

economic commitments of this project. Although magazines offer a generative site for

investigating the discursive rules that contribute to popular ways of thinking about food,

understanding the political economy of food media ownership and its relation to other

culinary related corporations enhances such an approach. In addition, such an approach

enables an unpacking of the broader social and economic factors that contribute to the

production of popular commercial discourse. Therefore, I selected three historical

moments in order to investigate specific synergistic links between food magazines,

advertisers, food corporations, and other consumer practices in three distinct eras. The

three historical eras analyzed in this chapter are condensed to three-year periods to allow

for a focused exploration of the political, economic, and social conditions of each era.

The discourse analysis of magazines in these three periods is limited to analysis of the

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[73] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 9.

June issue of each magazine in publication during the final year of each selected three-year timeframe. For instance, during the period from 1948-1950, *Bon Appétit* was not yet published, therefore the discourse analysis in this time period focuses solely on *Gourmet*. The selection of the June issues is deliberate. Because there are few holidays with culinary traditions in June, I selected the issues from this particular month in order to avoid theme issues dedicated to holiday recipes and articles. The discourse analysis in this chapter is aimed at investigating the "written narratives [that] communicate detailed knowledge about social practices and reproduce certain knowledge structures."[74] Specifically, it is aimed at revealing the social and cultural "common sense" notions of cuisine, cooking, and chefs in each historical period in an attempt to connect this socially constructed knowledge with the political-economic conditions of each era. Therefore, I analyze the commercial discourse of culinary magazines by focusing on emergent common themes related to cuisine—and in particular the representation of chefs—in order to trace the transformation of common social conceptualizations of chefs within the broader "socio-gastronomic scene"[75] specific to U.S. culture.

The first section of analysis comprises the post World War II era, specifically the period from 1948 to 1950. These years represent a tenuous and transformative time in U.S. history. As the country emerged from its engagement in World War II, the cultural expectations of women shifted. The glamorization of working women in popular media during the war, which contributed to the gainful employment of six million women, abruptly abated following Japan's surrender. In 1946, four million women previously

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[74] Akihiko Hirose and Kay Kei-Ho Pih, "'No Asians Working Here': Racialized Otherness and Authenticity in Gastronomical Orientialism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, no. 9 (2011), 1489.
[75] *Ibid,* 1483.

celebrated for their contributions to the war effort were fired from their jobs because of fears that their continued employment would lead to job shortages for the returning male soldiers.[76] As a result, a cultural and political emphasis was placed on the promotion of the nuclear family through the investment of "an enormous amount of cultural capital in the ability to form a family and live out a set of highly structured gender and generational roles."[77] This reformulation of the ideal role for women in American culture also contributed to the restructuring of the postwar economy, as the production of household goods aimed at female consumers created a convenient avenue for capitalist expansion.[78] Consequently, I investigate the cultural discourse represented in food magazines during this historical moment alongside a broader analysis of the political-economic context of gendered consumption in which the magazines were produced.

The second section of the chapter analyzes the period following the cultural wars of the 1960s and 1970s. Focused specifically on the three-year period between 1976 and 1978, the selection of this time frame is a deliberate attempt to uncover cultural attitudes toward food following an era marked by significant social and political tensions. The concomitant rise of the countercultural, feminist, and civil rights movements—through their distinct but not wholly unrelated struggles—managed to destabilize traditional norms and values. Issues of food production and consumption, while certainly not central to the political struggles waged during this period, were nonetheless influenced by the general cultural destabilization of the time. In fact, the countercultural ethos led to

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[76] Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994).

[77] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 2.

[78] David M. Lowe, *The Body in Late-Capitalist USA* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

alternative food movements and practices, including organic agriculture.[79] Moreover, the conventional gendered notions of domestic food production were directly challenged, as "[f]eminist utopians embraced almost any idea that would get food out of the home and thus free up women."[80] The feminist challenge of the role of women in domestic food production contributed to significant alterations in the cultural practices of food consumption in a number of ways, including increased dining outside of the home.[81]

Finally, the third section of the chapter analyzes the political and cultural influence of neoliberal governance associated with the rise of Reagan and Thatcher in the early 1980s. The analysis contained in this section is limited to the three-year period from 1983 to 1985. Neoliberalism, as social theorist David Harvey argues, is a class project "[m]asked by a lot of rhetoric about individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility and the virtues of privatisation, the free market and free trade," all of which effectively "legitimised draconian policies designed to restore and consolidate capitalist class power."[82] At least two important outcomes of the neoliberal project are crucial to the aims of the analysis in this section. First, neoliberal policy has led to regulatory changes by the state that provide the necessary conditions for a rapid series of mergers and acquisitions within the media sector that resulted in the consolidation and concentration of media ownership. Food magazines were not immune to this process. In fact, as the political-economic analysis of this period indicates, significant changes in the ownership of food magazines occurred, the implications of which I explore in detail in this section.

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[79] See Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[80] Belasco, *Food*, 4.

[81] Belasco, *Appetite for Change.*

[82] David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

Second, the promotion of individualism and self-actualization within neoliberal ideology

has resulted in the production, promotion, and dissemination of styles and lifestyles

whereby a person's ability to achieve cultural distinction and individuality is always

contained within the act of consumption.[83] In this way, the cultural reevaluation of chefs

and new attitudes toward dining out may be linked to the neoliberal impetus to search out

new forms of consumption through which individual distinction may be asserted. As

sociologist Juliet Schor explains:

> The expansion to new products has begun to encompass formerly nonvisible
> expenditures, such as dining out, leisure activities, and tourism. The last (where
> you went, where you stayed, the restaurants you ate at, what you saw) is
> increasingly a positional good…[84]

Situated within this broader context of neoliberal cultural transformation, then, this

section combines an investigation of the political economy of food magazine ownership

with an examination of the discourse produced within the magazines themselves in an

effort to arrive at a greater understanding of the cultural reconceptualization of chefs and

the kitchen.

The methods employed in this chapter, admittedly, are only capable of producing

a partial insight into the transformation of the cultural relevance of food and chefs due to

the fact that the approaches engage with an "imaginary popular culture"[85] produced by

food magazines and corporate advertisements that may not accurately represent ordinary

people's attitudes toward chefs and the consumption of food. Yet, if the transformation of

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[83] See Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991); Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004); Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (London: PlutoPress, 2009).

[84] Juliet B. Schor, *The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don't Need* (New York: Harper, 1998), 48.

[85] Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 8.

cultural norms is indeed constructed by the social, economic, and political conditions in which such norms emerge, the analysis is able to generate a greater understanding of the cultural forces behind the gradual reappraisal of chefs, food, and dining out that has led to the current popularity of food media as well as the economic and cultural importance of celebrity chefs in contemporary society.

The Post-World War II Era

By some measures, the U.S. economy emerged from World War II in a far better condition than when it entered the war. Military spending during the war rejuvenated a domestic economy ravaged by the Great Depression of the previous decade. The renewed prosperity brought about by state-coordinated wartime production did not cease with the war's end. Instead, the years following the end of World War II marked the beginning of an economic boom that would eventually become known as the "golden age of capitalism."[86] Variously attributed to sustained military spending immediately following the war and preceding the eventual onset of the Cold War,[87] as well as the emergence of the "age of corporation capitalism" in which large corporations began to dominate the domestic economy,[88] in either case by 1950 the U.S. controlled half of the world's wealth.[89]

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[86] Chris Harman, *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 161.

[87] *Ibid*. See also Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999).

[88] William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988).

[89] Chomsky, *Profit Over People,* 21.

The unprecedented economic prosperity of the postwar era altered the lives of millions of people in the United States. The commitment of U.S. politicians to economic development through the application of "Keynesian" economic policies during this period resulted in "rising real wages, virtually full employment [at least for white men] and welfare provision on a scale people had only been able to dream of previously."[90] The adherence to "Keynesian" economic policy following World War II was centered on the idea that the state should actively intervene in the market to ensure the welfare of its citizens as well as that of the capitalist economy. As David Harvey explains, "Fiscal and monetary policies usually dubbed 'Keynesian' were widely deployed to dampen business cycles and to ensure reasonably full employment," which effectively constituted "[a] 'class compromise' between capital and labour" secured by the state in an effort to maintain "domestic peace and tranquility."[91] In short, the hegemonic economic and political philosophies of the era held that in order to maintain a flourishing capitalist economy the state must ensure stable levels of production and consumption. Central to this process was the securing of high levels of employment in order to provide both the labor required to produce goods as well as the wages necessary for the consumption of those goods. Consequently, the economic boom of the postwar period was largely fostered through the construction and promotion of a culture of consumption.

The consumption of food is a necessary activity of human subsistence. As a result, food-related production is the world's largest industry. And like the Taylorism characteristic of the workplace and factories, speed and efficiency in food production and consumption became the cultural norm. As Belasco notes:

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[90] Harman, *Zombie Capitalism*, 161.

[91] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10.

> [T]he prevailing insistence on speed was the very basis of the processed foods business. Slicing, chopping, dicing, pureeing, mincing, pounding, cutting stewing, fermenting—all this could be done in the kitchen or, for a fee, in the factory ahead of time—part of the bargain by which harried consumers bought minutes from processors.[92]

In spite of—or perhaps because of—the postwar societal expectations for women to return to a life of domesticity, processed foods became a staple of the U.S. households.[93] As media and cultural scholar Dana Polan explains, "Like any good postwar science project, cooking became reduced to mechanical, engineered solutions to empirical problems in, in this case, the feeding of the family."[94] Not only did processed foods allow for the efficient production of family meals for women busy with a plethora of additional daily household labor expectations, for many in the postwar era, especially the rural poor, "the artificial-looking, lightly colored, packaged brand-name foods of the city connoted purity, prestige, science and being a part of the wider, more sophisticated urban-centered culture."[95] Postwar prosperity, however, also provided alternatives—or at least an occasional supplement—to the consumption of processed foods.

For those who benefited most directly from the postwar economic boom, an altogether different form of culinary consumption became a marker of prestige: demonstrating an acquired taste for exotic cuisine and the related practice of dining at lauded (often urban) restaurants. As cultural sociologist Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson notes, "In the twentieth century the diffusion of prosperity stimulated an unprecedented societal demand for exotic foodstuffs and elaborate culinary preparations inconceivable

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[92] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 51.

[93] Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Revolution of the American Diet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[94] Dana Polan, *Julia Child's The French Chef* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 6.

[95] Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table,* 201.

on such a scale only a few decades earlier."[96] Moreover, gastronomy or "the socially

valorized pursuit of culinary excellence," according to Ferguson, is a particularly modern

phenomenon in which the social status of the connoisseur is demonstrated through the

conspicuous consumption of elite or exotic fare.[97] Although founded in 1941, the social

valorization of gastronomy in the postwar period provided *Gourmet* magazine a

privileged place in the marketplace. Not only was *Gourmet* the only magazine in which

food was the central focus, it was also the only magazine targeted at an audience

interested in upscale cuisine and foreign travel.[98]

In my analysis of the June 1950 issue of *Gourmet,* I identified three major

discursive themes: (1) an overall focus on exotic cuisine; (2) the valorization of the

tradition or critical reputation of the featured restaurants; and (3) an absence of discussion

of chefs in favor of elaborate descriptions of food and the aesthetic experience produced

by the cultural place and space of the dining experience.

Exotic Cuisine

The June 1950 issue of *Gourmet* magazine contained four feature articles, all of which

were travel narratives set in exotic locations (the Swiss Alps, Siam [Thailand], Bordeaux,

and China). In addition to elaborate accounts of the exotic nature of the various locales

(which will be discussed below), all of the articles featured the foreign titles of numerous

local dishes to amplify their exoticness. For example, a meal experienced at a

"celebrated" Bordeaux restaurant "on the top level of epicurean excellence" is described

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[96] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 152.
[97] *Ibid,*152-153.
[98] Andrew F. Smith, *Eating History.*

in nearly incomprehensible fashion for U.S. readers limited to an understanding of the

English language, generating a desire or expectation to know French terms in order to be

a sophisticated reader:

> The estimable lamprey is often served here *á la bordelaise.* And they prepare *gratin de queues d'écrevisses* with all the pomp and splendor that it receives in Burgundy. The *foie de canard aux raisins* is a regional splendor which you won't soon forget, and you couldn't end your meal more pleasantly than with an *omelette surprise*.

The focus on exotic cuisine was not limited to the meals described in the feature articles.

A section of the magazine dedicated to aiding readers in the preparation and execution of

exotic meals at home featured recipes for dishes such as *Coquilles Saint-Jacques á la*

Pampolaise in which the reader is instructed to spread *duxelles* on the bottom and sides

of ramekins. Moreover, in the section "Let's Eat Out" dedicated to advertisements of

restaurants located in large urban centers, the exoticness of each restaurant is emphasized.

Even restaurants specializing in traditional American cuisine are rendered exotic, with

taglines such as "Cuisine That Epicureans Applaud," or "RELAX IN THE GRACIOUS

SURROUNDINGS OF AN OLD COUNTRY ESTATE." The text's aspirational

discourse, clearly meant to appeal to readers engaged in practices of conspicuous

consumption, reinforced the role of food as a symbolic means of expressing class

distinction.

The Valorization of Tradition or Reputation

In addition to the focus on the exotic nature of the restaurants featured in *Gourmet*, the

magazine's writers consistently established a restaurant's worthiness or authenticity by

valorizing a given restaurant's cultural culinary pedigree or critical reputation. A passage

from the article written about dining in the Swiss Alps is exemplary of both forms of valorization:

> The large cities of Switzerland support many world-renowned restaurants: for example, La Terrace of the Auberge l'Or du Rhône in Geneva and Baur au Lac in Zürich. Both places are almost legendary in Europe, and travelers from America know them well. La Cygne, or Der Schwanen, facing the lake in Lucerne, is a café of a very high order, but in this city it is the old Swiss restaurants along the river that attract the visitor.

Clearly the prestige of a given restaurant—and consequently that of its patron—is related to the process of social classification. For the consumer interested in the status offered through conspicuous consumption of *haute cuisine*, world-renowned restaurants offer an opportunity for discernable social distinction. For those concerned with attaining cultural capital through a comparatively modest mode of consumption, dining at old, prestigious and authentic restaurants that produce genuine cultural fare in a traditional scenic Swiss venue is an alternative—yet equally effective—method of establishing individual distinction through consumption. Rather than the overt elitism associated with high-class restaurants, difference achieved through the appropriation of a traditional restaurant's perceived cultural authenticity represents a more subtle way of establishing social distinction.[99]

An Absence of Chefs

Chefs have historically occupied a low cultural status due to the inconspicuous quality of their labor. The final culinary product—prepared by chefs operating in the obscure

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[99] For a more detailed examination of distinct, yet related methods for attaining cultural capital through unequal access to knowledge of culinary taste hierarchies, see Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, "Democracy Versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 1 (2007).

confines of the professional kitchen—has instead been the focus of critical attention.[100]

The discursive structure of the *Gourmet* text is illustrative of the low cultural status of

chefs. The only mention of chefs or cooks in the text is made in passing in order to assert

the status or cultural legitimacy of a restaurant. In the closing sentence of a review of the

Restaurant Dubern in Bordeaux, the writer links the chef with another critically

acclaimed restaurant in order to confirm the quality of the cuisine: "The chef of the

Restaurant Dubern was formerly with the Grand Hôtel in Paris." The chef is not

mentioned by name and only mentioned at all, apparently, because of his experience at a

renowned restaurant. The only other mention of a chef appears in the same article. The

focus, however, is not on one chef, but on a family of cooks:

> The Basque and Bordelais cooking provided by the talented chefs of Etche Ona is
> not only good but down right delicious. They have their own regional ways of
> cooking veal kidneys and chicken and duck livers which open up a whole new
> culinary horizon…For many generations this house has been in the hands of a
> Basque family called Sabalcagaray, a name as awe-inspiring as their cooking.

Here, the reference to the chefs is meant to allay any fears about the uniqueness of the

cuisine they prepare in relation to the more traditional French cuisine associated with the

region. The ethnicity of the chefs is mentioned twice and the over-emphasizing of their

Family name by stressing its unusual, non-French sound, along with the fact that their

family has successfully operated the restaurant over multiple generations, works to

authenticate the ethnic cuisine they prepare, as well as highlight their sustained success in

an effort to demonstrate the consistent quality of the food they produce.

In contrast to the absence of chefs in the magazine's discourse, the management

and staff who occupy more conspicuous positions in the restaurant are mentioned

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[100] Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste,* 155.

frequently, which strongly implies a rigid professional restaurant hierarchy that *Gourmet*

plays a role in policing. Owners, managers, operators, captains, proprietors, *maître d'*'s,

officials, waiters, hosts, and hostesses—though the roles of these named positions are not

openly differentiated or even explained in the text—are mentioned numerous times

throughout to demonstrate how the staff make diners feel special. Even more frequent

than references to front of the house staff, however, are lengthy descriptions of cuisine

and the ambience particular to each restaurant. The following passage—characteristic of

the detailed accounts of cuisine in the text—describes a writer's experience at an exotic

Bangkok restaurant:

> Obviously suspecting that we didn't know how to cook, the waiter insisted on
> doing our cooking for us. When the broth in the pot was boiling, he broke the
> greens (rather like mustard greens and scallions) into appropriate lengths and
> tossed them in. After them went a generous handful of transparent vermicelli.
> Next came the meat, not chopped in a grinder but with a knife. It was part lean
> beef and part liver, and an egg had been broken over it. The waiter mixed meat
> and egg together with a pair of chopsticks and dropped lumps of the mixture into
> the pot.

Not only does this passage demonstrate *Gourmet*'s exceptional focus on the minute

aspects of exotic gastronomy, it also reveals the attention paid to the ambience (including

the personnel) of the dining experience. Another paragraph from a short review of a New

York City restaurant, however, is even more emblematic of the magazine's focus on

space:

> Granted that one can't eat *décor* or subsist on atmosphere and that neither of them
> is particularly thirst-quenching, they nevertheless can contribute to one's
> enjoyment. The old adage—pleasant surroundings make surroundings pleasant—
> is too homely a saying to be mentioned in connection with, for instance, the
> luxuriously good-looking Drake Room of the Hotel Drake (Park Avenue at Fifty-
> sixth Street), but if one went ahead and mentioned it regardless, it would fit this
> room to a T.

The location of a restaurant, it's décor, and upper class address are rendered important to the pleasure of dining out. Equally important is the appropriateness of the restaurant's space. Luxurious surroundings provide the appropriate ambience for consuming *haute cuisine*, while exoticness is crucial for establishing an authentic gastronomic encounter with a foreign cuisine. Food, too, is a crucial element of fine or exotic dining. Yet this issue of *Gourmet,* characteristic of the social conceptualization of chefs in this historical period, almost completely ignores the chefs and cooks who produce the cuisine.

The Post Counterculture Era

If the success of *Gourmet* in the period following World War II was attributable to a growing interest in exotic foodstuff or elaborate culinary fare by members of U.S. dining or reading public, this interest was certainly not universal. As evidenced by the magazine's elite advertisers as well as the implicit expense of dining in the distant—often exorbitant—culinary establishments profiled in the magazine's featured articles, the publication clearly targeted an affluent demographic. In contrast, for middle and lower class consumers, the Fordist principles that characterized their daily work lives largely carried over into their everyday modes of food consumption. Fast food franchises, although not an entirely new phenomenon, spread rapidly in the middle of the 1950s due to innovations in both food production as well as general business practices implemented by McDonald's executive (and later owner) Ray Kroc.[101] With Kroc at the helm, McDonald's franchises quickly spread throughout the country, extending Fordist logic to the production and consumption of food. In contrast to both the laborious nature of

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[101] George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation Into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1993).

gathering and preparing a wide variety of ingredients characteristic of home-cooked

meals, as well as the relatively time consuming nature of dining in a traditional

restaurant—where patrons must drive to the establishment, wait to be seated, order off a

menu, linger at the table while the food is prepared, pay the bill, and then return home—

fast food restaurants, with their limited menus and efficient assembly line methods of

production, provided a cheaper and more efficient means of satisfying hunger for

working-class consumers.

The goal of efficiency and standardization, however, was not limited to fast-food

corporations. Further corporate development, especially in mass-market food production

and distribution as well as technological innovation in household appliances, sought to

ease the burdensome task of home cooking.[102] One such technological advance, the

microwave oven, not only brought the efficiency of the fast-food restaurant into the

domestic kitchen, but also resulted in the creation of entirely new segment of culinary

products. As sociologist George Ritzer explains:

> The key to the salvation of the kitchen was the development and widespread
> adoption of the microwave oven. The microwave is simply a far more efficient
> means than its major alternative, the convection oven, for preparing a meal . . .
> Perhaps most importantly […] it spawned the development of a number of
> microwavable foods (including soup, pizza, hamburgers, fried chicken, french
> fries, and popcorn) that permit the preparation of the fare one usually finds in fast-
> food restaurants.[103]

Microwaves, of course, did not render traditional ovens, or for that matter, more

laborious methods of home cooking, obsolete. Canned ingredients and easy-to-follow

recipes featured in the growing number of cookbooks aimed at domestic cooks, along

with other technological advances in kitchenware such as "the replacement of the hand

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[102] *Ibid*.
[103] *Ibid,* 45.

beater by the electric beater; slicers, dicers, and even knives by the Cuisinart; and the presence of either stand-alone freezers or those that are an integral part of the refrigerator,"[104] all contributed to the diminished time and energy required to produce a conventional home-cooked meal.

In an attempt to capitalize on the growing interest in home cooking and domestic culinary entertaining, in 1955 two retired advertising executives in Chicago founded *Bon Appétit,* a bi-monthly food magazine aimed at cutting into *Gourmet*'s decade long dominance in the food magazine industry. *Bon Appétit* endured an inauspicious initial two decades during which the magazine was given away at drug or liquor stores and changed ownership numerous times before Knapp Communications purchased it in 1975.[105] At the time of Knapp's purchase of *Bon Appétit*, ongoing cultural revolutions in the U.S. led to divergent popular conceptualizations of food, especially in regard to its myriad political and social implications.

On the one hand, a "neo-bohemian youth movement known as the counterculture turned to natural and organic foods in the late 1960s"[106] in a deliberate political attempt to counteract what they perceived to be the deleterious growth of "poisonous" mass industrial food manufacturing. By adopting and widely promoting natural and organic forms of growing, harvesting, processing, and consuming foods, these advocates of—and adherents to—what became known as "countercuisine" sought to enlighten U.S. consumers by exposing the inherent human and environmental harms engendered by

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[104] *Ibid,* 47.
[105] Smith, *Eating History*.
[106] Warren Belasco, "Food and the Counterculture: A Story of Bread and Politics," in *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader,* eds. James L. Watson and Melissa L. Caldwell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 217.

large scale industrial food production. Not only did the proponents of countercuisine

object to the "vast quantities of land, fertilizer, water, pesticides and herbicides"[107]

required to produce mass marketed foodstuff, they also publicly opposed the emergent

experimentation conducted by food technologists (supported by both the U.S government

and food corporations) that resulted in the fabrication of entirely new foods or produced

more efficient ingredients by genetically modifying natural grains or altering the basic

molecular structures of naturally occurring raw materials. Natural or organic food

production and consumption—due to the unpredictable consequences of engineered food

as well as growing fears from members of the political left that a "conspiracy of

agribusiness firms, medical professionals, and government officials" sought to suppress

dissent by keeping citizens unhealthy[108]—became a serious point of contention for the

counterculture.

On the other hand, however, the drive for greater efficiency and convenience in

industrial food production was not without supporters. Beside the predicable cabal of

farmers, food corporations, and time starved consumers—all of whom unquestionably

stood to benefit from advancements in food technology—the multiple proponents of fast,

less laborious foodstuff also had a welcome, if somewhat reluctant adversary, in some

members of the feminist movement. Although some second-wave feminists opposed

technological advances in food production based on male dominance of the food-

medical-industrial establishment, others saw convenience food as a welcome

development since most home cooking was seen as a woman's duty.[109] If modern

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[107] Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 57.
[108] *Ibid,* 32.
[109] *Ibid.*

advances in food technology allowed women to focus less energy in the kitchen in order to further their careers outside of the home, many feminists supported such changes. Further, some feminists even challenged the craft food or countercuisine movement as inherently sexist, since cooking without modern aids or prepackaged foods was more work and women did majority of the cooking.

Bon Appétit, in the hands of Knapp Communications, attempted to straddle this cultural divide. The company's owner, Cleon T. Knapp explained upon his purchase of the magazine that he intended to turn the publication into a monthly subscription magazine aimed at relatively wealthy consumers over the age of 30 who enjoyed fine food and drinking, but lacked the requisite time to recreate the "esoteric" cuisine featured in *Gourmet* or traditional "women's service books."[110] By the end of 1975, Knapp successfully completed his vision, turning the publication into a monthly subscription magazine. He replaced the magazine's editor with Paige Rense, who had previously transformed Knapp's other publication, *Architectural Digest*, from a trade publication into a successful glossy publication for wealthy consumers. Rense was quickly successful in her transformation of *Bon Appétit* as well. As communication scholar Kathleen L. Enders explains, "Rense transformed *Bon Appetit* into a how-to magazine for the upscale cook who lived a full life and was too busy to shop all around town for the obscure ingredients often featured in *Gourmet m*agazine's recipes."[111] With all of Knapp's

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[110] Phillip H. Daugherty, "Advertising: Architecture and Bon Appetit," *New York Times*, April 4, 1975.
[111] Kathleen L. Enders, "Bon Appetit," in *Women's Periodicals in the United States: Consumer Magazines,* eds. Kathleen L. Enders and Therese L. Lueck (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 34.

changes, *Bon Appétit*'s subscriptions grew quickly and by 1979 the magazine had a greater circulation than *Gourmet*.[112]

In analyzing the June 1978 issue of *Bon Appétit*, I identified three major discursive themes: (1) feminization of content; (2) an appropriation of exotica; and (3) a glorification of elegant or luxurious living.

Feminization

Of the nine feature articles in the June 1978 issue of *Bon Appétit*, eight were written by women and the one article penned by a male author was feature story of a Boston cooking school run by a French born and educated female chef. Many of the articles authored by women are clearly aimed at female cooks, with instructions on how to impress dining guests by elevating simple recipes to "higher levels of gastronomy." One article, for example, instructs the reader (implicitly female) on how to elevate the taste of pies by adding "a dash of spirit" in the form of liqueur. "Whenever I stand before the dazzling display of liqueurs at some ambitious wine shop," the article begins, "I always feel like Holly Golightly eyeing the windows at Tiffany's." The author goes on to explain:

> For me, the incredible variety of jewellike liqueurs with their range of flavors from fruit to nuts (and seeds, herbs, barks, and flowers) is a constant temptation. Just a few drops of one of these elixers can perfect an already excellent dish and vastly improve one with less impressive credentials. Take pies, for example. Our thoughts of them are generally wrapped in clouds of nostalgia for the heartwarming pies of memory that sat cooling on the window ledge and were one part of the plain and practical backbone of the American kitchen. Well, those same sound and sturdy pies can be made quite different, even exotic, by a simple touch of liqueur. Oh, grandmother might be shocked by the suggestion of sullying

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[112] *Ibid.*

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the purity of her peach pie with a dram of Southern Comfort—but she might enjoy the result.

The article clearly establishes cooking (or in this case baking) as a traditionally feminine activity. In this author's mind, not only is baking a fun and rewarding endeavor, but it also offers a natural and easy way for women to achieve recognition. If one is able to "spice up" a traditional recipe, the mundane and often under appreciated or unrecognized chore of baking is elevated to "racy" and "glamorous" task that is sure to gain notice.

The feature articles were not the only feminized aspects of the magazine's content. The magazine also included columns dedicated to professional, workingwomen too busy to produce labor-intensive meals. In an early example of post-feminism, one of the columns, appropriately tilted "Too Busy To Cook?" provided advice sent in from women around the U.S. with careers and busy lifestyles describing how they manage to fit culinary entertaining and cooking into their daily lives. The majority of entries included recipes for easily prepared meals that also conveniently produced leftovers capable of lasting for days and thus eliminated the need to plan and prepare daily dinners.

Beyond the content generated by the magazine's editorial staff and writers, nearly all of the advertisements, either explicitly or implicitly, also targeted female readers. Characteristic of the food industry's focus at the time on quick, prepackaged foods aimed at easing the burden of preparing daily family meals, the magazine featured a bevy of full-page advertisements showcase the latest convenience food concoctions, such as Rice-A-Roni, Jello, Stouffers, Knox Unflavored Gelatin, Uncle Ben's, and Birds Eye Combinations. The latter of these promised that "Birds Eye Combinations will do almost anything to get your husband's attention." Cooking appliances aimed at alleviating much

of the hassle associated with food preparation were also heavily featured. One such appliance, the Jenn-Air Grill-Range explicitly articulated cooking with female labor by featuring a woman (in professional attire more appropriate for the workplace than the kitchen) effortlessly grilling steaks while simultaneously removing the stovetop on the opposite side of the range to showcase the appliance's "five Cooktop Convertible units that let you choose the way you want to cook." Even advertisements for products not stereotypically associated with female consumption were nonetheless signified as desirable and even necessary products for women who wanted to sustain or achieve a successful life. One of the more explicit advertisements of this type, for a product called B and B (a French liqueur that combines Bénédictine and brandy), implied that a successful marriage could be achieved through the consumption of its product. Underneath a photo of a couple engaged in a romantic, luxurious home dinner, the advertisement proclaimed in bold font, "The romance never goes out of some marriages." While the slogan is a play on the "marriage" of the Bénédictine and brandy in the company's product, the implicit message is clear: the key to a successful marriage is sharing in the consumption of B and B.

The Appropriation of Exotica

Although Clarence T. Knapp explicitly positioned *Bon Appétit* as an alternative to the more "esoteric" *Gourmet*, *Bon Appéit* too mirrored *Gourmet'*s focus on exotic food and locations. Unlike *Gourmet*, however, *Bon Appétit* focused on making exotic cuisine approachable and understandable for its audience. The Americanization or appropriation of exotica was clearly evident in the June 1978 issue of *Bon Appétit*. In a five-page

feature article, writer Cobey Black focused on the life of Sally Goldman, the "[m]istress of one of the great homes of Hawaii and wife of international developer Monte Goldman." The article detailed in high quality photographs the exotic location of the Goldman's home, and in particular the well-appointed kitchen in which Sally cooked as well as the expansive outdoor dining terrace where the couple entertained. Not only was the exoticness of the location, replete with native palm trees and sweeping oceans views showcased, but also the exotic nature of the couple's everyday existence. Although native Oklahomans, the Goldmans, according to the article, happily acculturated to the Hawaiian lifestyle. As Sally is quoted in the article:

> Our house lends itself beautifully to luaus…We set out low tables and cushions on the terrace, serving the food on banana leaves by torchlight, and we float orchids in the pool. Our luaus are authentic in the contemporary sense: they combine dishes from Hawaii's famous melting pot society. I'll have the traditional *kalua* pig, poi, lomi-lomi salmon and chicken *hekka,* but also Japanese spring rolls. And besides the delicious *haupia*, or coconut pudding, I may serve ice cream laced with *poha* jam, made from the tiny tart berries that grow only on the volcanic slopes of the Big Island of Hawaii.

While the article notes that the Goldmans have a "backup crew" for especially large occasions, Sally is portrayed as the home's main provider of food. Once again, cooking is portrayed as a woman's activity, and the preparation of exotic cuisine is not reserved for professionally trained chefs. The latter fact is highlighted by the continuous demonstration of Sally's knowledge of native Hawaiian fare throughout the article, but especially in the recipes contained in its conclusion. Eight "island" recipes, including Baked Papaya, Sesame Broccoli, and Coconut Spinach, are detailed for the (presumably female) readers to prepare at home. This white appropriation of native Hawaiian knowledge and cuisine mimics Hawaii's imperial annexation.

Exoticness was also a major theme of the magazine's advertisements, as travel, kitchenware, and liquor were all marketed based on their exoticness. An advertisement for Air France notes that "[i]t took French technology to build the most exciting airport anywhere—Charles de Gaulle," and even the planes themselves feature "great chefs from great French restaurants…presiding over every detail of our dining service." Likewise, the association of France with culinary excellence is utilized by cristal d'Arques—a producer of fine crystal stemware—with their slogan, "It's no wonder that throughout France, from Deauville to Marseilles, the French word for crystal is cristal d'Arques." As a final example, Sabra Liqueur flouted their exotic origins with a more simple and direct message: "Born in Israel."

Exoticness is clearly an indicator of one's culinary sophistication. For those without the financial means to travel to exotic locations, or even local ethnic restaurants, *Bon Appétit* provided a means of reproducing exotic cuisine in one's own kitchen through simple recipes and affordable (for some), yet exotic imported pre-made products.

Glorification of Elegant or Luxurious Living

Not all of the articles or advertisements featured in *Bon Appétit*, however, were concerned with economic accessibility. In line with its targeted demographic of "over-30-year-olds who make in the pleasant neighborhood of $20,000 a year,"[113] much of the content featured in *Bon Appétit* focused on fine living. In addition to the feature article on the glamorous lifestyle of the Goldmans detailed above, other articles focused on the benefits of achieving an elegant or luxurious lifestyle, perhaps mostly notably a Caracas,

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[113] Daugherty, "Advertising: Architecture and Bon Appetit." Adjusted for inflation, this salary is equivalent to $78,300 in 2016.

Venezuela, travel article. While obvious, it is nonetheless worth mentioning that international leisure travel for many is an unattainable luxury. And although the article is not explicit in regard to the cost of travel, meals, or other daily excursions, it *is* explicit in its adulation of the luxurious surroundings of a "chic" international city.

In the second paragraph, the author notes, "Caracas has all the wealth and glamour of an international center—Parisian boutiques; jet-set hangouts frequented by tycoons, models, TV celebrities, playboys and *toreros*; a wealth of art galleries; restaurants featuring a kaleidoscope of cuisines; and some of the most exciting, venturesome architecture in the world." Such features clearly appeal to a very specific demographic for which the explicit focus on the Europeanness of Caracas is meant to alleviate any safety concerns associated with such an exotic location. While the article was mostly concerned with detailing broad aspects of Caracas and Venezuelan culture, the author also spent a significant portion of the article describing the city's culinary scene. And like the article's early focus on glamour and luxury, the author was solely concerned with high-end dining establishments. In assuming the article's reader would undoubtedly be interested in an excursion to Caracas, the author advises:

> If you spend your day in the city, make your lunch an important one because the Venezuelan lunch is typically a major meal of several courses. One of the most fashionable places to meet for lunch is Hector's, a French restaurant in the glamorous Parque Central complex which combines offices, condominiums, the Museum of Contemporary Art, a church, a swimming pool and stores. It has gardens everywhere—cascading down walls of concrete, on rooftops and in plazas.

Dinner too, is noted for its luxurious options:

> You might eat at El Gazebo, a beautiful restaurant filled with greenery and particularly favored by the social élite. Or you might have dinner at Tarzilandia (named after Tarzan)—an open-air restaurant on the slopes of the Avila, where

you dine under thatched roofs in the midst of gardens fragrant with flowers and herbs, and eat berries and vegetables, a salad of frilly watercress—all just picked from the hillside.

The prices were not the only noticeably absent detail in the article. Although a number of dining establishments were noted, some in great detail, there was not one mention of any of the restaurant's chefs—or farm workers, presumably happy to pick berries and other produce for the diners to consume. Although perhaps unintentional, the omission of any mention of professional chefs from the article detaches the labor of cooking from the consumption of food. In a magazine that explicitly and continuously articulates cooking with feminine household labor and leisure time, ignoring professional chefs implicitly maintained such an articulation. Furthermore, dining out was firmly established as a superfluous, yet aspirational or welcome luxury, whereas the act of dining at home was marked as a necessity.[114] Consequently, the act of cooking in *Bon Appétit* is clearly feminized, with women readers encouraged to replicate the exotic or luxurious dishes featured in the magazines pages at home.

In contrast to *Bon Appétit*'s focus on home cooking, the June 1978 issue of *Gourmet,* much like the 1950 issue, articulated fine dining with travel and exotic locations. In particular, in my analysis of the issue, I identified two major discursive themes: (1) a focus on male, professional chefs and (2) the promotion of "authentic" travel to unspoiled, tradition-rich locations.

Professional Chefs

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[114] Even though in other sections of the magazine cooking at home is portrayed as fun, rewarding, and even capable of being exotic, it is clearly not as spectacular as dining in a lush, foreign location frequented by elite members of society.

Unlike *Bon Appétit*, the ownership and editorial structure of *Gourmet* magazine in 1978

remained unchanged from that of its inception in 1941. Perhaps because of the

magazine's consistency in management as well as its continuous success, the format of

the magazine also remained largely unchanged. The most obvious difference in format

was brought about by advancements in printing technology. Rather than the early black-

and-white version of the magazine, by 1978, *Gourmet* was printed in color and its articles

were accompanied by professional photography rather than illustrations. Beyond this

superficial change, the most glaring difference in *Gourmet*'s content was its focus on

individual, professional chefs. Whereas in 1950 chefs were only mentioned to establish

the provenance of a particular restaurant, in the June 1978 issue, chefs were a prominent

feature of restaurant descriptions. Yet, the merits of a particular chef were not the main

reason for their inclusion in the text. Instead, because the magazine focused exclusively

on ethnic restaurants, the chefs were included to establish cultural authenticity. For

instance, in an article focused on the New York restaurant scene, the author lamented the

"instant clichés of trendy new combinations" produced by chefs attempting originality. In

contrast to chefs focused on "trendy" cuisine, the author highlighted the work of chef

Gérard Drouet, "a craftsman of the old school whose standard readings of such classics as

maquereau au vin blanc, sole meunière, côte de veau normande, and frogs' les *povençale*

are so precise as to seem almost original." Later in the article, when describing an Italian

restaurant, the author again mentioned the chefs to establish their cultural authenticity:

> The restaurant is operated by Umberto Verdicchio (who is *not* a white wine in an
> amphora-shaped bottle) and Torino Pignalosa, both of whom were born in
> Naples…Although Verdicchio is new to the business, Pignalosa is an old hand
> who grew up in Rome and worked in restaurants all over Italy and on the Rome-
> Munich express and on the liner *Olympia* before settling in New York. The menu

he has devised, though not terribly original, is varied and well balanced, and the cooking, supervised by Pignalosa, is consistently rewarding.

Unlike the articles in *Bon Appétit,* where exotic cuisine was made accessible and readers were encouraged to attempt to recreate foreign fare in their own kitchens, in *Gourmet* the professional chef, due to *his* authentic cultural provenance, was valorized. Here, cultural capital was not gained by demonstrating one's own gastronomic ability, but rather by having the resources and leisure time to dine at an authentic ethnic restaurant. The cultural importance of the chefs, however, remained tied to their nationality and subsequent authenticity. The chefs were not the "face" of the restaurant, nor a commodity to establish and maintain its success. A cooking ability possessed by the chefs was important, but only insofar as they were capable of producing the classic cuisine associated with their place of birth.

Authentic, Unspoiled Travel

Food was an unquestionable focus of *Gourmet*'s content. An equal, even sometimes greater amount of space, however, was dedicated to elaborate descriptions of place, as food was almost always mentioned in the context of travel or location. In fact, place played an integral role in every feature article, even if the article was not explicitly based on travel. Much like the social distinction attained through the appropriation of an other's cuisine, for those concerned with establishing their own individuality, traveling to authentic, exotic locations provided another means of distinguishing oneself from others.

Authenticity is a socially constructed and negotiated concept. Originating in the museum, the process of authentication allowed expert curators the ability to distinguish

between "real" and "fake" objects.[115] This practice of identifying and attributing

distinction through expert authentication spread beyond the museum and into culture writ

large, as "authenticity in ever-changing guises became at once the goal and cement of

cultural knowledge—the origin and essence of being human."[116] According to cultural

anthropologist Regina Bendix, the quest for authenticity is a result of the of

industrialization and commodification that is

> …at once both modern and antimodern. It is oriented toward the recovery of an
> essence whose loss has been realized only through modernity, and whose
> recovery is feasible only through methods and sentiments created in
> modernity…The continued craving for experiences of unmediated genuineness
> seeks to cut through what Rousseau called 'the wound of reflection,' a reaction to
> modernization's demythologization, detraditionalization, and disenchantment.[117]

This, in turn, "leads to a nostalgia for the real: a fascination with and desperate search for

real people, real values, real sex."[118]

Cultural difference in modernity is no longer predicated on a stable, identifiable

otherness, but is instead the tenuous result of discursive social practices and power

relations. The erosion of traditional forms of social distinction has forced members of the

middle classes to engage in an endless project of selfhood, whereby the procurement of

distinctive consumer goods or aligning oneself with a particular lifestyle denotes cultural

distinction.[119] *Gourmet*'s popularity may thus be read as a byproduct of modern

consumers' constant search for a way of achieving social distinction, as well as

Gourmet's established authority in authenticating cuisine and other cultural goods.

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[115] Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 15 (1988), 371-386.

[116] Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 6.

[117] *Ibid,* 8.

[118] Arthur Kroker, "Baudrillard's Marx," *Theory, Culture, & Society* 2 (1985): 80.

[119] Tania Lewis, *Smart Living: Lifestyle Media and Popular Expertise* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

If, for the publishers of *Gourmet,* a given food's authenticity is derived from its connection to a place and the native people that produced it, it is only logical for the publishers to also concern themselves with authenticating particular locations and travel experiences for their readers. This concern is obvious in the June 1978 issue of *Gourmet,* as any serious attention to food is absent in multiple articles. For example, in an article that details a weeklong "horse-drawn Gypsy caravan" through the Welsh countryside, there was no mention of a restaurant or professional cuisine. Instead, the article was dedicated to describing a vast landscape relatively unspoiled by modernity, as the following passage from the narrative exemplifies:

> After four leisurely miles in two hours, we found at Pennorth (population nineteen or twenty) our second empty field. On our third afternoon we reached Llangynidr (two inns, two shops, rustic houses with charming gardens, a telephone booth, and a policeman)…Only half a dozen miles from green and tranquil Llangynidr, over the mountain top, lay industrial Wales: Traedegar, Ebbw Vale, Blaina, Nantyglo, Brynmawr. We took direct upward line through sheep, fern, and thin grass, gingerly climbing over barbed wire fences with Catherine lagging further and further behind because of her woolgathering tendencies. Each time I reached what seemed to be the summit, another grassy ridge loomed front. But the birds chirruped, the silly sheep stared, and all around stretched an everlasting green peace.

For the writer and reader alike, the Welsh countryside provided a vivid manifestation of a real, authentic place. Even if the reader was incapable of—or uninterested in—recreating the idyllic voyage through rural Wales, the knowledge gained from reading the article provided its own form of cultural capital. Not only could a reader incorporate the knowledge gained into his or her own life by retelling the story (even possibly inserting themselves into the narrative when relaying the story to an unsuspecting acquaintance), the article also confirmed for the reader that authentic experiences were still capable of

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being had and thus worked to legitimate the unending quest for authentic experiences endemic to modern human existence.

The Neoliberal Era

The post World War II economic boom that became known as the "gold age" of capitalism came to an abrupt halt at the end of 1973.[120] The onset of a global recession called into question the Keynesian economic policies in place during the previous three decades of unprecedented economic growth in capitalist countries. Economic instability continued into the 1980s, eventually leading to the adoption of new economic policies put forth by the increasingly influential economists associated with the "new classical" school, perhaps most notably Milton Friedman. The new classical school economists rebuked the state interventionist policies associated with Keynesian economics; instead, they asserted that a market free of government interference provided the best possible means of achieving economic prosperity.[121] Under the leadership of President Ronald Reagan, in the 1980s the U.S. government embraced the economic philosophies espoused by the new classical school, creating a series of regulatory changes—mainly weakening or eradicating regulation—that provided the legal framework for corporate consolidation. Under this political economic paradigm, known as neoliberalism, a series of mergers and acquisitions were initiated within the media sector that would eventually consolidate the

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[120] Harman, *Zombie Capitalism*.
[121] *Ibid.* See also Chomsky, *Profit Over People*; Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

control of the dominant U.S. mass media into the hands of a few multinational corporations.[122]

Unsurprisingly, large publishing corporations targeted food magazines in order to add to their growing media portfolios during this early period of media consolidation. First, upstart magazine *Food & Wine,* founded in 1978 by Michael and Ariane Bratterberry (along with a partial start-up investment by *Playboy* magazine founder Hugh Hefner), was sold to American Express Publishing in 1980.[123] Three years later, Condé Nast Publications acquired *Gourmet* magazine from the estate of its founder Earle R. MacAusland, whose widow Jean MacAusland had run the magazine following his death in 1980. *Bon Appétit*, still the leading food magazine in terms of circulation at the time, was the only widely circulated food magazine to avoid a takeover by a larger corporation, remaining under the control of Knapp Communications and editor Paige Rense.

In the June 1985 issue of *Bon Appétit,* much of the content was unchanged from my previous analysis of the June issue published in 1978. The magazine remained dedicated to providing its readers with easy to follow recipes and time saving techniques, including the aforementioned column "Too Busy to Cook?" in addition to a newly devised column on properly utilizing the increasing popular domestic appliance, the food processor. Likewise, much of the advertising content was discernibly aimed at a female demographic. I did observe one noticeably novel discursive theme, however: a valorization of professional chefs.

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[122] Ben H. Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).
[123] Alex Kuczynski, "Public Lives: 30 Years of Love and Chronicling Cuisine," *New York Times,* August 20, 1998.

Valorization of Professional Chefs

In contrast to the June 1978 issue of *Bon Appétit,* in which no professional chef was

mentioned by name, in the June 1985 issue, two professional chefs (both male) were

highlighted at length. The first chef, Michel Stroot, was lauded as a Belgian "master

chef" with "rigorous training in classic French cuisine." As the executive chef of the

Golden Door restaurant in Southern California for 11 years, Stroot, according to the

article "has created dishes and devised menus that are scrupulously healthy and utterly

satisfying." Although an article dedicated to a professional (male) chef was a divergence

from the exclusive focus on female home cooks in the 1978 issue, the article's content

remained committed to previous established themes of healthy, accessible cooking and

eating. Beyond the title of "master chef" bestowed to Stroot, there was no mention of any

accolades achieved by the chef or his restaurant. Instead, the article was exclusively

concerned with the preparation of traditional French cuisine in an innovatively healthy

way.[124] This focus on healthful cooking and eating coincided with—and formed an

important part of—a larger cultural discourse focused on disciplining the body (along

with aerobic exercize) as way to present a "successful self." As cultural historian

Benjamin G. Rader explains:

> [T]he new strenuosity of the 1970s and 1980s entailed a common effort to nurture
> a more sufficient self in two general ways. One stressed physical fitness; it was
> epitomized by aerobics, more particularly by long-distance running…[its
> adherents] frequently refrained entirely from, or cut back on, their consumption of
> 'unhealthy' foods and drink. Second was the use of physical robustness and
> energy to present a more attractive self. These participants in the new strenousity
> eschewed neither consumption or competition. Indeed, they employed fitness as

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[124] Notably, six pages of text were dedicated to Stroot's recipes, while a brief profile of the chef at the
beginning of the article was limited to two pages.

part of a larger strategy to gain status, power, and greater control over their personal relationships.[125]

Bon Appétit's focus on Stroot's healthy preparation of "utterly satisfying" healthy cuisine, rather than on Stroot's professional accolades, may thus be read not so much as a valorization of a particular chef, but instead a celebration of innovative cuisine that met the strenuous nutritional requirements of an emerging lifestyle formation in an effort to broaden its readership and increase revenue by attracting these health-conscious consumers (and any potential advertisers targeting them). Not only could adherents of this new lifestyle of "strenuosity" consume classic French cuisine (which they had presumably been depriving themselves of), but those of adequate financial means could also travel to Southern California to indulge in this innovatively healthy cuisine at its source, and thus gain even greater social or cultural status.

The second mention of a professional chef in the June 1985 pages of *Bon Appétit* was more noteworthy in terms of its valorization of an individual professional chef. This profile echoed the "rugged individualism" associated with Reagan's neoliberal ideology.[126] This piece was the first in my sample to articulate a chef with the broader discourse of individualization or self-actualization characteristic of neoliberalism, whereby one's social standing is deemed the result of personal acumen, sound decision making, or general willpower rather than broader social or structural conditions. Chef Raymond Blanc was celebrated in *Bon Appétit* for being "completely self-taught," and having an innate "genius" that enabled him to rise to the upper echelon of elite

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[125] Benjamin G. Rader, "The Quest for Self-Sufficiency and the New Strenuosity: Reflections on the Strenuous Life of the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 2 (1991), 266.

[126] Chomsky, *Profit Over People*, 67.

gastronomy. After immigrating to England from his native France, the article notes that

"[w]ithin a decade he moved on to his own place in Oxford and earned two Michelin

stars—so firm was his reputation that Michelin transferred the stars to Le Manoir even

before the inn opened in 1984." The prestige that accompanies the awarding of stars by

the *Guide Michelin*, according to Ferguson, is at least partially responsible for the

elevation and promotion of individual chefs.[127] Traditionally, restaurants gained prestige

based on the clientele that they were able to court, as opposed to the acclaim of the

producers of the cuisine. As Ferguson notes:

> The rationale is clear. With production out of sight, the spotlight falls exclusively
> on the elite consumer—the goal of the traditional culinary spectacle. Indeed, the
> conspicuous consumer depended upon the inconspicuous producer.[128]

The ascendance of chefs to a status of cultural visibility or even social valorization may

indeed be attributable in part to changes at institutions like the *Guide Michelin*; however,

the fact that the elevation of chefs coincided with the rise of neoliberalism cannot be

discarded. In an era when old cultural distinctions and social hierarchies collapsed, it is

no wonder that elite consumers could not be counted on to validate a restaurant's

prestige. Moreover, when one's social status and cultural distinction is achieved through

the act of consumption, in particular the *right* kind of consumption, it is thus logical that

the prestige of a given restaurant shift from the consumer to the producer, as the

consumer's social status is based upon the appropriation of the cultural capital associated

with that which they consume.[129] The fact that this particular *Bon Appétit* article focused

more on Blanc, celebrating his personal accomplishments as opposed to a detailed

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[127] The *Guide Michelin* was established in 1931 and began to list the names of individual chefs in the 1940s. See Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 158.

[128] Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 155.

[129] See, for instance, Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*; Featherstone, *Consumer Culture & Postmodernism*.

description of the atmosphere of the restaurant or the clientele that frequented it, may thus be read as an incorporation of neoliberal ideology into normative culinary discourse.

Despite the change in ownership of *Gourmet,* the June 1985 magazine's discursive themes remained the same as those of the June 1975 issue. This fact is perhaps due to the fact that *Gourmet* had already incorporated neoliberal ideology into its content. The focus on classically trained native chefs as well as locating and presenting authentic travel experiences are both emblematic of the "valorization of the 'genuine'" in the neoliberal era that has culminated in a "middle-class interest in the authentic object and the authenticity of the other"[130] in order to appropriate or consume the cultural dispositions of "authentic" others and thus facilitate the construction a distinct self.

Conclusion

Food has served as a symbolic means of establishing cultural distinction throughout history. Only recently, however, have chefs played a significant role in this process of social stratification. Early food journalism focused solely on cuisine and specific details of the place it was produced and consumed. During the economic boom in the U.S. following the end of World War II, consuming food, especially exotic or expensive cuisine, became a marker of social status. In the pages of the June 1950 *Gourmet* magazine, a plethora of advertisements for imported fine liquor were placed alongside stories of exotic gastronomic travel, symbolically linking the various brands of liquor with exotic world travel. For those without the monetary means to recreate the extravagant or exotic trips detailed in the magazine's articles, the numerous

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[130] Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture,* 23.

advertisements implicitly presented the act of buying and consuming fine, often imported, liquor as an adequate alternative method for procuring social distinction through the demonstration of gastronomic sophistication. Moreover, the promotion of particular urban U.S. restaurants provided yet another substitute for foreign travel. The myriad advertisements for U.S. dining establishments, while not as explicitly exotic as traveling to another country to consume cuisine, nonetheless served to suggest that "authentic" exotic dining experiences could be had in established gastronomic cities such as New York City, San Francisco, New Orleans, and even Cincinnati. In the latter city, a restaurant called Maisonette clearly played off the exotic nature of *Gourmet's* travel writing by advertising not only French cuisine, but unmistakably exotic items such as "Frog Legs Provencase," or "Escalopine of Veal." Through the representation and subsequent establishment of food and fine dining as a marker of social or cultural status, *Gourmet* magazine helped to create—as well as profit from—a burgeoning cultural interest in fine (and often exotic) dining during the postwar era in the United States.

Following the countercultural movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, food discourse was divided between a focus on the practicalities of home cooking, the cultural debate over convenience food, a veneration of exotic cuisine, and detailed descriptions of the locations where authentic ethnic cuisine could be consumed. The rise of *Bon Appétit*, which supplanted *Gourmet's* domination of the food media marketplace, introduced new representations of food and dining to the reading public. Aimed at busy, upscale home cooks, *Bon Appétit* focused on teaching readers to elevate convenient, simple recipes into gastronomic fare. This focus on home cooking coincided with the rise of the big food industry. As such, the magazine featured advertisements for the latest convenience food

concoctions, such as Rice-A-Roni, Jello, Stouffers, Knox Unflavored Gelatin, Uncle

Ben's, and Birds Eye Combinations. These prepackaged food products, produced by

large food corporations, aimed to expedite the cooking process for home cooks—

explicitly busy housewives—while *Bon Appétit*'s feature articles focused on teaching its

presumably female readers how to convert such simple ingredients into meals capable of

impressing the most discerning houseguest, and thus provide these women with the

necessary means to retain or gain cultural capital based on a demonstration of

gastronomic prowess. Although *Bon Appétit* aimed to make exotic cuisine approachable,

even reproducible in one's own home, it also firmly established fine dining at lauded

restaurants as an aspirational or occasional luxury in contrast to the more routine act of

home cooking. This particular act further cemented specific restaurants and cities as

destinations for fine dining, providing the publication with additional revenue through

airline and travel related advertisements.

Gourmet largely ignored home cooking during this era in favor of celebrating

ethnic restaurants as means to gain or increase one's cultural capital during. By valorizing

these restaurants and their chefs as authentically exotic through an explicit articulation

with the chef's national origins, *Gourmet* implied that cultural capital was not gained by

demonstrating one's own ability to reproduce exotic fare, but instead tied cultural capital

to dining out at authentic ethnic restaurants. Furthermore, *Gourmet*'s established

authority in authenticating cuisine based on a food's connection to a particular place and

the native people that produced it also led its publishers to focus on authenticating

particular locations and travel experiences for its readers. By highlighting these specific

places, *Gourmet* thereby confirmed that authentic, unspoiled experiences were still

capable of being had and thus worked to legitimate the unending quest for authentic

experiences for those seeking to gain distinction through cultural consumption.

It was not until neoliberal ideology came to dominate U.S. culture in the mid-

1980s that professional chefs were elevated in culinary discourse. Although *Gourmet* did

identify individual chefs prior this period, their cultural importance remained tied to their

nationality and their culinary ability was only important insofar as they were capable of

producing the classic cuisine associated with their place of birth. However, following the

rise of neoliberalism, food media discourse was no longer limited to detailing the elite

clientele that frequented a given restaurant or to establishing a restaurant's authenticity

based on a chef's national provenance. Instead, a chef's personality, innate ability, or the

cultural recognition attained by receiving professional accolades (such as *Michelin* stars)

became important markers of cultural capital for individual chefs as well as their

restaurants. The reevaluation and valorization of chefs and cooks in the mid-1980s paved

the way for a new lifestyle formation upon which a certain class of consumers could

procure cultural capital by dining at a restaurant run by a culturally celebrated chef.

Moreover, the cultural elevation of chefs provided a new means of capital accumulation

for both the food and media industries. Whether deliberate or not, the cultural

valorization of chefs that began in the 1980s has proven widely successful for those in a

position to capitalize from it, as the cultural and media focus on chefs has only increased

in the subsequent decades.

Chapter Two

CULTURAL PILLAGING:
AUTHENTICITY AND THE APPROPRIATION OF OTHERS

On January 8, 2002, Food Network aired the premiere episode of *A Cook's Tour* hosted

by Anthony Bourdain. The episode's title sequence immediately established the show's

deliberate divergence from the cooking demonstration structure of previously successful

food television shows. Bourdain, donning a leather jacket and a silver hoop earring,

opened the sequence from the interior of a professional, but nondescript kitchen with the

phrase, "Welcome to my world." A series of rapid cuts ensued. All of the scenes, filmed

inside the cacophonous confines of the New York City kitchen of Brasserie Les Halles—

where Bourdain served as executive chef prior to the success of his 2000 *New York Times*

bestselling memoir *Kitchen Confidential*—effectively evoked the chaotic nature of life

inside a professional kitchen that Bourdain described in the book. Between shots of the

kitchen's various stations, Bourdain was shown in his chef's whites, shouting orders

while servers rushed quickly around him. In a voiceover, Bourdain explains the rationale

of the show and his role in it:

> As a cook, tastes and smells are my memories, and now I'm in search of new
> ones. So I'm leaving New York City and hope to have a few epiphanies around
> the world and I'm willing to go to some lengths to do that. I am looking for
> extremes of emotion and experience. I'll try anything. I'll risk everything. I have
> nothing to lose.

The title sequence established both the show's uniqueness, as well as that of Bourdain

himself. In contrast to the staged cooking demonstrations and the carefully cultivated

populist personalities of the already established Food Network stars (of whom only about

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one-third had professional training[131]), the title sequence for *A Cook's Tour* overtly

stressed Bourdain's difference and authenticity by exhibiting his experience as a

professional chef. Moreover, by demonstrating his success in taming the chaos of a

professional kitchen, the title sequence provided a clear rationale for Bourdain's need to

move beyond the kitchen in order to seek new "authentic" food and cultural experiences

around the world.

More important than his professional experience in differentiating the show—as

well as Bourdain himself—from other established food media shows and their affable

hosts, however, was the ability of *A Cook's Tour* to continue to build upon the "bad boy"

persona Bourdain cultivated so presciently in *Kitchen Confidential*. His consistent

derision of other Food Network personalities, swearing, drinking, sardonic wit, and

chain-smoking all contributed an air of authenticity to the show that rendered it unlike

any other form of food media proffered by the cultural industries at the time.

Consequently, through his rebellious style, Bourdain managed to separate himself from

the largely homogeneous products and personalities on offer within the food media genre.

Much like the branding that distinguishes products in other areas of capitalist production,

as Graeme Turner suggests, "[T]he celebrity develops their capacity for fame, not by

achieving great things, but by differentiating their own personality from those of their

competitors in the public arena."[132] Bourdain, in his televised global search for

"authentic" food, employed a devil-may-care attitude that built upon—and

strengthened—the rebellious, authentic persona he established in *Kitchen Confidential* by

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[131] Christine M. Mitchell, "The Rhetoric of Celebrity Cookbooks," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43, no. 3 (2010): 525.

[132] Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 5.

accentuating his difference from other culinary celebrities whose fame was linked to their congenial personalities and accessible domestic cooking demonstrations.

Unlike the cooking demonstration shows in which viewers are "not only spared the real-life aspects of food preparation" but also "cheated of the full extent of the work and physical exertions required to accomplish the results,"[133] Bourdain openly and consistently celebrated the violent and unsavory aspects of both cooking and eating. In so doing, Bourdain positioned himself as rougher, more adventurous, and ultimately more masculine than other male culinary celebrities confined to domestic kitchen settings. Bourdain's unabashed representation of the darker aspects of the culinary industry offered readers—and subsequently viewers—of his media fare an ostensibly "privileged" perspective previously available only to culinary "insiders". Through his demonstrated mastery of the culinary "underbelly," Bourdain successfully cultivated an authentic persona that distinguished him from other culinary celebrities and filled a void within the burgeoning food media genre that others had ignored. This authentic persona not only contributed to development of his fame, but also provided the perfect vehicle through which to successfully build and expand his own brand within culinary media, eventually altering the scope, style, and importance of the genre within the broader cultural industries in the process.

Maintaining an authentic persona while occupying a conspicuous position within the commercial cultural industries, however, is not easily accomplished. In contemporary popular culture, as Sarah Banet-Weiser argues, "What is understood (and experienced) as

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[133] Andrew Chan, "'Le Grande Bouffe': Cooking Shows as Pornography," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 3, no. 4 (2003): 52.

authentic is considered such precisely because it is perceived as not commercial."[134] For

Bourdain, then, filming a television show distributed by Food Network and co-produced

by New York Times Television inherently threatened the stability of his authentic

persona, and by extension, his fame and cultural relevance. Furthermore, because

Bourdain relinquished his position as executive chef at Brasserie Les Halles in order to

pursue a career in mass media, his rebellious, anti-establishment persona as well as the

authenticity derived from his position as a kitchen insider were in danger of being

usurped by perceptions of Bourdain "selling out" or becoming too commercial.[135] For

Bourdain, however, the televised global food expedition instead provided him with a new

form of authenticity to cultivate: exoticism. Consequently, rather than lose his anti-

establishment, "bad boy" authenticity in his transition to commercial television, Bourdain

utilized his authentic persona to lend veracity to his ability to locate and recognize

"authentic" Others "unspoiled" by Western commercial culture.

Bourdain, however, did not simply "discover" foreign, "authentic" cultures, he

ingratiated himself with "exotic" Others by expressing a clear appreciation for their

cultural traditions and cuisine. In a very similar manner to the way Bourdain exposed

readers to chef underground in *Kitchen Confidential*, in his global travels for *A Cook's

Tour* he introduced viewers to a diffuse global subculture who lived outside the norms of

dominant, mainstream commercial culture —whether forced to by their conditions of

existence, or in an overt stance against the dominant economic system and value structure

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[134] Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 10.

[135] Canadian journalist James MacGowan accused Bourdain of selling out as early as 2002. See James MacGowan, "The Bad Boy Celebrity Chef: Anthony Bourdain on Life, Celebrity, and Going to the Dark Side," *The Ottawa Citizen,* February 9, 2002.

of their various societies. Consciously or not, all of these "outsiders" Bourdain sought out—above all—lived an "authentic" lifestyle, often by maintaining and celebrating their cultural traditions and cuisine. In connecting with these "authentic" Others, Bourdain managed to effectively maintain his authentic persona and anti-corporate, *cool* credibility.[136] Moreover, by "accepting" his presence and eager, "adventurous" consumption of their traditional cuisine—foods that other Western people are often unaware of or deliberately choose not eat—the "exotic" Others he encountered reinforced Bourdain's masculine mastery of food.

Although *A Cook's Tour* lasted only two seasons on Food Network, it provided a foundational structure upon which Bourdain, along with the show's original producers, would achieve widespread popularity and critical acclaim with their second collaborative television venture, *Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations*. A recreation of *A Cook's Tour* with improved production quality, *No Reservations* continued to proclaim and produce authenticity through exotic cultures and food. In *A Cook's Tour*, where authenticity was almost exclusively based on the relative remoteness of a culture and the foreign nature of its traditional cuisine for Western viewers, *No Reservations* expanded Bourdain's construction of authenticity beyond the mere exposure of the "novel" cuisine in far-flung geographic locations. Instead, authenticity became more mutable, allowing Bourdain to "discover" and authenticate the food and cultures of Others in multiple, more nuanced ways—even within cities of the West. In so doing, different forms of authenticity began

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[136] Cool, here, is what authors Dick Pountain and David Robbins describe as "a rebellious attitude, an expression of a belief that the mainstream mores of your society have no legitimacy and do not apply to you. It's a self-contained individualist attitude, although it places high value on friendship within a tightly defined peer group." See Pountain and Robbins, *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 23.

to take on distinct meanings with disparate consequences for the people Bourdain encountered in each episode of the show.

In this chapter as well as the following chapter, I analyze the cultural influence of chef and television personality Anthony Bourdain by examining the construction and representation of authenticity in his television show *No Reservations*. I demonstrate how Bourdain, acting as a cultural intermediary, manages to sinuously maneuver between disparate cultures, utilizing his authentic persona to affirm the distinguishing characteristics of Others in order to expose Western middle-class consumers to different, more "authentic" cultural dispositions as well as provide them with new symbolic goods and experiences to convert into cultural capital. Through his (alleged) unique ability to traverse traditional cultural, social, and economic divides, Bourdain enhances his own authentic persona by aligning himself with and representing the various forms of authenticity he "discovers" in Others. And because what it means to be "authentic" varies for different people and different cultures, Bourdain's power to expose and authenticate Others produces distinct consequences for those he deems authentic. The goal of these chapters is thus to explicate the diverse outcomes and pressures faced by the Others through which Bourdain constructs authenticity in his television show.

To that end, in these two chapters I analyze three different episodes of *No Reservations* that produce very different notions of what it means to be "authentic," in some cases in the very same episode. In this chapter, I focus on the "Ozark" episode of *No Reservations.* By reproducing traditional stereotypes of white Ozark natives as culturally "backwards," internal Others, Bourdain effectively constructs an unadulterated "authentic" Ozark culture through his representation of Ozark people as self-reliant,

steadfastly committed to their traditional ways of life, and generally opposed to modern

notions of progress and contemporary cultural norms. Through Bourdain's exoticization

of the people he encounters in the Ozark region and his auspicious participation many of

their traditional cultural activities, Bourdain is able to further instantiate his own

authentic, masculine, and countercultural persona by demonstrating cultural adroitness

and mastery of their ways. In the following chapter, I turn my focus to two episodes of

No Reservations filmed in Brooklyn and Paris. By juxtaposing the disparate ways in

which Bourdain represents ethnic minority chefs and cooks in contrast to white male

chefs featured in the two episodes, I aim to illustrate the unequal ways in which different

people and cultures are interpellated through their exposure on *No Reservations*. In so

doing, I also demonstrate the unique ways Bourdain benefits through his construction of

each type of authenticity. Prior to engaging in this analysis, however, I first want to

emphasize the importance of authenticity in maintaining Bourdain's cultural relevance,

and, by extension, his cultural power.

A Taste for the Authentic

The act of eating is, at its most fundamental level, an essential element of human

survival. In contemporary capitalist society, however, the consumption of food does not

merely serve as a means of physiological subsistence, but instead plays a crucial role in

the formation of individual identity. As a means of individuation, consumer goods—like

food—divorced from their use value, act as a marker of status upon which hierarchical

social categories are formed. As Mike Featherstone argues, in consumer society "an ever-

changing supply of commodities gives the illusion of complete changeability of goods

and unrestricted access to them; yet here, legitimate taste, knowledge of the principles of classification, hierarchy and appropriateness is restricted."[137] In a society with a seemingly endless supply of consumer goods, the ability to determine which goods are of cultural value as well as the knowledge of how to appropriately use those goods is an important method of signifying an individual's social status and works to reinforce class distinctions. Although not entirely separate from economic capital, status attained through the demonstration of knowledge of hierarchies of cultural taste is a form of cultural capital.[138]

Social status maintained through cultural difference in contemporary capitalist society is no longer predicated on a stable, identifiable Otherness, but is instead the tenuous result of discursive social practices and power relations. The transformation of capitalism that occurred after the social and political unrest of 1960s and 1970s is largely defined by the incorporation of the countercultural ethos into capitalist production.[139] As Mark Fisher explains, "At the same time as particular modernist forms were absorbed and commodified, modernism's credos—its supposed belief in elitism and its monological, top-down model of culture—were challenged and rejected in the name of 'difference', 'diversity' and 'multiplicity'."[140] In a very clear case of hegemonic struggle, some concessions were indeed won by—or granted to—the subordinate classes during this era

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[137] Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991), 17.

[138] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

[139] For more on the various conceptualizations of the transformation of capitalism after the countercultural movement, see Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: 0 Books, 2009); Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (New York: Pluto Press, 2009); Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

[140] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 8.

of cultural upheaval, but freedom of choice and individuality were ultimately largely aligned with the act of consumption.[141] Although the resulting form of capitalism appears more democratic since everyone is *seemingly* granted the "choice" of how and what to consume, it is precisely through the diversity of commodities produced—and in particular the ways in which those commodities are consumed and made to be meaningful—that battles for social power and supremacy are won and lost. This struggle over the exchange value of commodities, while ostensibly a natural evolution of popular culture based on consumer agency, plays a vital role in determining social hierarchies that, in turn, generate socioeconomic and political consequences. Cultural taste, once legitimated, establishes significant symbolic boundaries and forms of exclusion.

Cultural hierarchies of taste are not static social constructs, but instead are necessarily mutable and operate as a means to achieve or preserve social distinction. The erosion of traditional "structures of meaning" in contemporary capitalist society has compelled members of the middle-class to engage in an endless project of selfhood, whereby the ability to assert one's own value based on the construction of a unique and discernable identity is necessarily secured through consumption.[142] The struggle to maintain social distinction through consumption produces a "paperchase effect" whereby those whose social status is based on cultural capital are continuously in search of new goods in order to counteract the "usurpation of existing marker goods by lower-status

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[141] As cultural studies scholar Marie Moran argues, "Whatever identity is 'chosen' or emphasised in the context of global corporate capitalism, whether 'personal' or 'cultural', it is one that must be bought…[T]he proliferation of 'identities' in contemporary capitalism masks an ultimate sameness at the heart of the logic of capitalism, which demands that all human needs and wants are met in the same way, by purchase on the market." Marie Moran, *Identity and Capitalism* (London: SAGE, 2015), 146.

[142] Greg Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (February 2007): 5.

groups."[143] As a result, status-seeking individuals increasingly rely on tastemakers, those whom Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the "new cultural intermediaries." According to Bourdieu, cultural intermediaries occupy positions "involving presentation and representation" and operate "in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services."[144] Due to the continuous proliferation of goods and services promoted by the cultural industries, the process of asserting one's individual identity based on an acquired knowledge of legitimate cultural taste formations necessarily requires instruction on what and how to consume.

Whereas cultural intermediaries once served "as arbiters of highbrow taste," in contemporary consumer society they are characterized by a preoccupation with "the translation and evaluation of other cultures."[145] By plundering other cultures for new symbolic goods and alternative cultural dispositions to openly disseminate, cultural intermediaries effectively expand the range of lifestyles available to consumers or audiences, while simultaneously increasing or maintaining their own social status or cultural capital by demonstrating their knowledge and discriminatory judgment.[146] This process of cultural appropriation not only creates new methods of capital accumulation and circulation—both economic and cultural—but also provides cultural intermediaries with significant social power. As David Wright explains, "Whilst the rise of the cultural industries, and the culturalization of other types of industry, relies on the opening up of new fields of legitimization, what is more significant is not that cultural intermediaries

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[143] Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 136.
[144] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 359.
[145] Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 148.
[146] Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*.

engage in this kind of opening up but that they are able to monopolize these processes."[147] Bourdain, through his televised travels across the globe, unquestionably occupies a unique and influential position of cultural mediation in contemporary society. Not only did his rise to cultural prominence coincide with an increased interest in food related media within the cultural industries, but more specifically, through his ability to sinuously embody and substantiate cultural values associated with high, middle, and working classes, Bourdain established himself as a seminal figure in the processes of cultural legitimation within the culinary and media industries. Bourdain is equally at home in the exclusive bastions of haute gastronomy as he is in the remote cultural environs of the Amazon jungle. What connects these disparate cultures represented by Bourdain in mass media is his distinct ability to bestow them with authenticity. In this way, authenticity serves as an important signifier of social distinction, legitimating and delegitimating particular lifestyles and cultural values in an era that has enabled the breakdown of traditional cultural hierarchies. Like other cultural intermediaries, however, Bourdain's cultural status is fraught with precariousness.

Popular culture is the product of continuous processes of transformation and resistance. Much like the status-seeking consumers who rely on experts to acquire proper knowledge of what and how to consume in order to align themselves with legitimate taste formations, cultural intermediaries must also maintain and constantly exhibit their superior cultural knowledge in order to reinforce their own cultural status and power. As cultural intermediaries have established themselves as an essential element in the process

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[147] David Wright, "Mediating Production and Consumption: Cultural Capital and 'Cultural Workers'," *The British Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 1 (2005): 111.

of consumption, cultural capital is not the only benefit they stand to gain. The ability to influence what and how other people consume produces tangible economic consequences, and thus the more people one is able to influence, the more valuable one becomes to corporations within the cultural industries.[148] The value of distinguishing oneself in a specific field induces incessant competition among various cultural intermediaries, as the magnitude of one's cultural influence ultimately determines the amount of economic capital they are able to accumulate. And because the social influence of cultural intermediaries is dependent on their ability to consistently present Western middle-class subjects with *novel* goods and cultural dispositions, contemporary cultural intermediaries must also concern themselves with the process of cultural delegitimation or reevaluation. For if the power of identifying and promoting new tastes and styles for cultural intermediaries lies in their ability to convince middle-class consumers to *literally* buy into the necessity of cyclically asserting their own individuality through "proper" forms of consumption, they must also—either explicitly or implicitly—contribute to the cultural devaluation of previously popular styles and tastes as well as other influential cultural intermediaries in their field.

For Bourdain, authenticity is key to his cultural distinction within the culinary and media industries. In addition to his global quest for authenticity, however, Bourdain also maintains his authentic persona by identifying and deriding artifice. "The notion of authenticity," as Regina Bendix explains, "implies the existence of its opposite" and therefore "identifying some cultural expressions or artifacts as authentic, genuine,

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[148] Sharon Zukin, "Socio-spatial Prototypes of a New Organization of Consumption: The Role of Real Cultural Capital," *Sociology* 24, no. 1 (February 1990): 37-56.

trustworthy, or legitimate simultaneously implies that other manifestations are fake,

spurious, and even illegitimate."[149] Artifice, for Bourdain, is always associated with

commodified, mass produced culture. Denigrating the artifice of mass culture serves to

both delegitimize other culture intermediaries due to Bourdain's identification of their

various inauthentic qualities as well as delegitimizes specific forms of mass consumption

practices. In addition to publicly voicing his discontent at various times with celebrity

chefs Emeril Lagasse, Rachael Ray, Paula Deen, and Rocco DiSpirito (among many

others), Bourdain has a particularly enduring public feud with celebrity chef and fellow

culinary travel television host Guy Fieri. In but one example of his many pubic

declarations of contempt for Fieri, in a 2011 magazine interview, Bourdain overtly

discredited the work done by Fieri and his television production team:

> I look at Guy Fieri and I just think, 'Jesus, I'm glad that's not me.' You work that
> hard and there's not a single show of yours that you'd want to sit down and say,
> 'Hey, I made that last week. Look at that camera work. It's really good, huh?' I'm
> proud of what I do.[150]

In addition to his open devaluation of the quality of Fieri's television show, in a radio

interview in the following year, Bourdain publicly derided Fieri's—as well as his

audience's—association with mass consumption:

> I'm fascinated by the Guy Fieri terror-dome they just opened up. 600 seats,
> something like that? Six *hundred* seats! And a gift shop. And all of these poor
> diners, drives and whatever, douchebags waddle in there. First of all, he single
> handedly turned the neighborhood into the Ed Hardy district, which I'm a little
> pissed off about.[151]

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[149] Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 9.

[150] Ingela Ratledge, "Anthony Bourdain's Celebrity Chef Smackdown," *TV Guide,* August 18, 2011, http://www.tvguide.com/news/anthony-bourdains-celebrity-1036482/ [accessed February 13, 2016].

[151] Sirius XM, **"**Anthony Bourdain [EXPLICIT] on Guy Fieri's "Terror Dome" // SiriusXM // Opie & Anthony," *YouTube* video, 1:35, September 28, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lD-e9eLhW0Y [accessed February 13, 2016].

By delegitimizing other culinary cultural intermediaries, like Guy Fieri, as well as their various media productions and audiences, Bourdain is able to reaffirm or increase his own authenticity by contrasting himself with the artificial commercial proclivities of the other celebrities in his field. This uninhibited, enthusiast disparaging of other celebrity chefs evokes the rebellious characteristics that originally established Bourdain's authentic persona and helped distinguish him from the numerous other cultural intermediaries operating in culinary media. Moreover, in expressing his anger at Guy Fieri's "terror-dome" and the damage it's done to the "neighborhood" of Times Square, Bourdain continued an ongoing critique of the gentrification of New York City he had long publicly lamented, as exemplified in this passage from his edited collection of essays entitled *The Nasty Bits:*

> What happened? Times Squre was, particularly for a young man with a criminal bent and a few bucks in his pocket, a wonderland of urban exotica…Where feral young men with butterfly knives tucked in their waistbands used to play video games and pinball among the chicken hawks, selling beat drugs and planning felonies, it's now stores selling Warner Brothers action figures and stuffed animals.[152]

Bourdain's anger at the destruction of the "authentic" and gritty New York seemingly aligns him with the working-class people who were displaced from their neighborhoods in order to increase the city's flow of capitalism by attracting tourists like the "diners, drives and whatever, douchebags" he described, yet such a critique also importantly contributed to the authentic persona he continued to cultivate for himself.

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[152] Anthony Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits: Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bone* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 184.

Bourdain's open disgust with the rapid transformation of lower Manhattan may indeed be linked to a genuine remorse for those residents who were displaced in the area's corporate transformation, but his nostalgia for the city's darker, more "authentic" past also effectively reinforced his masculine rebelliousness and adventurism. He made this clear throughout the remainder of the essay by contrasting the contemporary landscape of every neighborhood in lower Manhattan with the danger and excitement that he used to find there, concluding: "It's been awhile since I felt that adrenaline-juiced exaltation, that 'I can't *believe* I'm *still* alive!!' feeling that made me proud to be a New Yorker."[153] Such a statement provides constructive evidence of his bonafide, vice-laden past. Moreover, his detailed enumeration of the commodified artifice to be found in every contemporary lower Manhattan neighborhood provided his audience—in a method characteristic of his role as a cultural intermediary—with the requisite knowledge of what kind of places and behavior to avoid in order to remain "authentic" themselves.

Merely identifying, deriding, and contrasting himself with inauthentic people, places, and cultures is not sufficient to maintain Bourdain's distinct authentic persona. Characteristic of the role cultural intermediaries play identifying and promoting new symbolic goods and dispositions for status-seeking consumers, Bourdain's ability to maintain authenticity is also largely accomplished through his cultural adroitness and ability to connect with—and represent—Other people and Other cultures. Bourdain's own authentic persona is both harnessed to authenticate the food, people, and places he encounters, as well as reinforced through his appropriation of the very authenticity he confers on an Other's select forms of novelty. The constant translation and evaluation of

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[153] *Ibid,* 187.

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the cultural goods and values of Others not only provides those that consume his various media productions with information about new forms of legitimate taste, but is also essential in preserving his own distinct authentic persona. In a contemporary culinary media landscape littered with critics, television shows, and celebrity chefs all vying for greater influence over cultural taste related to culinary consumption, it is through Bourdain's ability to maintain his authentic persona by locating authenticity across racial, social, class, and national boundaries that enables him to occupy a distinct and influential position in contemporary popular culture.

Locating the Authentic

The articulation of food and travel is not new. In contemporary consumer society, however, food has taken on an increasingly prominent role in the promotion of travel. Distinguishing traditional food magazines from other genres like travel, lifestyle, or even news magazines is increasingly difficult. The consumption of novel foods while on vacation is no longer a convenient benefit or a mere necessity of travel. Instead, mass media regularly highlight "the best food destinations," and trips are often planned primarily, if not solely, on the reputation of a location's culinary offerings. As Lucy M. Long argues, "[F]ood itself can be a destination for tourism, not only a vehicle." One does not, however, need to travel to a remote country in order to consume the products of an exotic or "authentic" Other. Instead, "culturally competent, cosmopolitan-minded consumers,"[154] "food adventures,"[155] or "culinary omnivores"[156] are able to establish

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[154] Akihiko Hirose and Kay Kei-Ho Pih, "'No Asians Working Here': Racialized Otherness and Authenticity in Gastronomical Orientalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 9 (2011): 1482-1501.

cultural capital through the consumption of exotic foodstuff in the "authentically" exotic

dining establishments of metropolitan cities or by locating "authentic" purveyors of

unique or exotic food native to particular regions of the West.

Although the majority of Bourdain's televised travels are set in "exotic" foreign

locations, in this chapter I analyze an episode that takes place in the United States before

turning my analytical focus to two episodes that take place in major cosmopolitan

Western cities in the following chapter. This is due in large part to the fact that, as Erik

Cohen explains, "The alienated modern tourist in quest of authenticity […] looks for the

pristine, the primitive, the natural, that which is untouched by modernity."[157] To his

credit, Cohen acknowledges the socially constructed nature of authenticity, yet asserts

that the pursuit of authenticity is nonetheless taken as a given and consequently achieves

an "'objective' quality attributable by moderns to the world 'out there.'"[158] If

authenticity, at least in modern Western society, is ideologically associated with

unfamiliar, "primitive" lands, it is thus not inconceivable to assume that by merely

traveling to foreign locations Bourdain inherently encounters cultures considered

authentic from which to appropriate in order to substantiate his own authenticity and

cultural capital. Limiting my analysis to episodes filmed in Western locations is thus a

deliberate attempt to investigate cultural authenticity as identified or instantiated by

Bourdain and the *No Reservations* production team by locating the "authentic" Others

within the West.

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[155] Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[156] Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, "Democracy Versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 1 (2007): 165-204.

[157] Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 15 (1988): 374.

[158] Ibid, 374.

In addition, all three *No Reservations* episodes I analyze were purposefully chosen due to their contrasting representations of Otherness. The first episode aired during the seventh season of *No Reservations* and is set in the Ozarks region of the U.S. The central motif of this particular episode is rural life, specifically that of poor and working-class, Southern citizens. The second episode, set in Brooklyn, New York, is from the show's ninth and final season. The diverse and urban community of Brooklyn and the authenticity of its seemingly endless variety food is a central aspect of the episode's narrative structure. Finally, the third episode I analyze is set in Paris, France, and was featured in the show's sixth season. Although the episode is shot in a foreign country, it is not the exoticness of Paris, its food, or its people that is of primary focus. Instead, Bourdain explores the potential of young male chefs in Paris to transform the foodscape of one of the most influential culinary cultures in the world by deliberately deviating from traditional French cuisine and gastronomic values. It is the rebellious attitudes and fearless individuality of the young chefs—not their foreignness—that is highlighted as uniquely authentic.

The Ozarks

In the opening scene of the "Ozarks" episode, Bourdain assists a resident of West Plains, Missouri, in the "cleaning" of a squirrel. "Around here," Bourdain proclaims in a voice-over as the scene unfolds, "you learn early to clean a squirrel…and this wasn't, not so long ago, an option, it was something you learned to do because you had to." Following the squirrel "cleaning," Bourdain—accompanied by accomplished novelist Daniel Woodrell (a West Plains native), Gordon (the aforementioned squirrel hunter) and Judy

Hardon, a local woman dedicated to preserving traditional regional recipes—dines on squirrel potpie. While Judy readily admits that she first experienced the dish only three years prior (after obtaining a 100-year-old recipe from a woman in her eighties), Woodrell, in contrast, proclaims, "A lot of people eat squirrel…when I lived in Arkansas, it was practically the state dish." Here, reclamation via oral tradition by a matriarch is not authentic enough. Instead, Woodrell inscribes the act of eating squirrel—and the Ozark culture of which he claims it is a part—with an authenticity located in the present by insisting on the existence an identifiable and exotic culture for whom the act is not exotic, but a natural part of life for those who choose—or are forced—to live outside the norms of mainstream U.S. consumer society.

The preparation and eating of "indigenous" cuisine immediately establishes the authenticity of Bourdain's local guides as well as the Ozark region as a whole. Further, Bourdain's willingness to participate in the skinning and gutting of a squirrel, in addition to his subsequent consumption of the wild animal not generally considered edible, adds to his authentic persona based on stereotypical notions of masculinity and bravery. The consumption of meat is a traditionally masculine form of eating in Western culture and is symbolically tied to man's domination of nature and other animals through the act of hunting in order to provide for one's family.[159] The conception of meat as a masculine culinary good—even in modern societies in which consumers are likely divorced from the brutal aspects involved in the procurement of the meat they consume—remains prominent in contemporary culture, as Lisa Heldke explains:

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[159] Jeffrey Sobal, "Men, Meat, and Marriage: Models of Masculinity," *Food and Foodways* 13, no. 1-2 (2005): 135-158.

Among its many meanings, meat is a macho food. What is so macho about meat? First, eating meat requires killing animals. Killing is often dangerous business, filled with the possibility of injury to oneself. (This remains true for the slaughterhouse workers today, working under modern, and thus supposedly safer, industrial conditions.) Thus, killing animals is man's work—a belief that comes to us in various forms, from potted archaeological accounts of 'man the hunter' to contemporary images of male slaughterhouse workers and deer hunters. In Euroamerican cultures, if we imagine women involved in the process of making meat at all, we tend to envision rather romantic, even bucolic jobs for them; gathering eggs, killing chickens, our stuffing sausages; anything bigger or more dangerous is left for the men.[160]

The gutting of a freshly killed squirrel in all its unpleasant detail in the opening scene thus worked to reinforce the masculine, even exotic nature of men in the Ozarks. Bourdain, through his unflinching participation in the act, reaffirmed his own authentic masculinity. Moreover, by enthusiastically eating meat from an animal not traditionally consumed in Western cultures, Bourdain further strengthened his own authenticity by demonstrating his willingness consume an animal many—if not most—of his viewers would find repugnant. Thus, participating in the filmed gutting and consumption of a squirrel is rendered masculine, exotic and authentic, not through the preservation and duplication of a traditional recipe by a woman, but because a *man* killed the wild animal and two *men* stripped it of its fur in order to consume its meat. Judy, as the scene's only woman, fulfilled the traditionally feminine role of duplicating a recipe in her home kitchen in order to feed men the meat that they themselves acquired.

For Woodrell, too, confirming the *Otherness* of Ozark culture—in direct opposition to Judy's acknowledgement of her unfamiliarly with the traditional dish and unusual source of protein until her recent "discovery"—has symbolic and material benefits. As a bestselling author whose novels are based on his interpretation of Ozark

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[160] Heldke, "Exotic Appetites," 72.

residents as largely poor, rural, and steadfastly committed to maintaining a way of life

independent from modern notions of progress, the representation of his longstanding

participation in Ozark culture in the opening scene reinforced Woodrell's cultural

authenticity and authority. As an influential cultural intermediary himself, Woodrell (who

earned an MFA from the prestigious Iowa Writer's Workshop) is clearly committed to

presenting and perpetuating his version of Ozark culture on *No Reservations.* The

promotion of Woodrell and his work on the show exposed him to a broader audience and

increased his potential to further accumulate cultural and economic capital. In fact, the

episode of *No Reservations* set in the Ozarks coincided with widespread critical acclaim

for *Winter's Bone*, a movie based on Woodrell's novel of the same name, both of which

were set in the West Plains area of the Ozarks.[161] Much like Woodrell's other work and

the representation of Ozark culture featured in *No Reservations*, in both the novel and

cinematic reinterpretation of *Winter's Bone*, Ozark culture is characterized by poor, but

hard working and self-reliant individuals attempting to survive—by whatever means

necessary—abject poverty and the depravity that emerges in the midst of such desperate

circumstances. The representation of rural Ozark culture on *No Reservations* as

stereotypically recognizable, but completely outside the dominant cultural norms of

contemporary U.S. culture, was mutually beneficial for Bourdain and Woodrell, as both

men gained cultural capital by appropriating each other's unique form of cultural

authenticity and commercial influence while simultaneously reinforcing their masculinity

as well.

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[161] The Ozarks episode of *No Reservations* first aired on March 28, 2011. A month prior, *Winter's Bone* received international publicity as it was nominated in four different categories (including Best Picture) during the live telecast of the 83rd Academy Awards, which aired on February 27, 2014.

Representations of poverty-stricken rural Southern white culture were particularly salient in popular media at the time the episode was filmed and aired. In addition to the critical success of *Winter's Bone*, the scripted cable series *Justified*, set in Harlan County, Kentucky—a rural, coal-mining region of southern Appalachia—was both critically and commercially successful, garnering four Primetime Emmy Award nominations and ranking among the ten highest watched cable television series in 2011.[162] Like *Winter's Bone*, the characters of *Justified* adhered to traits stereotypically associated with rurally isolated Southern poor whites, including violence, vigilantism, alcohol and drug use, self-reliance, resourcefulness, and a suspicion of outsiders and the law.

These stereotypical characteristics associated with Southern poor whites have mutable social and cultural meanings, but have proven to be an enduring method to either deride or celebrate difference in U.S. popular culture. Referred to as "crackers" both colloquially and in official documents in the British colonies prior to the Revolutionary War, poor rural whites were subjected to public scrutiny, violence, and legal discrimination due to their lack of geographic fixity and reputation for skirting established codes of moral conduct and societal laws. As Matt Wray explains,

> Lacking access to the land required for upward social mobility, many poor white colonists opted for geographic mobility and, in defiance of colonial authorities, pushed aggressively and violently into the western trans-Appalachia frontier…[C]rackers had reputations for being ill-mannered, arrogant, treacherous, and cruel, stealing from Indians and propertied colonists alike.[163]

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[162] Other scripted or reality shows featuring stereotypical Southern white characters were either on the air at the time, or soon followed. Shows specifically related to the outlaw or "hillbilly" culture include *Moonshiners, Clash of the Ozarks, Hatfields & McCoys, Hillbilly Handfishin', Swamp People*, and *Duck Dynasty*.

[163] Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 34-36.

Like the "hillbilly" stereotype that would largely replace the use of the term "cracker" by the early twentieth century, attaching the label of "crackers" to poor whites was a method of demarcating boundaries of whiteness. Based on perceived differences in race, manners, class, and intelligence, poor whites were deemed naturally inferior to land owning and law abiding white colonists.

In the early twentieth century, crackers and their vagabond outlaw lifestyles no longer evoked the same menace among white members of the U.S. upper and middle class. As the term "hillbilly" suggests, the poor and working-class white Southerners ceased to be threateningly mobile and were instead largely geographically tied to the Southern mountain regions of the U.S., most notably the Appalachians and the Ozarks. This shift in the popular representation—and general circumstances—of poor and working-class whites in the rural South reflects a larger cultural and social ideological transition, as Beverly Skeggs notes:

> Locatedness, a geography of placement, becomes a way of speaking class indirectly but spatially; through geography and physicality. Just as the middle-classes have changer their interests and perspectives from fixity to mobility (although remaining located to become mobile), the working-class have shifted historical locations from once being the dangerously mobile, threatening to contaminate the respectable through their movement and proximity, to now becoming firmly fixed in order to be identifiable and governable.[164]

In this way, the hillbilly identity attached to Southern poor and working-class whites serves as means of distancing them from upper and middle class whites, but also situates them as a useful resource for cultural exploitation. The hillbilly image has consequently "endured because of its semantic and ideological malleableness—a changeability rooted in its core ambiguity as a representation of a 'white other' that both celebrates and

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[164] Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture,* 50.

denigrates the American past the folkways of the southern mountain folk."[165] Thus, the

hillbilly stereotype—and the "backward" tendencies associated with it—simultaneously

acts as a means for blaming the poor for being poor, but also provides a nostalgic link to

a past rooted in and self-preservation and closeness to nature. This dual function of the

hillbilly stereotype closely resembles what Renato Rosaldo refers to as imperialist

nostalgia, or "a particular kind of nostalgia…where people mourn the passing of what

they themselves have transformed."[166] According to Rosaldo, "In this ideologically

constructed world of ongoing progressive change, putatively static savage societies

become a stable reference point for defining (the felicitous progress of) civilized identity.

'We' valorize innovation and then yearn for more stable worlds, whether these reside in

our own past, in other cultures, or in a conflation of the two."[167] This tendency to "yearn

for more stable worlds," I want to suggest, is even stronger when contradictions arise that

threaten to rupture the dominant ideological and economic structures of society, and thus

the privileged existence that these structures secure for members of the upper and middle

classes.

In times of economic and political uncertainly, when the established conditions of

existence for the majority are tied to institutions seemingly on the brink of collapse, there

exists a general tendency among citizens to either attempt to shore up the collapsing

systems which structure their way of life, or to turn against modern notions of progress in

an attempt to reclaim a more "pure," "natural," or even "authentic" way of life that was

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[165] Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 220.

[166] Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 (1989): 108.

[167] *Ibid,* 108.

largely lost in the fervent transition to modernity.[168] The hillbilly—as a paradigmatic

image of a person (often a man) living a natural life outside the confines of modern

economic and cultural formations—has offered a useful public representation of an

alternative way of being during such times of crisis. As Harkins explains, "The hillbilly

image/identity reached its apex during the Great Depression and blossomed across the

cultural spectrum from novels to film to comic strips and cartoons. In an era of economic

and social upheaval, the 'hillbilly' represented both fears of societal collapse and

devolution *and* a celebration of an indigenous American folk and folk culture."[169] It is no

wonder then that during the Great Recession of the last half of the 2000s that a renewed

cultural focus on the Southern poor and working-class whites emerged in popular media.

Whether a coincidence, a response to an already burgeoning cultural interest, or a

harbinger of things to come, the airing of the *No Reservations* episode neatly packaged

the *Otherness* of rural Southern poor and working-class white culture for its audience. In

the Ozark episode of *No Reservations*—which aired as the national economy was

beginning to stabilize following massive government bailout of the U.S. financial

system—Bourdain repeatedly forced the stereotypical representation of hillbilly culture

onto the local people he encountered in order to demonstrate and capitalize on their

unique form of cultural authenticity.

After a night spent drinking with locals in a Joplin, Missouri, dive bar hosting a

sanctioned arm wrestling tournament, in the episode's next scene Bourdain and Woodrell

set out for another excursion into the Ozark wilderness. The scene begins with the two

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[168] See, for example, Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009), 93-98.
[169] Harkins, *Hillbilly*, 220.

traveling by boat up a scenic remote Missouri river, with the boat's driver and local guide

preparing the two for the suckerfish gigging planned for later that night:

> Bourdain: Now suckers, or suckerfish, what do you call them…suckers?
> What…what are they like that I would know? I mean are
> they…they're bottom feeders?

> Boat driver: They feed off of insects on the bottom, they're not like a catfish that
> sucks rotten stuff off the bottom. I think you'll find when you eat the
> suckers, they taste a whole lot better then even a smallmouth bass
> does.

> Woodrell: Why is it so many people don't seem to think a sucker as a eatin' fish?

> Boat driver: They haven't eaten one.

> Woodrell (laughing): Okay.

> Bourdain (voiceover): The way they tell it, these tricky to catch little (expletive)
> lurkin' right under the surface in shallow, fast running water, are a
> prized delicacy that most in the country are just too damn dumb to
> appreciate, much less know about. And the way that you get them is,
> well…you'll see. You gotta wait until dark.

The local knowledge of the guide imbues the scene with cultural authenticity. He

possesses the knowledge and ability to locate, catch, and cook a fish that mainstream U.S.

consumers "are just too damn dumb to appreciate, much less know about." By "siding"

with the Ozark fishermen and valorizing the hidden gems of a culture that is either

unknown or largely disparaged in cosmopolitan areas, Bourdain reinforces his outsider

persona. Moreover, the ability to live off the land in ways that other people are unable or

unwilling to do provides the guide with cultural authenticity based on his unique brand of

perseverance and self-reliance in a society largely dedicated to convenience and

maintaining a comfortable distance from the more unsavory and potentially dangerous

aspects involved in the acquisition of meat. Once the trio reaches their destination, the

uniqueness of the guide and his friends—who are already set up on shore—is further

demonstrated. During shots of men frying fish and sliced potatoes, Bourdain and

Woodrell marvel at the ability of the men's ability to cook:

> Boudain (voiceover): We're joined by a swarm of locals who clearly know what they're doing when it comes to frying suckers. You score the fish just right to tenderize the tiny little bones that run through the flesh. You batter 'em, and deep fry 'em. Then serve 'em with hush puppies— some of the lightest, airiest, and tastiest I ever had, by the way—and some fried potatoes and red onion, and maybe a slice of bread.

> Daniel (to Bourdain): Well this turns into one of the top five restaurants in the Ozarks all of a sudden.

> Bourdain: This fish is as good as advertised. Man, these hush puppies are great, right? Ripe.

> Daniel: I've certainly had a lot of hush puppies that were, like marbles.

> Bourdain: Right.

> Daniel (holding up a hush puppy): This is perfect.

> Bourdain: Yeah this is a situation that would defeat a lot of professionals…tryin' to make a light hush puppy.

> Daniel: Mm hmm.

The men not only possess an uncommon knowledge of the palatability of a fish

indigenous to their region, they also demonstrate an autodidactic ability to cook that

"would defeat a lot of professionals." Although two women are present in the makeshift

outdoor fish fry, only men are shown actually cooking the food in the filmed scene. The

men thus engage in what Jeffrey Sobal refers to as "doing masculinity," an iconic

masculine approach to cooking and eating in which a man "hunts or fishes for his own

game, minimally cooks it over an open fire, and eats the meat with few accompaniments

in the outdoors in the company of other like-minded men."[170] The women—when briefly shown—are huddled around the warmth emanating from men's cooking equipment, eating and making conversation.[171] Once the sun begins to fade behind the Ozark hills and the group finishes eating, the men head out on the promised gigging excursion.

The danger of attempting to kill wild animals—in this case fish—becomes quickly apparent as Bourdain, Woodrell, and the other men head upstream in multiple boats. The men are cloaked in complete darkness, the kind of darkness only possible when far removed from the contemporary infrastructure and lights of civilization. If the tenebrous sky and the inherent instability of traveling in short, flat-hulled aluminum boats against the current were not ominous enough, the utter lack of skill possessed by both Bourdain and Woodrell further complicates the mission. As the camera crew attempts to capture the scene with little ambient light—the only lights visible on the screen are not camera aides but instead mounted to the bow of the boats and aimed directly into the river to illuminate the shallow water—Bourdain throws his spear wildly into the water. The handle hits Woodrell, spinning him around. Woodrell loses his footing and falls headfirst into the back of the boat, violently, from the bow of the boat where he was perched next to Bourdain. With true panic, the production crew and other boaters scramble to come to Woodrell's aid. The boats eventually make it to shore, where Woodrell is ushered into an ambulance and driven away. Although clearly unplanned, the scene adds to the authenticity of the episode. Bourdain and Woodrell, while obvious cultural interlopers unprepared for the gigging excursion, nonetheless demonstrate a

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[170] Sobal, "Men, Meat, and Marriage," 139.

[171] The presence of women in the scene verifies the heterosexuality of the men. If the men were alone, the open homosociality could turn into a threat to their heteromasculinity. Keeping "their women" in the shot, but silent, puts the women "in their place" and secures the men's mastery of the scene.

willingness to endure hazardous conditions and risk their lives in order to participate in a local custom. Moreover, Woodrell's injury (later revealed to be a broken shoulder) increases the masculine bravado of the men that gig on regular basis in order to provide sustenance for themselves (and presumably their wives and children).

Woodrell's injury, however, does not deter Bourdain from further participating in potentially dangerous activities with Ozark men in an effort to represent the Otherness of their culture in the episode. Yet, the forced representation of "hillbilly" stereotype is quickly made clear. In the scene following Woodrell's injury, Bourdain goes duck hunting with two locals, Alan and Toby. While in the duck blind, Bourdain asks Alan, the man that brought him to the blind, "What kind of duck makes the best eating?" To Bourdain's apparent surprise, Alan responds that he does not enjoy the taste of duck. In a voiceover following the exchange, Bourdain, with a haughtiness tempered by sarcasm, proclaims:

> I now know what I must do. What I was put on this earth for. I will teach these young hunters how to properly prepare a duck breast. To not waste that which god hath put on this earth. Which is to say, like, make a duck breast with crispy skin, rendered fat, and perfectly red-pink meat. This I shall do o' lord.

The trio goes on to successfully shoot a few ducks before leaving the blind. The scene then cuts to the lodge where Bourdain and his crew have been staying. Alan and Toby join Bourdain in a non-professional kitchen for what Bourdain—in a voiceover setting the scene—calls "an impromptu lesson in cooking":

> Bourdain: So, here's an experiment gentlemen. We're gonna find out whether the wild version of ducks, instead of farm raised, you know, are they, can they be delicious? Let's find out if we can make something delicious with just salt and pepper. Duck fat is a very hot substance, so gentlemen, remember this please: When cooking duck, always wear pants.

(Laughter)

Bourdain: At this point you want it to go slow. Pan not too hot. They're just gonna sit there for a while. If you cook it right, that fat kinda goes into the meat and it all becomes juicy and delicious.

Bourdain: Which bird was this, the mallard?

Alan (nods): The mallard.

Bourdain (looking at the pan): I'm pretty sure you did not give your life in vain.

Alan: Yeah, I'm hoping to uh, glean something off this.

Bourdain: Yeah, well we'll see. It's a noble experiment.

Unlike the men in the previous gigging scene, Alan and Toby lack the proper knowledge and skill to fit the masculine, self-reliant hillbilly stereotype. In fact, although they demonstrate a certain masculine willingness and ability to kill wild animals, the fact that they do so for sport and not sustenance strips them of any cultural authenticity or uniqueness they may possess. The men use modern weapons and decoys to lure ducks close enough to their comfortable blind to allow them to shoot and kill purely for pleasure. Bourdain, however, competently uses their morally dubious behavior to his advantage. In a move not so different from early manifestations of the hillbilly stereotype, Bourdain highlights the moral and economic "backwardness" of the men's behavior in order to demonstrate his own moral superiority and cultural competence.

Once the duck is finished cooking, Bourdain removes it from the pan and places it on a cutting board to let it rest. After providing further lessons to the men on the importance of letting the breast rest to finish cooking in its own juices, Bourdain demonstrates the proper way to slice the duck:

Toby: He's done that once or twice.

Alan: Yeah.

Toby: Cause I can guarantee you, you can grab that knife and it would not go anything like that.

Alan: I might cut my pinky finger off.

Bourdain plates the sliced duck breast and displays it for the camera and his two pupils:

Bourdain: Well, that's two forty-eight dollar orders of duck right there. Okay let's see how it is. You tell me.

Alan: That's like eight hundred times better than any duck I have ever tasted.

Bourdain: It doesn't suck, right?

While producing good food out of what one is able to kill, catch, or forage in nature—and passing on the necessary skills for others to do so in the future—is ostensibly the goal of this "noble experiment," the scene cannot simply be read as a benevolent act on Bourdain's part. His demonstration of skill displaces any notions of the kitchen as feminine space and cooking as a feminine act. This not only reinforces Bourdain's own masculinity, but also situates the act of cooking wild game as a cool, conscientious, and ultimately manly act. Any disconnect between the stereotypical Ozark man and the hunting practices of Alan and Toby is thus erased. The two—by eagerly learning from Bourdain and willingly tasting an animal they had so openly shared their derision of— show a commitment to acquiring the knowledge and skill to live *properly* off the land. By teaching the men the cultural and economic value of the delicacy that is well-cooked duck, Bourdain also increases his own cool and authentic persona by demonstrating—and gaining the men's confirmation and approval of—his mastery of their ways. Although he may not be a cultural insider in the Ozarks, Bourdain clearly values the anti-consumerist

traditions of self-perseverance and a commitment to maintaining a lifestyle close to nature stereotypically associated with Ozark culture. His ability to represent and engage in these traditional activities, connect with Others, and even contribute to the erudition of Ozark natives all work to enhance his own cultural capital.

While it is perhaps unlikely that Bourdain, through his sojourn in the Ozarks, identified and disseminated a new lifestyle formation for many astute cultural omnivores in his viewing audience, he did manage to further his own cultural distinction by demonstrating his "wide range of cultural interests."[172] Moreover, and in a more pernicious sense, by engaging in the everyday practices of poor and working-class Ozark citizens, Bourdain managed to exploit their culture for his own gain. By representing the aspects of working-class Ozark culture capable of appropriation in order to accumulate cultural capital (as well as, of course, economic capital), Bourdain—as well as the Travel Channel and the show's producers—benefitted in a way that members of the culture from which he/they plundered are inherently incapable of. While certain aspects of poor or working-class rural culture are easily appropriated, members of the culture remain ineluctably fixed.[173]

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[172] Wright, "Mediating Production and Consumption," 111.
[173] Skeggs, Class, Self, Culture.

Chapter Three

GENDER, RACE, PLACE, AND ARTISTRY:
CULINARY HEIRARCHIES AND CULTURAL VALUE

> The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as
> a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and
> feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can
> liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture.
> —bell hooks, *Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance*

Accompanied by East Flatbush native and critically acclaimed actor Michael K. Williams (and his dog), the first scene of the "Brooklyn" episode of *No Reservations* begins with a leisurely walk through the streets of the East Flatbush neighborhood. Bourdain stands idly by as throngs of neighborhood residents eagerly greet Williams, who was raised in East Flatbush. The two eventually make their way to the Crown Heights neighborhood in order to eat at Gloria's, which, as Bourdain explains in a voice-over, is a restaurant that specializes "in traditional island cooking aimed at the enormous population of Caribbean and West Indian transplants around here." The content of the opening footage filmed in the kitchen is almost exclusively focused on the food. The scene quickly shifts to the dining room, where Bourdain and Williams consume oxtail, curried goat, and callaloo. While the two eat, shots of the kitchen staff preparing the meals are interspersed with the footage from the dining room to coincide with a voice-over recorded by Bourdain explaining each dish. Yet again, the focus is on the ingredients and cooking, replete with the heads of the cooks cut out of each frame.

Unlike the majority of modern culinary television shows—*No Reservations* included—where authenticity is tied to the artistry or prestige of the chef, in this scene

authenticity is derived from the food, as well as Williams' constant laudatory ravings.[174]

In contrast to most culinary travel shows that feature interviews or visits with the cooks

or chef, in this televised visit to Gloria's, none of the cooks speak. By neglecting to speak

to those doing the cooking, the cooks—either women of Caribbean heritage or

individuals trained by them—are devalued as culinary artists by the *No Reservations*

production team and instead lauded for their innate ability to carry on the flavors and

dishes associated with traditional Caribbean cuisine. In stark contrast with male chefs

trained at prestigious culinary institutions who then apprentice at critically venerated

restaurants, the food produced at Gloria's is lauded for its accuracy in duplicating

traditional recipes, rather than the artistry associated with "inventing" a new dish. This

devaluation of the innovation—or even skill—of the chefs and cooks at Gloria's by

Bourdain and *No Reservations* reproduces racialized and gendered notions of cooking. As

David E. Sutton explains, "[The] image of the chef/experimenter would be more in line

with the male 'great chefs' in France, who…have the power to impose their family names

on their culinary innovations, while women have tended in the past to cook in an oral

tradition of kinship transmission in which, even when they publish cookbooks, they

remain the semi-anonymous 'Aunt Maries' and 'Grandma Madeleines.'"[175] Sutton's

reference to "Aunt Maries" and "Grandma Madeleines" is used to illustrate the gendered

displacement of females in the "cannon" of professional cooking, but it also hints at a

history of racist oppression and exploitation of black female cooks in popular culture.

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[174] Williams, as explained in the episode, is a first-generation Bahamian immigrant.

[175] David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 141.

Intentionally or not, Sutton's employment of "Aunt Maries" to articulate the

historic devaluation of the contribution of female cooks within the culinary field also

unmistakably invokes the "mammy" stereotype, exemplified by the Quaker Oat's

infamous Aunt Jemima trademark. "The 'mammy' or 'aunt jemima,'" figure, as Robin

Means Coleman explains, was "one of the first White stereotypes of a Black woman,"

and as a "fat jolly slave…the mammy was thought to be the ideal Black person largely

because she was so deathly loyal to the Whites who owned her or to whom she was

employed."[176] The mammy figure has worked to maintain racial and gender oppression

for African American women by instantiating a "U.S. desire for African American

women to be the ever-smiling producers of food, to be nurturers who themselves have no

appetite and make no demands."[177] This antiquated stereotype of Black womanhood

simultaneously produces a commodifiable longing for this fabricated Otherness and

contributes to the ongoing oppression of Black women, as bell hooks explains:

> The acknowledged Other must assume recognizable forms. Hence, it is not
> African American culture formed in resistance to contemporary situations that
> surfaces, but nostalgic evocation of a 'glorious' past. And even though the focus
> is often on the ways that this past was 'superior' to the present, this cultural
> narrative relies on the 'primitive,' even as it eschews the term, to evoke a world
> where black people were in harmony with nature and with one another. This
> narrative is linked to white western conceptions of the dark Other, not to a radical
> questioning of those representations.[178]

It is this nostalgia for "a glorious past" that has created a contemporary demand for

traditional, "authentic" food produced by Black women and thus served to limit their

ability to innovate (or openly acknowledge their innovations) "because experimentation

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[176] Robin R. Means Coleman, *African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy: Situating Racial Humor* (New York: Garland, 2000), 43.

[177] Doris Witt, *Black Hunger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999),

[178] bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works,* eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 370.

would damage the connections that traditional cuisine makes within the communities from which it came." The valorization of traditional, "primitive" food has led to a cultural expectation for Black women to be silent cooks who are not needed—nor expected—to do more than "what comes natural" to them. To reduce the culinary skills of Black women to an innate and unremarkable capacity to accurately reproduce traditional recipes effectively obscures and erases the real and important culinary contributions of African American women and inhibits their potential to legitimately participate in, contribute to, and capitalize on the contemporary cultural fascination with culinary innovation. For Gloria too, her contribution to the culinary field remains semi-anonymous and fixed. Although her eponymously named restaurant is featured in an episode of a popular and critically acclaimed food travel show, she remains conspicuously absent from it.[179]

Following his brief visit to Gloria's, Bourdain heads to the Columbia Street Waterfront District restaurant Pok Pok, a Thai restaurant owned and operated by James Beard Award winning chef Andy Ricker. For this meal, New York City restaurateur Eddie Huang accompanies Bourdain. Immediately, Bourdain, again in a voice-over, poses the following questions:

> What is authentic? Does it exist? Should white guys get famous and successful cooking the traditional cuisine of poor ethnic groups from the other side of the world?

The focus of the camera shifts to Huang for his take:

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[179] There is no mention of Gloria, the history of the restaurant, or the people doing the cooking at all in the episode. Similar to Lauren Berlant's description of Delilah in her analysis of *Imitation of Life,* Gloria's "status as a living trademark takes over her own meaning and history." See Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 121.

I'm always curious about Gringo chefs doing Asian food. Especially Gringo chefs that win James Beard Awards doing Asian food. They probably suck. I want it to suck. Then I ate it and it's mind blowing.

Like Williams in the previous scene, Huang provides the scene, as well as the cuisine, with ethnic authenticity. Moreover, by challenging the very notion of authenticity, Bourdain is able to deflect any significant analysis of the unequal power relations inherent in Ricker's blatant cultural appropriation of Thai cuisine, which seamlessly allows Huang to legitimate the food served at Pok Pok, as well as Ricker's cultural status and ability as a chef, on Bourdain's behalf. Unlike the scene shot at Gloria's, at Pok Pok the chef is the star. The food, of course, is featured, but a plethora of shots of Ricker toiling in the kitchen repeatedly bombard the screen.

As the Huang and Bourdain finish the meal they repeatedly and enthusiastically praise, Ricker emerges from the kitchen to join the men at the table:

Ricker: Hey Eddie.

Huang: What's up dude? How's it goin'?

Ricker: How's it goin' guys? How was the meal?

Bourdain: It was perfect.

Huang: It was.

Ricker: Oh, I'm really glad to hear that. Did you eat some of these freaky greens over here?

Huang: Yeah, delicious.

Bourdain (to Ricker): Of all of the reasonable things you could do in this world, why would you embrace a cuisine that just about every Western guy who ever tried to get it right completely (expletive) up.

Ricker: Well, I didn't set out to do this.

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Huang: So you weren't a chef that just needed a second restaurant?

Ricker: No, I was a cook on vacation. When I first started going to Thailand…you know I'd had Thai food in America, but then I had this and I thought, my god, this doesn't taste like Thai food—that I knew of Thai food.

Bourdain: I've had a lot of Thai meals in the Western world. Nothing's approached this…awesome!

Ricker: To me this is the kinda food that people eat normally, every day. This is like peasant food, really. I think the tendency for most Western chefs is they want to take food that was never meant to become fancy and make it somehow elevated. And this food is meant to be eaten like this, on plastic plates, on a plastic tablecloth. My fear is to take something that's already really good and turn it into something it's not.

This interaction between the men importantly reveals an unequal cultural and economic hierarchy of restaurants and chefs within the Western world. Although both Bourdain and Williams praise the food at Gloria's, they do not praise the work of the cooks. The cooks at Gloria's are instead assumed to possess an innate ability to recreate the cuisine of their own culture. However, when a white man is able to successfully duplicate the recipes of a remote region of Thailand, he is valorized for his ability to cook, even if he readily admits his steadfast commitment to reproducing unaltered recipes he learned from cooks he met there. Bourdain employs two very different conceptions of authenticity in these two scenes, with very different consequences for those deemed authentic.

Authenticity for Gloria's, much like the authenticity possessed by—or attributed to—the people of the Ozarks, is tied to the past. Gloria's is deemed authentic because immigrants—or the children of immigrants—reproduce food native to their culture of origin. Yet, because they hail from a region in which many people have emigrated, the food has become recognizable, perhaps even commonplace to those in culturally diverse

metropolitan areas of the U.S. Neither the food they produce nor the way it is presented is in any way represented as innovative. The fact that Gloria's is featured on *No Reservations* confirms the quality of the food, and may even position it as superior to other Caribbean restaurants in Brooklyn, New York City, or the rest of the United States, but it is still firmly rooted in traditional and recognizable cuisine. Gloria's is no doubt is affected—whether positively, negatively, or a combination of both—by its exposure on a uniquely popular food television show. Much like the people of the Ozarks, however, Gloria's is greatly limited in any potential economic and cultural opportunities stemming from this exposure due to the fact that its success is based on the reproduction of a stereotypically fixed notion of "authentic" Caribbean cuisine.

For Ricker, on the other hand, his ability to travel to a remote region of Thailand and consume, observe, and learn to cook a cuisine at the time largely unexposed to consumers in the Western world has enabled him to benefit greatly from his privileged mobility. In contrast to his interaction with Bourdain in the above scene in which he claims to have been a cook on vacation and disavows any preconceived plans to capitalize by exposing Northern Thai cuisine to U.S. consumers, in his bestselling cookbook featuring recipes from his restaurants and travels, his story is a bit different:

> Back in the States, my obsession with Thailand made me hard to hire, because every winter, I'd have to quit my job and go back. That's when I decided to take up house painting full-time, after spending much of my working life in restaurants. It gave me the flexibility to spend months at a time in Thailand. I took language lessons. My eating became more systematic. I'd taste something, get obsessed with it, and eat it everywhere I could. So much of the food there is cooked outdoors, in plain sight, so I watched the food being made. I talked my way into the homes of friends, and friends of friends. I'd hang out with street vendors, picking their brains over glasses of rice whiskey. Gradually, I learned to cook the dishes I loved most, to tweak them and tweak them until they tasted just

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like they did at my favorite spots. *Someday I'll open a restaurant,* I thought. *Americans need to know this food.*[180]

The "flexibility" of Ricker's labor and his ability to travel to Thailand for extended periods of time are emblematic of the unequal circulations of knowledge, culture, and capital in contemporary society associated with the structural and racial privilege of whiteness. Such advantages allow for "[i]ntercultural behaviors in which a White person crosses ethnocultural boundaries in an attempt to enrich his or her 'human' experience," and "are frequently grounded in an attitude, which displays a significant degree of entitlement."[181] Although this entitlement "no doubt springs from a position of structural advantage," according to Sean M. Tierney, "it also shows how the unquestioned invisibility of whiteness rationalizes the adoption or appropriation of Others' cultural activities as an expression of a universal, human impulse or right."[182] Tierney argues that the appropriation and employment of the term "human" is "a strategic rhetoric of whiteness" that situates whiteness as a natural—rather than culturally produced—subject position, and thereby attempts to eradicate it of its historical, racially constructed difference and power in order to suggest the existence of an essentialized, collective human experience. Cloaking the crossing of cultural boarders and the "borrowing" from Others as a natural and universal human drive effectively expunges the deleterious history of colonialism and white entitlement, and consequently minimizes any potential criticism of the contemporary practice of cultural appropriation by obfuscating the fact

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[180] Andy Ricker and JJ Goode, *Pok Pok: Food and Stories from the Streets, Homes, and Roadside Restaurants of Thailand* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2013), 2.

[181] Sean M. Tierney, "Themes of Whiteness in *Bulletproof Monk, Kill Bill, and The Last Samurai*," *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006): 608.

[182] *Ibid,* 609.

that the ability to appropriate the cultural practices of Others is neither natural or

universal, but instead derives from "the power and privilege that membership in the

dominant segment of society endows."[183] Thus, cultural appropriation is positioned as a

benign, even beneficial, form of universal intercultural exchange, not an exclusive

privilege of Western whites.

While it is impossible—and largely irrelevant—to understand Ricker's initial

motivations in accumulating such an exhaustive knowledge of a foreign cuisine, it is

telling, however, that Ricker goes out of his way to justify his appropriation of an Other's

cuisine as well as the sacrifices he had to make in order to achieve success. In his

cookbook, Ricker recounts in detail the many hardships he encountered in opening Pok

Pok in a "shack" that "hadn't seen any major improvement since about 1935":

> Now, I'd worked in enough restaurants to know a busy restaurant doesn't mean a
> profitable one. Sure enough, a year later, despite the success of the shack, I was
> broke. More than broke. I had maxed out about six credit cards in the process of
> building out the rest of the house into a proper restaurant. I fielded menacing calls
> from creditors. I'd broken every rule there is about opening a restaurant: I'd put
> up my house as collateral. I wrote checks blindly. My mom had to loan me seven
> thousand dollars that she couldn't afford so I could make my first payroll. All this
> to serve food not many Portlanders had ever heard of.[184]

Without completely discounting Ricker's hard work and the hardships he encountered

while opening up his restaurant, one cannot simply dismiss his position of privilege that

allowed him to open the restaurant in the first place. First, he owned a house, had access

to credit, and a family with the ability to access funds in order to help him make his first

payroll. Sure, it was a risk, but a risk not many are able to even contemplate, let alone

attempt, in order to start their own business. One cannot help but read Ricker's account as

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[183] *Ibid.*

[184] Ricker and Goode, *Pok Pok,* 3.

an effort to establish his own form of authenticity based on his hard work and the various

struggles he had to overcome in order to achieve success, but also as a method of

assuaging—consciously or not—imperialist guilt. Such a reading is further enhanced in

the final paragraphs of the book's introduction:

> This book is a tribute to the cooks of Thailand. Which leads me to disclaimer number one: I'm not a chef. I didn't invent this stuff. The food at my restaurants is not my take on Thai food…I'm a proud copycat. The recipes in this book are my best approximations of some of my favorite Thai dishes, which have been created, cooked, and perfected by Thai people…These characters, I should mention, are getting older and their knowledge is being threatened with extinction. Many members of the younger generation of Thais no longer want to take over their parents' food stalls or learn the secrets of their grandmothers' bamboo shoot salads. They want to go to college, move to Bangkok, or leave the country…These changes aren't bad or good. It is what it is. Many of this book's recipes embody traditions that are rapidly disappearing. Even if you don't cook through the recipe for Northern Thai *laap*, at least it will be on paper. At least there will be a record in English of its existence.[185]

Again, Ricker downplays his own skill—even though he no doubt considers himself

skilled enough to open restaurants, accept critical acclaim, and publish his own

cookbook. He may indeed feel indebted to those who willingly shared their recipes and

knowledge with him, and thus provided him with the means to capitalize on an Other's

cuisine in ways they never could. Moreover, Ricker importantly neglects any discussion

of the economic success and cultural prominence he has achieved by commodifying on

an Other's cuisine. Tellingly, he instead chooses to legitimate his appropriation of

Northern Thai cuisine as a form of historical documentation and preservation. There is

even a copy of a letter written by a man Ricker refers to as "Mr. Lit…my chicken

mentor" included in the book's pages that affirms Ricker's mastery of Thai cuisine and

lends approval for his "documentation" of Northern Thai cuisine:

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[185] *Ibid,* 3-4.

Andy…I think this Thai-food project of yours is praiseworthy in that it will not only show the reader how to best prepare their Thai food at home, but will also explain the philosophy behind the various processes in a comprehensive way. Having known you for nearly a decade, I can only say there are very few connoisseurs of Thai dishes; or even Thai chefs anywhere, who have an understanding of Thai cuisine comparable to you…Furthermore, we both share a belief that the 'old' way is the best way: that a chili paste from a mortar is much tastier than that from a grinder; and that meat grilled with charcoal smells far better than done any other way. By making it a rule to travel to Thailand at least once a year in order to acquire deeper knowledge of the country's food and culture—you have thus become a Thai at heart. In the name of all Thais, I wish to thank you for playing a part in upholding our cultural values.[186]

The sharing of this letter of by Ricker reinforces his stated aim of preserving traditional methods of Thai cooking and Thai cuisine. More importantly, however, it reflects "[a] repetitive framework" of cultural appropriation "in which the White person achieves and/or comes to *possess* skill, mastery, and recognition (as well as mastery over and the acquiescence of Others) [that] displays a colonialist attitude that reinforces Western hegemony."[187] By using an Other to validate his own "mastery" of the "old ways" of cooking Thai cuisine and demonstrate his cultural authenticity by in becoming "a Thai at heart," Ricker's inclusion of the letter works to reposition the mastery of Thai cuisine from the culture of an Other into the hands of Western white man. Consequently, as Tierney explains, "The white imitator's display of the appropriated mastery both *to* and *through* the Asian practitioner nullifies the Asian's relationship to (and possession of) the mastery."[188] Thus, readers of Ricker's cookbook may regret the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the decline of "traditional" cuisine in Northern Thailand, but at least Ricker's possession of its mastery assures its continued survival in the West.

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[186] *Ibid,* 139.

[187] Tierney, "Themes of Whiteness," 614.

[188] *Ibid,* 613.

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This imperialist mode of thinking, however, is laden with economic and cultural inequalities Ricker chooses to ignore. Sure, he mentions that moving to Bangkok or out of the country provides greater opportunities for those born in the impoverished regions of Northern Thailand, but he certainly did not acquire extensive knowledge and traditional recipes in order to simply preserve the cuisine on behalf of those he encountered and learned from in Northern Thailand. He either fails to mention—or completely neglects—any notions of using his privilege and economic success in order to aid in the preservation of that cuisine for those whose livelihoods depend on it and willingly shared their knowledge and skills with him. Instead, he simply views the potential extinction of an Other's cuisine and way of life as an inexorable consequence of modern progress.

Besides the presence of an ethnic minority legitimating the exotic cuisine proffered at both restaurants, the two scenes could not be more distinct. In the working-class ethnic restaurant run by Others, there is no mention of the chef, owner, or cooks. On the other hand, in the award-winning restaurant run by a white chef serving ethnic cuisine, the chef's ability is profusely highlighted. What exactly this means in terms of Bourdain's representation and appropriation of an Other's authenticity seems clear. Consuming the culturally exotic cuisine served in Gloria's inauspicious space, in and of itself, provides a genuine experience from which to bolster Bourdain's cultural capital. In addition, the fact that Williams—an actor best known for playing gangsters in the critically acclaimed television shows *The Wire* and *Boardwalk Empire*—accompanies Bourdain on the streets of Brooklyn imbues the scene with a sense of danger related to racialized stereotypes of Black men which works to reinforce Bourdain's adventurous,

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masculine persona. This unfortunately common re-appropriation of Black culture in media, which involves exploiting the fact that Black men have historically "been criminalized for their perceived threat and danger" in order to strategically employ them "as dangerously glamorous and cool," serves a resource for Bourdain to convert into cultural capital, while simultaneously "reducing and reproducing [Williams] as *only* cool and dangerous."[189] The meal at Pok Pok, however, provides an entirely different experience. Not only did Huang's approval grant the scene and restaurant cultural authenticity, it also effectively assuages any imperialist culpability. As long as the food is authenticated—as well as praised—by an Asian chef, Bourdain is able to guiltlessly benefit though his association with both a culturally valorized chef, as well as Huang himself. Ricker, too, certainly benefits from his exposure on the show, as well as through the tacit approval of his appropriation of an Other's cuisine.

The unheralded cooks of Gloria's, not unlike the poor and working-class residents of the Ozarks, are incapable of attaining cultural capital through the appropriation of an Other's culture because they are always already positioned as the Other. Their authenticity always remains fixed to their cultural origins and the reproduction of their traditional cuisine in way that is recognized as "authentic" by U.S. consumers. By introducing U.S. diners to a cuisine that had not been widely commodified and established as authentic, Ricker's authenticity offers a greater opportunity for capital accumulation and expansion for both Ricker and other members of the cultural industries. Heldke contends that the being the first to appropriate an Other's culture produces a unique position of status for a cultural intermediary, like Ricker, that is laden with

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[189] Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture,* 98.

importance and influence based on the subsequent authenticity they acquire within their own culture:

> Being the first to introduce members of a culture to a 'new' cuisine gives one a status similar (in kind, if not degree) to that of explorers who return from their journeys loaded down with unusual and alluring stories, artifacts, and maps of the region they've explored, all of them all the more alluring for their striking unfamiliarity. Being the first to render a cuisine in the English language (for example) makes one a kind of expert by default, simply by virtue of knowing more than most any other English-speaker. This knowledge can give on the authority needed to overcome the obstacle of being an outsider, because it makes one indispensable to all the other outsiders who want access to a culture's cuisine.[190]

Although this form of authenticity is based on a demonstrated knowledge of a particular culture's history and traditions, by benefit of being a cultural outsider and through the very act being among the first to popularize an Other's cuisine in the West, this type of expertise is not geographically fixed nor is the cultural intermediary's representation of the Other's culture limited by established notions of the what is deemed authentic for that particular culture by Western consumers. Unlike those whose authenticity is fixed based on established stereotypes and widely recognized traditions their culture in Western society, Ricker's cultural authority and "mastery" of Thai cuisine allows him to innovate and "introduce" new, "authentic" Thai commodities. In addition to his two original award-winning restaurants in Portland and New York, Ricker has opened another restaurant as well as a stand-alone bar and lounge in Portland, an additional restaurant in New York, and two restaurants in Los Angeles. Beyond the expansion of his Pok Pok

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[190] Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 111.

restaurant empire, Ricker has also established a bottled drinking vinegar company, Pok

Pok Som, and imports charcoal from Thailand under the brand name Pok Pok Thaan.[191]

Paris

During a brief drive through the streets of Paris with friend and critically acclaimed chef

Eric Ripert to set the stage for the ensuing episode, Bourdain opens the show by noting

how much the city where Ripert began his career as a chef has changed since his move to

New York and subsequent success running the three stared Michelin restaurant Le

Bernardin. Bourdain boldly claims:

> It's been a while since Eric spent any serious time eating in Paris and he has every
> reason to believe he knows his way around here. But things have changed since
> Eric's time. A new breed [has emerged], not necessarily a movement, not any
> kind of an organized thing, but a groundswell…a rising of young Turks,
> reactionaries, revolutionaries, people for whom the old way, what they used to
> call the correct way, the way the old Michelin star system used to demand it had
> to be done, is the enemy.

Following Bourdain's identification of an emergent cultural formation that he claims is

threatening to transform the established culinary mores of Paris, Bourdain and Ripert

arrive at a small specialty food shop to discuss the ongoing changes in the Parisian

foodscape. Writer Alexandre Cammas, founder of the influential restaurant guide *Le

Fooding*, and critically acclaimed chef Inaki Aizpitarte of Le Chateaubriand join the two

for the filmed conversation. Cammas opens the exchange by explaining the impetus for

the transformations occurring in Paris:

> The problem with French cuisine is that we have the best quality of ingredients
> available to us, but we tend to over sophisticate things. We found ourselves in a

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[191] Pok Pok Restaurants. http://pokpokrestaurants.com/ [accessed May 25, 2016].

situation where chefs, guides and culinary schools were happy to just reproduce this 'classic' French cooking and they forgot to be French.

The ensuing conversation sets the scene for the entire episode: tradition versus innovation. In the scenes that follow, Ripert, somewhat reluctantly, serves as a defender of the established French culinary tradition as he and Bourdain dine at restaurants identified as either culturally innovative or traditionally French in an attempt to evaluate what the contemporary changes may mean for the future of Parisian—and thus French—culinary culture.

In perhaps any other location, labeling the abandonment of—or direct challenge to—that place's established culinary culture by popular young chefs and other members of the cultural industries as a "revolution" would likely seem hyperbolic. Yet, in France, food and drink are much more than commodities or objects required for subsistence. Traditional French cuisine provides a distinct and valued identity for the country and its citizens, so much so that the French government has multiple agencies that maintain strict standards regarding both the quality and origins of French produce. Granting such importance to cuisine in France places a unique emphasis on culinary tradition, as Amy B. Trubeck explains:

> The French foodview, this sensibility about food and drink, situates their tastes and celebrates their origins. Such a sensibility, especially since it is reinforced by many individual, collective, and government efforts, means that a piece of cheese or a glass of wine exists as much more than an object to be bought and sold on the marketplace…[T]he French government has a long history of intervening in the provision of food to French people, creating a 'moral' market and exchange system…The 'production of locality' through taste helps constitute the meaning of France in the midst of the global flow of ideas, ingredients and values shaping our tastes for food and drink.[192]

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[192] Amy B. Trubek, *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 52-53.

The "revolution" of French cuisine, attributed by Bourdain to "young Turks" like

Cammas and Aizpitarte, thus threatens to alter the core of French national identity.

Following the conversation with Cammas and Aizpitarte, Bourdain and Ripert eat

a sautéed kidney dish at a small Parisian restaurant that specializes in traditional offal

dishes. After the traditional meal, which both men praise, the two share a meal with two

Parisian chefs know as innovators for two different reasons. Bourdain, in a voiceover,

introduces the scene:

> Everything is fine…everything is fine. Nothing has changed. The classics? Still here. All good. Condition: Normal. Or is it? Les Cocottes, owned by chef Christian Constant, of an earlier generation of great chefs who also opted to leave the Michelin stars behind and opt for more casual, friendly, neighborhood oriented dining. And Thierry Marx, the fearsomely brilliant, forward-thinking new chef who's been exploring a new molecular style of gastronomy without any stabilizers or artificials. On the surface, two guys who are as different as can be, but…

After a serious of cuts between the kitchen and table where the men are conversing

during the voiceover, the camera focuses on Bourdain:

> Bourdain (to the table): What's going on in Paris with gastronomy, with this move to more casual…what does it all mean?

> Constant (in French): I think that in Paris, bistros are taking over from the Michelin-starred places. I used to work at the Crillon, we had 2 stars, and I realized that people were looking for a more convivial atmosphere, more simplicity and more comfort food.

> Ripert: My memories of France, it was like you were going to the table and you were spending hours and hours and hours. And they're saying the tendency today is to be much faster, a little bit like we do in the U.S. or in Europe, for instance. Where we don't spend three hours at the table.

> Bourdain: What a change. Can the two systems coexist?

Marx (in French): The customers have a lot more freedom these days. If they want to eat a burger from a stand, they'll eat a burger from a stand, and at night they'll eat at a three star Michelin place.

Ripert: They don't want anyone to tell them what to do. And my observation was, well that has been done in the U.S. a long time ago already. We have been pioneers in that aspect.

Beyond mere change, the conversation clearly indicates that what is at stake in the ongoing transformations of cooking and dining in Paris is the long-held "global culinary hegemony of France."[193]

The historical importance of French cuisine extends far beyond its territorial borders. Through the creation of a codified culinary linguistic model by Marie-Antoine Carême in the nineteenth century, a formally recognized and standardized system for cooking arose in France and spread globally, effectively establishing Paris as the epicenter of the culinary world.[194] Much like the rest of the world's cosmopolitan culinary centers in the twentieth century, French cuisine "defined the upscale American landscape."[195] As Gwen Hyman explains:

> It was the old nineteenth-century formula: class came from France, as did beurre blanc, couture, good wine, modern table service, and all sorts of delicious, slightly transgressive indulgence. Those few haute chefs who happened to be born in the USA lived their public, professional lives as French chefs in quasi-colonial skins. The key term for the most accomplished American chefs was 'classically trained'—indicating, as a sort of certificate of value and authenticity, that the chef in question was the product of French or strongly French-influenced cooking schools, of French kitchens in France, or at least, of French kitchens in America.[196]

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[193] Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

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

[195] Gwen Hyman, "The Taste of Fame: Chefs, Diners, Celebrity, Class," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 8, no. 3 (2008): 43.

[196] *Ibid,* 43.

Thus, the embrace of a casual, quicker, more *American* approach to fine dining by

Parisian chefs and consumers represents a very real threat to the survival of traditional,

"authentic" French cuisine as well as the potential decline France's global culinary

supremacy.

The U.S. influence of the young, "revolutionary" breed of French chefs is further

demonstrated in the episode's next scene. As Bourdain and Ripert are shown walking the

streets of Paris at dusk, Bourdain sets the scene in a characteristic voiceover:

> Where are we? Ass end of nowhere best I can tell. A narrow one-way cobble
> stone street in…What's the name of this neighborhood? And here we are:
> Frenchie. Where we get one of our first looks at what might be, the future.

Once the two men enter the restaurant, the scene cuts to a shot of a man in chef's whites

and an apron standing in an alley, staring ominously at the camera as cigarette smoke

slowly billows from his mouth. As the shot lingers, Bourdain introduces the man and his

approach to cooking:

> Gregory Marchand is French. French born, French trained. But unlike most
> generations that came before, he spent eighteen months early in his career in New
> York, at Gramercy Tavern. He talks about Brooklyn style a lot. The name David
> Chang comes up. Try to imagine a French chef twenty years ago, even ten years
> ago, talking admiringly about an American chef. Nah. What's going on here? One
> menu, *prix fixe*. One seating for a couple dozen people. One guy cooking. Menu
> changes everyday with the market. This was not the way fine dining was
> supposed to be, right? Or wrong?

Marchand, in the ilk of a younger Bourdain, is presented as a culinary *enfant terrible*.

Young, rebellious, and critically acclaimed—Marchand displays a *cool* detachment from

French tradition and a dedication to innovation through the development of his own style

of cooking. After various shots of Marchand cooking and meticulously plating dishes, the

focus of the scene shifts back to the dining room:

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Ripert: Forty-five Euros for appetizer, main course, desert.

Bourdain (voiceover): Smoked mackerel with *asper su vag*, wild asparagus.

Ripert: Its amazing how guys who have luncheonette wants to do high-end sometimes and guys from the high-end want to do the contrary.

Bourdain: It's beautiful.

Ripert: Oh, the smell is great too.

Bourdain: Yeah. And one of my favorite underutilized fish, pretty. Em.

Ripert: I like the texture.

Bourdain (voiceover): Unnerving. This is no way to get rich in the restaurant business, but this guy doesn't seem to care.

Bourdain (to Ripert): It's remarkable the complete lack of greed.

Ripert (nods): Yeah.

Bourdain: I'll make this just this much money, it's just what I need. It's enough. I don't need to get rich.

Ripert: It is interesting that the guy is so passionate, he thinks about, okay I'm investing in quality of products, not on making my life easy. And having another cook, I don't care about that. I'm strong enough, I'm young enough. I'm thinking about giving the best to my client in terms of ingredients for the price.

Bourdain: Yeah, I never thought that way my whole life.

Ripert: Me too! It's why I ended up with thirty-eight cooks.

The "lack of greed" and "passion" evident in Marchand's devotion to quality over profit is characteristic of the cool, rebellious autonomy often associated with artists in contemporary culture. The artist—so long as he or she refuses to "sell-out" or avoid becoming to "mainstream"—represents the ideal authentic figure in an otherwise inauthentic world, as Jim McGuigan explains:

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> The image of the artist that sill prevails in Western culture, in however mystified a guise, derives from the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Romanticim that was notably theorized in German philosophy and pracised in English poetry. The artist is here a lone figure with a special gift, a superior imagination that enables him or her to see and depict what the rest of us miss…This ethereal figure is not only an idealist illusion but is also manifested materially in typical though often degraded form as the representative of an alternative way of life: that of the bohemian, an autonomous rebel living in a space separate from the mainstream.[197]

Bourdain, through both his open admiration of Marchand's greedless dedication to his craft and his own apparent honesty in admitting that he "never thought that way my whole life," reinforces his own authentic persona. Marchand's representation as a culinary "bad boy" with a disregard for tradition and an apparent anti-capitalist bent works to revive Bourdain's original authentic, anti-establishment persona. On the other hand, Bourdain has clearly capitalized on his fame and popularity, so his open admission of his own avarice does not diminish his authentic persona, but instead lends credibility to Bourdain's open and consistent distain for the industry he is exploiting and profiting from.

Later in the episode, on the way to Le Chateaubriand, the restaurant run by Inaki Aizpitarte, Bourdain and Ripert engage in a conversation that continues the episode's theme:

> Bourdain: I never thought I would find myself in this bizarro position. There you are, you're sitting at a table, having to defend yourself for running a three star Michelin restaurant.

> Ripert: Seriously, you don't run a three star restaurant to screw the people. You do that by passion and you do that because you want people to be happy. Right?

> Bourdain: But this is what happened.

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[197] Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 48-49.

Ripert: It was interesting. I was surprised.

It may be surprising to Ripert that the young chefs of France express a certain skepticism of the Michelin star system, but the traditions and values it upholds are part of the exclusivity and stagnation of French cuisine the chefs claim to oppose. The *Guide Michelin* began as a promotional giveaway with Michelin tires in 1900 and highlighted travel worthy destinations—including restaurants—throughout France in an effort to encourage its patrons to travel the country by car and, in the process, put wear on their tires.[198] Michelin introduced its star rankings in 1931 and "with their rules of exclusion and inclusion, and their expectations about what made a restaurant great, helped to create an elite cadre of restaurants throughout France that ultimately reinforced a national haute cuisine."[199] The guide eventually grew to include restaurants around the world, which further increased its influence and established a universally recognized global standard of culinary excellence. In the process, Michelin's annual guide wielded unprecedented power in the high-end restaurant industry, eliciting a pressure to gain or maintain star status that increased the stakes in an industry where failure has always been more common than success. Recognition from *Guide Michelin* may elevate a chef's status, but it also generates what Ripert earlier in the episode refers to as the "weight of the stars on the shoulder."[200] If the ideal, "authentic" artist is a figure that works with a complete dedication to their craft free of outside influence, however unrealistic or unattainable

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[198] Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste,* 158.

[199] Trubek, *The Taste of Place*, 37.

[200] The loss of a Michelin star or the pressure to maintain one's star status has even been linked to the suicides of some of the world's most venerated chefs. See https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/02/01/suspected-suicide-of-worlds-best-chef-highlights-pressure-cooker-of-haute-cuisine/ [accessed June 1, 2016].

such a position may be, by opposing the established systems of value in the culinary industry along with the pressure and expectations they generate, chefs like Marchand and Aizpitarte do exude an air of rebellious authenticity evocative of the independent, single-minded artist.

It is this sense of authenticity that Bourdain and the *No Reservations* production team emphasize in their visit to Le Chateaubriand. Following a brief shot of the restaurant's dining space as Bourdain and Ripert enter, the scene cuts to a shot of Aizpitarte sitting on a curb in a black motorcycle jacket, cigarette in hand, looking more like a disaffected rock star than a chef. As Bourdain proclaims in a voiceover, "Time to find out of this Inaki guy is the hotshot that *Le Fooding* dude seems to think he is," the scene cuts to a sequence of shots showing Aizpitarte shouting orders in a small, hectic kitchen. Reminiscent of the title sequence of *A Cook's Tour*, the shot establishes Aizpitarte's masculine mastery of the kitchen. In a voiceover during the kitchen sequence, Bourdain explains, "Not formally trained and personally, along with a couple other cooks, manning the ridiculously tiny kitchen, Inaki Aizpitarte has a single *prix fixe* menu a day." The fact that Aizpitarte is a self-taught cook whose restaurant was ranked as the eleventh best in the world by the increasingly prestigious The World's 50 Best Restaurants academy[201] at the time of Bourdain's visit, furthers Aizpitarte's artistry and singular talent.

Before the meal, Bourdain and Ripert attempt to comprehend the ongoing transformation of French cuisine and the new, more accessible bistro-style atmosphere in which it is served:

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[201] See http://www.theworlds50best.com/list/past-list/2010 [accessed June 3, 2016].

Bourdain: I'm not sure what it means. I'm a little scared.

Ripert: It means the world is changing and the young generation doesn't see what we do, maybe, with the same reverence. It is true that you can eat great food in bistros—that sometimes it's as good as a three star.

Bourdain: And I love the idea that all these people who can't afford *haute cuisine* are now able to eat this well for that cheap. That's good too.

Ripert. That's good news. That's fantastic.

Bourdain: But it really was, like meeting a young Trotsky, it could be our head on the pike. Well, not me, your ass.

Like Marchand, Aizpitarte's cuisine is characterized by its democratic appeal, but resolute adherence to quality. As opposed to the traditional, exclusive, and pretentious "temples of gastronomy" that were the traditional reserves of *haute cuisine*, Bourdain describes the atmosphere of Le Chateaubriand as "a noisy, minimally decorated pub, or wine bar." According to Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, this adherence to a democratic ideology in the culinary industry stems from the decline of elite consumption as a sign of distinction in the U.S. and "fuels the omnivorous notion that arbitrary standards of distinction based on a single, elite French notion of culture are unacceptable, and that multiple immigrant ethnicities and class cuisines possess their own intrinsic value."[202] Yet, although *haute cuisine* and gourmet food may be more readily accessible to middle-class consumers, the assertion of one's individuality and distinction through consumption have not disappeared. Instead, as Johnston and Baumann contend, "Operating in a dialectical tension with democratic ideology, an ideology of status and distinction operates implicitly to suggest that only certain individuals appreciate and

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[202] Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, "Democracy Versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 1 (2007): 173.

understand 'quality' culture." Here, Bourdain's role as a cultural intermediary becomes important. Aizpitarte's cuisine may not fit the traditional system of *haute* gastronomy that automatically distinguishes one simply based on their ability to afford to consume it, but it does allow those culturally astute consumers to assert their own individuality and cultural distinction by demonstrating the ability to discern quality food. As for Bourdain, his awareness of the *cool* reputation of Aizpitarte and Le Chateaubriand increases his own cultural capital and in his declared intention to "find out if this Inaki guy" really is a "hotshot" chef, Bourdain explicitly asserts his culinary authority and status as a cultural intermediary.

After a eating a sequences of dishes that Bourdain and Ripert enthusiastically laud, including one that Ripert proclaims, "I mean I wish I could have invented a dish like that," the two reflect on their dining experience and what it may mean for the future of French cuisine:

Bourdain: This is clearly making you happy.

Ripert: This is what we like about dining—fine or not fine dining.

Bourdain: Right.

Ripert: Is to be surprised, to have an experience.

Bourdain: And that's hard to do to us, come on.

Ripert: I mean this is fine cuisine. The way he's cooking is really, really upscale. It has nothing to do with bistro food.

Bourdain: I would've been really, really happy with so much less.

Ripert: Yeah.

Bourdain: You know what I mean, this is *waaay* better than I expected.

Ripert: This is an amazing cuisine. I mean the guy is like…a great chef. He's
using a very organic way of cooking. I haven't seen anything
inspired by super-modern cuisine like molecular, or whatever you
call it.

Bourdain: In order to be a true revolutionary, you have to be willing to completely
destroy the old. And I don't think any of these guys is interested in
doing that. I think they clearly love the old.

Ripert: Yes.

Bourdain: One of the great meals of memory.

Ripert: Yeah, me too.

Beyond validating the hype of Aizpitarte, the above conversation demonstrates the

culinary authority and cultural distinction of Bourdain and Ripert. The fact that it is hard

for them to be surprised and "have an experience" while dining distinguishes them from

other, ordinary culinary consumers. Moreover, that experience was "one of the great

meals of memory" both authenticates Aizpitarte's skill as a chef as well as reinforces the

fact that Bourdain and Ripert are experienced culinary adventurers, with a plethora of

great meals under their respective belts.

Through the act of authenticating both the rebellious innovation of Marchand and

Aizpitarte, as well as the exceptional quality of their food, Bourdain reinforces his own

authentic persona. The fact that he implicitly represents the two male chefs in the episode

as young rebels due to their personal style—importantly related to their physical

appearance as much as their approach to cooking—and deliberate divergence from

traditional mores of French culinary culture, Bourdain invokes his own youthful,

masculine, and anti-establishment authenticity that originally engendered his fame.

Conclusion

Johnston and Baumann identify the move away from exclusive, elite consumption in favor of a seemingly open and democratic means of consumption in contemporary culture as a transformation rife with complex cultural and political implications.[203] On the one hand, the search for authentic or exotic cuisine may benefit immigrants or people of "exotic" origins through their ability to produce the "authentic" food associated with their cultural traditions for the conspicuous consumption of cultural omnivores, and thus establish themselves socially and economically in a country where they may otherwise be subject to forms of social, educational, employment, and legal discrimination. Yet, there are problematic aspects of such a view. First, as Heldke explains, "food adventurers" often neglect or ignore the fact that ethnic restaurants may serve as places of communal gathering for members of an ethnicity and that the presence of cultural outsiders may be an unwelcome or disrupting experience.[204] Second, as Meredith E. Abarca contends, strategic or "planned authenticity" runs the risk of boxing ethnic people into well defined cultural and economic boundaries and subjects them to the cultural expectation or demand that they always inhabit and assert the "exoticness" associated with their ethnic origins.[205] And because ethnic restaurants are expected to be inexpensive places to eat[206] (unless run by a white male), any benefits attributable to the valorization of authentic and exotic cuisine that brings people of different social and economic backgrounds together, are outweighed by the always unequal social and economic grounds in which such encounters occur. Sure, the celebration and consumption of another's foodstuff may be a

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[203] Johnston and Baumann, "Democracy Versus Distinction."

[204] Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 55.

[205] Meredith E. Abarca, "Authentic or Not, It's Original," Food & Foodways 12 (2004): 1-25.

[206] *Ibid*, 8.

step toward fostering a society more open and accepting of cultural difference, but the assumption that ethnic cuisine should always be inexpensive creates a devaluation of ethnic others and their culture that reinforces social and economic hierarchies. Finally, as Johnston and Baumann contend, any notions of a democratic and open culinary terrain produced by the cultural valorization of authentic cuisine is negated by the fact that the cultural elevation of authentic cuisine produces the conditions for the devaluation of mass produced food (due to its perceived inauthenticity) that most working-class or middle-class consumers actually consume because of its affordability and cultural ubiquity in grocery stores and chain restaurants.[207]

Johnston and Baumann's acknowledgement of the inherent cultural devaluation of inauthentic cuisine brought about by the search for novel, exotic, and authentic food has led at least one theorist to question the notion of culinary omnivorousness altogether. In her critique of Johnston and Baumann's notion of omnivorous culinary consumers, Isabelle de Solier agrees with the contention that cultural consumers gain distinction based on their pursuit of unique and diverse food as well as the fact that this practice contributes to the formation or continuation of class-based food hierarchies, however, she claims these consumers are not true "omnivores" based on the actual ways in which they consume the food of others.[208] Consequently, de Solier suggests that the notion of cultural omnivores is insufficient because although these consumers will eat the food of the ethnic poor, they neglect or refuse to eat the food of the white poor. Yet, de Solier's claim that the food of the "white poor" is devalued because it is mass produced (fast food

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[207] Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[208] Isabelle de Solier, *Food and the Self: Consumption, Production and Material Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 63.

or supermarket convenience food), discounts the exotic nature of the food prepared by many "white" people in circumstances of poverty or that live a seemingly "traditional" or nostalgic existence unadulterated by modern progress and the way that this particular form of exoticness appeals to foodies or adventurous eaters. For, as Robert Shepherd argues, the West has located its desire for authenticity in the past, not just the past of non-Western others, but also in its own past.[209] In addition, de Solier's neglect of the fact that many expensive chain restaurants are equally devalued by "foodies" for their perceived inauthenticity further problematizes her argument. For example, although no member of the "white poor" is likely to dine at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse due to its high prices, neither will many "foodies" because of its status as a chain despite its reputation for quality food. Yet the "traditional," exotic foodstuff associated with the past struggles of "white" settlers, still produced out of necessity by people in poverty or in an attempt to preserve a culinary past (as evidenced in the "Ozarks" episode of *No Reservations*), does indeed hold an allure for some food adventurers.

The traditional cultural valuation of authenticity that created a binary divide between mass-produced capitalist goods as inauthentic and hand-made, natural, or traditional goods as authentic remains an important form of cultural legitimation. Authenticity, understood this way, is once again problematic because it is often tied to the cultural goods created either by poor or ethnic people, or both. This reinforces unequal relations of power, as the mobility afforded to the middle-class cultural consumers necessitates fixed ways of life for poor or ethnic Others whose cultural forms and objects constitute the cultural authenticity desired by privileged middle-class consumers.

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[209] Robert Shepherd, "Commodification, Culture, and Tourism" *Tourist Studies* 2 (2002): 191.

Emblematic of the function of cultural intermediaries, as the above examples illustrate, Bourdain has successfully harnessed his cultural knowledge in order to legitimize and disseminate new taste formations. Bourdain, in his position as a culturally valorized television personality, unquestionably occupies a privileged social position. Through his televised travels across the globe in search of authentic people, cultures, and cuisine, Bourdain is able to construct a particular version of selfhood through his experiences and encounters with Others. And although he often displays a seemingly genuine respect and admiration for the people and places he "discovers," Bourdain's representation of Others in a mass medium is an implicit act of power in which the lives of Others are used as a way to enhance one's self only to be disregarded when no longer of use. The use of authentic Others reinforces Bourdain's cultural capital, further legitimating his cultural authenticity and authority, while at the same time offering up exotic cultures and cuisines for consumption by his audience. "The whole process," as Skeggs argues, "is predicated on the power and ability to move, to access others, to mobilize resources."[210] Clearly this is a privileged and exclusive (as well as exclusionary) form of power. The working-class residents of the Ozarks and immigrant cooks represented in *No Reservations* experience this as a process of exclusion and exploitation. They are the Others against and through which privileged selfhood is constructed. Their cultures provide an ideal site for the middle and upper classes to pillage in order to convert the consumption of exotic cultures, goods, and dispositions into cultural capital that aids in the continuous process of distinction and individuation promoted by consumer culture.

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[210] Skeggs, Class, Self, Culture, 140.

In addition to the "exotic" people Bourdain "discovers" and imbues with cultural authenticity, the white male chefs—like Ricker, Marchand, and Aizpitarte—that Bourdain often features in his culinary adventures reinforces global hierarchies of chefdom. As Ferguson explains, "In transporting people and products across borders so readily, modern means of communication and transport have fashioned an international coterie of gastronomes attentive to the local product and the creative chef."[211] Bourdain's middle- and upper-class viewers no doubt belong this "international coterie of gastronomes" who—in order to enhance their own cultural capital and individuality— travel to the authentically *cool* places identified by Bourdain to interact with the star chefs and consume their cuisine. In his role as a cultural intermediary, Bourdain contributes to what Ferguson describes as "a network of high-end restaurants run by self-consciously innovative chef-entrepreneurs" that is built and maintained through an "elite media that diffuse critiques and praise of given restaurants as well as anecdotes about star chefs."[212] Bourdain's exposure and authentication of the quality of this "network" of uniquely talented chefs comes with its own set of consequences.

The chefs undoubtedly benefit both economically and culturally by Bourdain's tacit approval of their talent and status[213], but the exposure also forces them to participate in the capricious global cultural industries, where popularity "is akin to a fickle swarm" in which status-conscious consumers are "driven to attend to new things, demystify

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[211] Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 170.

[212] *Ibid*, 108.

[213] Ricker's expansion of his Pok Pok empire detailed above, although not solely attributable to his exposure on *No Reservations*, no doubt benefited by Bourdain's televised visit. Likewise, following Bourdain's trip to Paris, Marchand opened a second restaurant as well as a wine bar and published a cookbook. Aizpitarte

current trends, and discard that which seems passé."[214] Much like cultural intermediaries,

elite chefs must also constantly assert their own distinction and ability in order to

maintain their cultural relevance and culinary status. As Johnston and Baumann explain,

"[E]lite food professionals and food enthusiasts constantly push the boundaries of what is

considered daring, bold, and exotic; some (but not all) of these trends slowly filter down

to mainstream eaters, and are then reclassified as bland or passé by the food avant-

garde."[215] It is this pressure brought about by Bourdain's original exposure of the chef

underground and continued uncovering of "cool" and "authentic" chefs that creates a

constant pressure to innovate and impress casual consumers, "the food avant-garde" or

foodies, as well as elite journalists, media outlets, and award committees that the final

half of this dissertation turns its focus. Through participant observation in professional

restaurants along with interviews with chefs, cooks, and restaurant managers, the

following chapters investigate how the increased focus on chefs in contemporary culture

has affected the everyday lives of chefs and cooks.

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[214] Devon Powers, "Notes on Hype," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012): 866.
[215] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, 25.

Chapter Four

UTOPIA LOST?
THE CULTURAL INCORPORATION OF THE SUBCULTURAL KITCHEN

> It was amusing to look round the filthy little scullery and think that only a double
> door was between us and the dining-room. There sat customers in all their
> splendour—spotless table-clothes, bowls of flowers, mirrors and gilt cornices and
> painted cherubim; and here, just a few feet away, we in our disgusting filth.
> —George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*

In his semi-autobiographical tale about a penniless British writer and drifter, George

Orwell presents an image of the professional kitchen as a dingy, debauched space

inhabited by malcontent chefs, drunks, thieves, drifters, and various other social

miscreants. According to Orwell, the life of a professional kitchen laborer was defined by

ebbs and flows, where daily tedium would suddenly morph into organized madness as

"the whole staff raged and cursed like demons" in order to stimulate one another "for the

effort of packing four hours' work into two hours."[216] In Orwell's account of the nightly

dinner rush of an expensive Parisian restaurant, the motley crew of workers confined to

the hot and cacophonous kitchen space somehow managed to artfully coalesce in order to

provide elite clientele with a superficially seamless culinary experience. For the Parisian

gastronomes, the separation between the dining room and kitchen managed to effectively

obfuscate the daily chaos and depravity that characterized the life of a kitchen laborer,

namely one of exhaustion and drunkenness:

> We were not free till nine, but we used to throw ourselves full length on the floor,
> and lie there resting our legs, too lazy even to go to the ice cupboard for a drink.
> Sometimes the *chef du personnel* would come in with bottles of beer, for the hotel
> stood us an extra beer when we had had a hard day. The food we were given was
> no more than eatable, but the *patron* was not mean about drink; he allowed us two
> litres of wine a day each, knowing that if a *plongeur* is not given two litres he will

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[216] George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (New York: Harcourt, 1933), 75.

steal three. We had the heeltaps of bottles as well, so that we often drank too much—a good thing, for one seemed to work faster when partially drunk.[217]

While Orwell recognizes the exploitative labor conditions of the modern professional kitchen—even going so far as to depict the *plongeur* as "one of the slaves of the modern world"[218]—his description of life in a kitchen may be best described as ambivalent. Whereas he derides the unsavory conditions of kitchen labor, he nonetheless extols the virtues such a subcultural lifestyle affords those unable or unwilling to conform to the standards of dominant, mainstream society. Orwell describes in detail the escape from dominant society, and consequent pleasure, such a life provides:

> There was—it is hard to express it—a sort of heavy contentment, the contentment a well-fed beast might feel, in a life which had become so simple. For nothing could be simpler than the life of a *plongeur*. He lives in a rhythm between work and sleep, without time to think, hardly conscious of the exterior world; his Paris has shrunk to the hotel, the Metro, a few *bistros* and his bead. If he goes afield, it is only a few streets away, on a trip with some servant-girl who sits on his knee swallowing oysters and beer. On his free day he lies in bed till noon, puts on a clean shirt, throws dice for drinks, and after lunch goes back to bed again. Nothing is quite real to him but the *boulot*, drinks and sleep; and of these sleep is the most important.[219]

For Orwell, the life of a professional kitchen worker, albeit plagued by the inequity inherent in an economy structured by capitalist logic, nonetheless represented an alternative way of being in the world. The "simpler" life of a kitchen worker allowed one an escape from the "exterior world" and thus offered an alternative, "rhythmic" existence

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[217] *Ibid*, 91.

[218] The hyperbolic (and potentially offensive) nature of such as statement was not lost on Orwell, as he subsequently (but nonetheless not entirely convincingly) explained, "Not that there is any need to whine over [the *plongeur*], for he is better off than many manual workers, but still, he is no freer than if he were bought and sold. His work is servile and without art; he is paid just enough to keep him alive." See *Down and Out*, 116.

[219] Orwell, *Down and Out*, 91.

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in which one could pursue pleasure in leisure, whether that be food, drink, the

companionship of a woman[220], or, of course, ample time to sleep.

Orwell's protagonist moved on quickly from his temporary sojourn as a kitchen

laborer. As is the life of a committed drifter, he continued on his deliberately aimless

journey by seeking refuge in a number of other subcultural lifestyle formations, this time

in London. Ultimately, no resolution is to be found in Orwell's scattered narrative that

reads like a youthful memoir, and the fact that there is no satisfactory, definitive

resolution to the tale is precisely the reason I find Orwell's work important. In the end,

the drifter is left seeking a better way of being in the world.

I use the example of Orwell's literary description of life in the kitchen in order to

point to the ways in which the kitchen functioned as a potentially transformative space

for those opposed to—or explicitly excluded from—normative, bourgeois modes of

existence. The kitchen in Orwell's narrative opened up an alternative way of being: a

simple and contented subcultural existence. While the refuge offered by a life in the

kitchen was only temporary in Orwell's tale, by drawing on the work of José Esteban

Muñoz, I argue that the professional kitchen functioned in a utopian manner by making

alternative modes of life a potentiality for all kitchen workers (not just those described by

Orwell) prior to the cultural valorization and professionalization of chefdom in the late

twentieth century. Muñoz focuses on previous utopian potentialities in an effort to use

those ephemeral traces as way to move toward a concrete utopian future. More

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[220] The "servant-girl" Orwell referred to was clearly a prostitute. As Orwell explained the penchant for prostitutes amongst the kitchen workers: "Sometimes half a dozen *plongeurs* would make up a party and go to an abominable brothel in the Rue de Sieyès, where the charge was only five francs twenty-five centimes—tenpence half-penny…The *plongeurs* wages did not allow them to marry, and no doubt work in the basement does not encourage fastidious feelings." See *Down and Out*, 90.

specifically, he argues that "utopia offers us a critique of the present, of what is, by casting a picture of what can and perhaps will be."[221] I too am interested in locating traces of past utopian potential, however, I am equally interested in uncovering the ways in which that potentiality was negated through the assimilation of specific utopian modes of being into late capitalist logic and cultural production. Thus, I am less interested in utopian futurity as such, but instead I focus on the way past utopian potentialities were made to fail in order to construct the present as an "ontological certitude."[222] By uncovering the ways in which professional kitchens were transformed through the incorporation and professionalization of chefdom by the capitalist cultural industries, I demonstrate how the once illegible chef underground was exposed and made legible in popular media which effectively attenuated the once promising utopian potential of the professional kitchen as an alternative space for marginalized subjects. Through an increased focus on chefs and cooks in popular and culinary media, I argue that the chef underground and its alternative modes of being in the world were largely displaced by entrepreneurial, predominately white male chefs seeking to capitalize on the *cool,* subcultural image of chefs and cooks instantiated by the representation and promotion of the chef underground in popular media.

In particular, I point to the 2000 publication of Anthony Bourdain's culinary memoir *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly*—and the book's subsequent popularity as well as that of its author—as a specific contemporary moment in which the alternative lifestyle of chefs and cooks was transformed through mainstream

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[221] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 35.
[222] *Ibid*, 11.

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cultural incorporation. By rendering the deviancy and alternative modes of existence

particular to professional kitchen workers legible and cool, Bourdain, consciously or not,

served to incorporate the antiestablishment ethos of kitchen laborers into the dominant

cultural industries. Moreover, through his valorization of this previously denigrated or

ignored subcultural way of life, Bourdain opened up a new lifestyle formation for

capitalist consumption, thereby rendering impotent the once promising utopian

potentiality evoked by this alternative way of being in the world. By drawing on

ethnographic research I conducted in a restaurant featured on an episode of Bourdain's

television show *No Reservations*, I contextualize the ways in which the representation of

chefs and cooks in popular culture has affected the everyday lives of kitchen workers.

More specifically, I interrogate how the ubiquitous focus on individual chefs and cooks in

various media has altered the conditions of existence for those laboring in professional

kitchens by fostering new and concerted methods of surveilling the restaurant industry

and its workers through food media coverage as well as by restaurant customers whose

cultural and culinary practices have been influenced by the hype generated by the

representation of chefs in food media.

Queerness and Professional Kitchen Workers as Queer Subjects

To claim that kitchen workers live a queer existence may seem an odd argument to make,

but that is precisely what I contend. Certainly, the sexuality or gender identity of some

kitchen workers would unequivocally position them as queer in a society structured by

hegemonic heteronomativity. While I do not want to dismiss the importance of sexuality

or gender identity in relation to queerness, my engagement with queerness is not limited

to analyses of sexuality or gender identity. "Queerness," as Muñoz argues, "is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing."[223] Although Muñoz's investment in queerness and utopian hermeneutics as a critical emancipatory project is mainly related to the potentiality offered by moments of sexual transgression, his definition of queerness as "the rejection of a here and now and insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world,"[224] makes clear that a critical engagement with queerness as an ideality may be—or must be—extended to encompass all those individuals for whom present suffering, inequality, and injustice forces them to seek out alternative modes of being in the world.[225]

Labeling the everyday lives of chefs and cooks as a queer subcultural form of existence is admittedly troublesome. As laborers exploited by a capitalist system, operating daily in a professional kitchen hardly seems a deviant or transgressive practice, let alone a form of resistance. Yet for those seeking a non-normative way of being, the professional kitchen, historically, provided an opportune space in which to do so. First, chefs and cooks, due to their unusual work schedules, necessarily inhabited a unique temporality within mainstream society. Although not directly describing the lives of kitchen workers, Judith Halberstam nonetheless describes their existence fittingly in terms of what she refers to as "queer temporalities":

> 'Queer time' is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction…Perhaps such people could productively be called 'queer subjects' in the ways they live (deliberately, accidentally, or of necessity) during the hours

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[223] *Ibid*, 1.

[224] *Ibid*, 1.

[225] Muñoz himself acknowledges this point, explaining, "Queerness, if it is to have any political resonance, needs to be more than an identitarian marker and to articulate a forward-dawning futurity." See *Cruising Utopia*, 87.

when others sleep and in the spaces (physical, metaphysical, and economic) that others have abandoned, and in terms of the ways they might work in the domains that other people assign to privacy and family.[226]

Kitchen workers undoubtedly fit Hablerstam's description of "queer subjects." Employment in a professional kitchen was traditionally an unglamorous job with low pay and odd hours that more often than not served as a temporary occupation to be "abandoned" once one was able to secure a more normative or higher status means of employment. Like Orwell's description of the *plongeur*, the fact that kitchen workers labor during the hours typically associated with bourgeois, middle-class family time and leisure also means professional kitchen labor inherently disrupts hegemonic family and reproductive temporalities. Hence, the kitchen often served as a place of last resort for those unable to find work elsewhere (often due to citizenship status or criminal records) or those uninterested in surrendering to the hegemonic constraints of "bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples" often "governed by an imagined set of children's needs" related to "beliefs about children's health and healthful environments for child rearing."[227]

Beyond the atypical working hours and conditions, however, for many committed to living a life as a chef or cook, the kitchen provided the space and means to engage in a more deliberate form of deviancy. Much like the life of a professional artist, that prototypical "autonomous rebel living in a space separate from the mainstream,"[228] the kitchen provided a practical space for rebellious, creative autonomy. As Bourdain describes his life in this subcultural space:

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[226] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005)*, 6-10.
[227] *Ibid,* 5.
[228] Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (London: Pluto)*, 49.

> We were high all the time, sneaking off to the walk-in at every opportunity to 'conceptualize.' Hardly a decision was made without drugs. Pot, Quaaludes, cocaine, LSD, psilocybin mushrooms soaked in honey and used to sweeten tea, Seconal, Tuinal, speed, codeine and, increasingly, heroin, which we'd send a Spanish-speaking busboy over to Alphabet City to get. We worked long hours and took considerable pride in our efforts—the drugs, we thought, having little effect on the end product. That was what the whole life we were in was about, we believed: to work through the drugs, the fatigue, the lack of sleep, the pain, to show no visible effects. We might be tripping on blotter acid, sleepless for three days and halfway through a bottle of Stoli, but we were professionals, goddammit! We didn't let it affect our line work.[229]

It is perhaps easy to dismiss Bourdain's claims of kitchen deviancy as nostalgic discourse or artistic embellishment for the sake of selling a book. Although there may be some truth to this reading, I instead choose to read his recollection of life in a professional kitchen as evidence of an alternative temporality for a group of professional kitchen workers who chose not to succumb to heteronormative and bourgeois notions of belonging, productivity, and value. As Muñoz aptly argues, "The past, or at least narratives of the past, enable utopian imaginings of another time and place that is not yet here but nonetheless functions as a doing for futurity, a conjuring of both future and past to critique presentness."[230] Thus, rather than a romanticized vision of kitchens past, Bourdain's recollection provides evidence of a past laden with utopian potential— potential of an alternative way of being that once came into existence and left traces capable of guiding present utopian longing through which to critique the present. Moreover, although wielding sharp knives and working next to dangerously hot stoves and other kitchen equipment while lacking sleep, working through pain, and abusing drugs may not be traditionally categorized as utopian, the very way Bourdain himself

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[229] Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2000), 123-124.

[230] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 106.

describes the pride he felt in engaging in such acts while still functioning as a professional chef point to an alternative—even transgressive—way of being in a capitalist world. Consequently, these dangerous, even self-abusive acts must be taken seriously as a deliberate attempt at exerting power, even if a relatively insubstantial and politically limited one. As Gilberto Rosas contends:

> Criminal and pathological practices give [the marginalized] a dark, grandiose sense of refusal to the new exercises of sovereignty, the war making of this late moment of the ongoing neoliberal era, that coalesces in and oozes through the necessary, jagged fissures of the neoliberal age, forming a space of inevitable, pathological death. By poisoning themselves . . . [they] defy sovereign powers and material forms of subjugation of living normal lives, of submitting to power and its ends.[231]

Thus, when understood as a refusal of their subjugation and an attempt at asserting autonomy in and through a structured space of capitalist exploitation, the drug use and deviancy present in the lives of chefs and cooks may indeed be read a sign of resistance through the forging of an alternative community. For Bourdain this alternative way of being may simply be the nostalgic recollection of a critically and commercially successful celebrity chef, but for those marginalized subjects left behind in the transformation of the professional kitchen, like the "Spanish-speaking busboy" mentioned in Bourdain's above quote, such a narrative provides evidence of the professional kitchen functioning as a subcultural space of belonging.[232]

Before moving onto critiques of the present state of being for professional kitchen workers, I wish to provide further substantiation of the subcultural existence of kitchen

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[231] Gilberto Rosas, *Barrio Libre: Criminalizing States and Delinquent Refusals of the New Frontier* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 119.

[232] I do not want to ignore the racial and class implications present in Bourdain's account. Yet, the very *inclusion* of a racially marginalized subject as a member—however one interprets his value—of the chef underground is noteworthy given the contemporary transformations of the restaurant industry I detail below.

workers past. Evidence of a past alternative temporality of life in a professional kitchen,

so forcefully articulated by both Orwell and Bourdain, is made even stronger when linked

to empirical research. In his ethnographic study of professional kitchens, *Kitchens: The*

Culture of Restaurant Work, Gary Alan Fine suggests that kitchen deviance was

ubiquitous in the restaurants he observed and led to a general sense of commonality or

community among kitchen workers. Like Orwell's account, if ample food was not

supplied for workers by management, those laborers would pilfer food and other supplies

deemed necessary to complete their daily tasks. While petty theft was not uncommon,

violating health and labor codes was even more common. Like Bourdain's description of

drug and alcohol fueled kitchen labor, Fine too observed the role that mind and space

altering substances played in establishing a cohesive kitchen community. As Fine

elaborates:

> Collective imbibing is central to community. The social characteristics of alcohol,
> linked to its easy availability in restaurant kitchens and perhaps to the heat and
> strains with which workers cope, leads to communal drinking.[233]

Although acts of deviancy, like petty theft, drinking, or drug use may not be considered a

form of resistance in a traditional, more overtly confrontational understanding of radical

politics, they nonetheless represent important ways marginalized people deal with their

subjectivity and build an alternative community. While not overtly political in the sense

that these acts are not aimed a specific social reforms or political goals, such acts,

according to James C. Scott, should not naively be dismissed as inconsequential:

> Where everyday resistance most strikingly departs from other forms of resistance
> is in its implicit disavowal of public and symbolic goals. Where institutionalized
> politics is formal, overt, concerned with systematic, de jure change, everyday

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[233] Gary Alan Fine, *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 128.

resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains. It is reasonably clear that the success of de facto resistance is often directly proportional to the symbolic conformity to which it is masked. Open insubordination in almost any context will provoke a more rapid and ferocious response than an insubordination that may be as pervasive but never ventures to contest the formal definitions of hierarchy and power.[234]

For those subjects who lack the ability to exert power in more traditional ways, there is a clear and important value that comes from participating in subtle forms of resistance that remain illegible to those in traditional positions of power. These covert acts are not only a significant way for a subjugated person to express resistance and assert their own power, but when done in concert with other members of a subculture, everyday forms of resistance begin to coalesce into something greater than the individual acts themselves. According to Scott, "Seen in the light of a supportive subculture and the knowledge that the risk to any single resister is generally reduced to the extent that the whole community is involved, it becomes plausible to speak of a social movement."[235] Yet, what becomes of this form of subcultural resistance—or even this kind of social movement—when it is exposed and made legible to those in positions of power? In particular, what consequences arose for those who relied on the professional kitchen to provide an anonymous and autonomous space from which to assert a collective resistance once the chef underground was exposed by Bourdain and subsequently valorized in popular culture?

Going Underground?

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[234] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 33.
[235] *Ibid,* 35.

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Prior to my own experience as a participant observer in a restaurant—which I will refer

to as Parvus—that was featured in an episode of Bourdain's television show *No*

Reservations, I conducted a preliminary interview with the restaurant's owner and head

chef whom I will refer to as Jim. In the interview, Jim repeatedly reminisced about his

early days as a kitchen worker when deviancy was the norm. He explained that he

originally gravitated toward the restaurant industry because it offered him a way to leave

the conservative small town he grew up in, and the people that inhabited it, behind. As

Jim described, "I had a drive to get out of where I grew up…[it] was a very conservative

place and not that I was crazy weird, but I certainly didn't fit in." The alternative

existence of chefs and cooks was in a large way a secondary discovery for him:

> I really had no direction in my life. I was really not good at anything. I moved up
> here, started working in the business and started finding people that I clicked
> with, that were a little deviant or a little, you know, out of the norm…like all the
> sudden I found my people. People that wanted to drink a lot or, you know, smoke
> a lot of pot, and I was in an environment where I could listen to music all day.
> You know, I could walk in and eat anything I wanted and it was just kind of really
> adrenaline filled days and alcohol and drug filled nights.

The kitchen provided Jim an outlet to find himself through the discovery of a like-minded

community. Not only did it allow him to escape what he viewed as a previously

repressive and banal existence in his small town, it supplied a ready-made subcultural

community diametrically opposed to that way of life.

In this way, the alternative space inhabited by kitchen workers, at least as Jim

experienced it, was predicated on group identification as well as the provision of a

subcultural space that enabled him to experiment with drugs, food, and music—all of

which allowed him to escape the straight culture from which he sought refuge and find

belonging in a queer, alternative community. Much like traditional working class

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subcultures, the community of chefs and cooks thus "serve[d] to mark out and appropriate 'territory'," while at the same time "develop specific rhythms of interchange, structured relations between members."[236] Jim, in a manner very similar to Bourdain's description in his memoir, claimed that the first restaurant he worked in was staffed with "second rate citizens…people that dropped out of this or dropped out of that." This collection of "people who [did] not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational expectations'"[237] provided a utopian community in which Jim could find himself:

> On some level the reason why I became good at cooking is because I hated social activities. The restaurant industry fit perfectly because I wouldn't have to go out on Friday and Saturday nights. I didn't have to go to parties, I didn't have to go to social gatherings, you know, I had to be at work every Friday and Saturday night. So I could hide behind my job.

The subcultural space of the professional kitchen that Jim described provided individual and communal opposition to, or detachment from, a social world in which the group's members were largely subordinate citizens, unable or unwilling to fit into dominant society. Thus, this community of chefs and cooks sought out and established a space in which to develop its own set of relations and rituals. Yet, no matter how oppositional the individual or group acts conducted by its members, the subcultural community was never meant as an overtly symbolic demonstration of subversion for Jim or the other chefs and cooks he worked with. Instead, the alternative lifestyle of chefs and cooks was much more personal, a kind of subcultural utopian community operating within the hidden margins of the larger, dominant culture.

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[236] Clarke et al., "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in *The Subcultures Reader,* eds. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (London: Routledge, 1997), 104.

[237] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 27.

Diving In: My Initiation to Parvus and Working in a Professional Kitchen

I arrived at Parvus for my first day of work seven minutes late. A sudden burst of anxiety on my drive to the restaurant resulted in a strange and slightly horrifying few minutes in which I lost all sense of direction and literally failed to remember the restaurant's location. Although I had already met Jim and felt a certain connection and level of comfort with him, I had never worked in a kitchen before, let alone one of Parvus's stature. I was nervous that about how I would do and how the others would accept me. Then, on top of that, after getting lost I was worried my I had blown my opportunity to work alongside the chefs and cooks of Parvus before I even had a chance to prove myself. Needless to say, I was a wreck.

I entered Parvus through the back door and passed by the dishwashing station before reaching the kitchen. The kitchen was smaller than I expected. The walls were covered with blue and white subway tile, much like I remembered from the restaurant's appearance on *No Reservations*. All of the cooks—adorned with white chef's coats and navy blue aprons accented with white pinstripes—were diligently preparing food for the night's service. Jim warmly greeted me, abandoning his preparation in order to lead me down a flight of cement stairs and into a dark, dank basement. I was given a locker to store my belongings and told to pick out a chef's coat and apron before meeting him back upstairs. I hastily abandoned my civilian attire in favor of the professional accouterments. Donning the official uniform somehow legitimated my presence at Parvus in my mind, easing my anxiety.

Once upstairs, I was briefly introduced to the staff. Ed, who worked the pastry station, was tall and skinny with dark blond hair and a thin mustache. He wore tight royal blue jeans under his coat and seemed athletic. Nhu, a young Asian American woman who wore her relatively short, dark black hair pulled back into a ponytail, normally worked the grill and meat cooking station. However, Jim explained that it was her mother's sixtieth birthday that night so she would be leaving after completing her station preparation. Finally, I was introduced to Calli, a seemingly lively young woman with short brown hair whose responsibilities included preparing and cooking the first two courses of the menu at her station. It was a small and intimate kitchen staff.

After introductions, everyone returned to their individual stations to continue working. Jim set up a station for me next to him, replete with a wooden cooking board and chef's knife. My first assigned task was to remove the outer membrane from a set of beef tongues. The experience had quickly and seriously become *real*. The process involved running a knife delicately down the thick layer of pink skin on the underside of the tongue. Once the slit was made, the outer membrane, which felt like the leather of a football, but less smooth due to minute rough papillae that covered the tongue's surface, did indeed peel off. I am not sure whether my being assigned this job as my first task was some kind of test or initiation to determine whether I even belonged in the kitchen, but it felt like it. Thus, my quick and somehow pleasurable completion of it gave me an even greater sense of belonging.

My later tasks were more mundane and included slicing mushrooms and processing broccoli. Once started, both tasks became very rhythmic, allowing for almost thoughtless effort. That provided the freedom to observe other stations. During all of this

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preparation work the cooks remained virtually silent, each approaching his or her station with utmost concentration and dedication. The impeccable organization and professionalism of the Parvus kitchen caught me off guard. Contrary to Bourdain's description of the kitchen as the unruly refuge of the misfit, staffed with "a dysfunctional, mercenary lot, fringe-dwellers motivated by money, the peculiar lifestyle of cooking and a grim pride,"[238] the staff at Parvus exhibited a rather modest and workmanlike approach to the business of cooking. Not only did the Parvus cooks contrast with Bourdain's description of the subculture of chefs and cooks, but they also differed from Jim's explanation of the subculture during our preliminary interview.

Following roughly four hours of prep work, Nhu left and everyone began to anticipate her replacement's arrival. Earlier in the afternoon, Jim explained—while we were completing prep work side-by-side—that Nhu's replacement for the night, Craig, had put in his notice a month earlier and had already worked his last official day. He had, however, agreed to come back for one night to cover the grill station for Nhu and Jim used this opportunity as an official farewell night for Craig. Parvus was featured in a chapter of a newly published cookbook, which Jim had all the staff sign for Craig as a farewell gift, or what Jim called "a kind of yearbook." On top of the book, Jim also mentioned that following the night's closing everyone was going to participate in a planned a "going away" celebration for Craig. This all seemed to more closely resemble a traditional corporate office setting than a subculture to me. Everything in the kitchen was orderly, done accustom to a longstanding routine and tradition, and Craig's "going away" party was no different.

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[238] Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential,* 55.

Yet, once Craig arrived, the atmosphere of the kitchen changed. Craig entered the kitchen with an air of imperiousness that differed from the rest of the cooks. He was definitely happy to be there and perhaps his attitude expressed a relief that he no longer had any job-related pressure. His appearance, however, matched a seemingly forced rebellious, non-chalant "cool" attitude, most predominately his uniquely short-sleeved chef's coat that exposed a right forearm covered with colorful food-related tattoos, a bright orange pumpkin and carrots the most visibly striking. After brief introductions, Dan walked back to his station and Jim could not contain his anticipation:

Jim: Craig, I hid your *mise-en-place*.

Craig: It's not in the ceiling tiles is it?

Jim: No.

Craig: Damn it!

Jim: Actually, I urinated in it, so be careful.

Craig: I'm not worried. I know your scent.

Laughter

Calli: *Eww.* That's gross.

Jim: Don't worry Calli. It was consensual.

This overtly masculine exchange mirrors the steady stream of phallic jokes and overall macho nature of the professional kitchen Bourdain described in his memoir. According to Bourdain, the ever-present, often phallic-related interaction in the kitchen is a form initiation or determining whether one belongs in close confines of the professional kitchen, and, after that, act as a kind of kinship and bonding, however insensitive and offensive it may be:

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As an art form, cook-talk is, like haiku or kabuki, defined by established rules, with a rigid, traditional framework in which one may operate. All comments *must*, out of historical necessity, concern involuntary rectal penetration, penis size, physical flaws or annoying mannerisms or defects…But let's say you *do* suck dick, you *do* "take it in the twins"; it's no impediment to survival. No one really cares about that. We're too busy, and too close, and we spend too much time together as an extended, dysfunctional family to care about sex, gender preference, race or national origin. After level of skills, it's how *sensitive* you are to criticism and perceived insult—and how well you give it right back that determines your place in the food chain.[239]

Although it is entirely reasonable to interpret this behavior as evidence of professional kitchens as debauched, exclusionary spaces inhabited by misogynistic, even xenophobic or homophobic men, such a reading misses the historic nature and importance of such wordplay to lower-class and racially oppressed men. The context in which such interactions take place is crucial to understanding their real meaning for the participants. As José E. Limón explains, such exchanges have a politically symbolic meaning beyond the "infantile concern with one's male group and their simple sexual dominance."[240] Instead, as Limón further explains, "the themes of anality, pollution, and bodily penetration may also be symbolic expressions of an essentially political and economic concern with domination...[as] [t]he marginalized working and unemployed classes where these expressions abound constitute a body politic symbolically conscious of its socially penetrable status."[241] As the professional kitchen has historically served as refuge for those unable or unwilling to gain inclusion into hegemonic bourgeois society, Limón's description fits the marginalized kitchen workers and their precarious employment conditions. Yet, I am unsure the chefs and cooks at Parvus fit the under

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[239] *Ibid,* 220-221.

[240] José E. Limón, *Dancing With the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 131.

[241] *Ibid.*

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skilled, lower-class status historically attributed to those employed in professional kitchens. Instead, the staff at Parvus was made up mostly white men from middle class backgrounds and nearly all had professional training. The few women that worked there full-time were also formally educated. Nhu and the Mexican American female dishwasher were the only racial minorities. Maybe, then, the exchange between Jim and Craig represented something else, perhaps a relationship between the two that signified a sort of passing of the torch. A sign that these two chefs, while obviously a product of a past kitchen culture of which some elements survive, were not representative of the chef underground, but instead a part of the "elite network of chefs and cooks"[242] that has emerged following the cultural valorization of chefs and cooks.

The Contemporary Professional Kitchen: Subcultural Space or an Elite Networking Site?
Jim first told me about Craig late in our initial conversation. It was a lighthearted moment in which Jim described why it was he cherished being a chef as well as what motivated him to open Parvus:

> On one level, on the top of the icing, you could say, I've created this restaurant that teaches people and is fairly cutting-edge and is doing things that other people aren't doing, but then you start peeling away layers and as you'll see, we basically sit around and talk about our dicks all day, or at least me and my male counterpart… who no longer works here.

At that moment, Jim seemed to forget that Craig, one of the original cooks at Parvus and a close friend, had left to help launch a new restaurant and gain the coveted title of Sous Chef in the process—an impossibility for him at Parvus. The philosophy at Parvus is one

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[242] See Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 108.

of equality, as Jim explained, a unique and egalitarian kitchen free of titles—except of course, when it comes to Jim's position.

By chance, I witnessed the unique bond between Jim and Craig latter on during my first night working at Parvus. As everyone completed last minute preparations, anticipating the arrival of the night's first patrons, Jim nonchalantly placed his cell phone in a glass jar—a place I had seen him keep it prior in the day. This time, however, I noticed the video recording screen was on. Jim discreetly finessed the camera, managing to precariously balance it on the mouth of the jar in order to maintain a consistent angle. Once his subject was properly framed, he hit the record button. Only I witnessed this act and observed the small screen record Craig as he stretched and moved around intently, preparing his body for the night's work.

It was at that point I realized the depth of the emotions Jim held for Craig. The night was a sentimental moment for Jim, to be sure. When I asked him about it the following Saturday, Jim admitted that he was sad to see Craig go, but he also acknowledged that change was an inevitable part of the industry. In the culinary industry, there comes a point, according to Jim, when it is necessary for one to make a move in order to advance one's career. Such a move not only increases the stature of the cook who leaves, like Craig, but if that cook is successful, it also increases the reputation of the chef that trained him. Besides Craig, Jim also mentioned two chefs that worked under him at his previous restaurant that moved to Nashville and opened their own restaurant in 2011. At the time of my participant observation in the Kitchen at Pavus, Jim told me the Nashville restaurant was nominated for a James Beard award and garnered a number of accolades from various national publications. Clearly this meant a lot to him, and in many

national interviews I read after Jim mentioned the restaurant to me, the chefs repeatedly

mentioned Jim's skill and what they learned from him. Like Parvus, that restaurant would

also soon be featured on an episode of *No Reservations.*

Jim not only maintained a network with his former chefs, but also by being

recognized as one of the city's best chefs and running one of the top rated restaurants,

Jim was acquainted with many of the city's other top chefs, as a I soon found out. On my

second Saturday working at Parvus, as I was getting my station ready Jim asked me a

curious question:

Jim: Have you ever eaten at Grind[243]?

Me: No.

I had heard of Grind and knew it was considered one of the best and most-cutting edge

restaurants in the city, so at this point I though he may be trying to get rid of me and send

me work with them instead. Jim continued:

Jim: Would you like to?

Me: Sure, I guess.

Jim: Do you have plans on Halloween night?

Me: No.

Jim: Good. We need an inside man for this job.

Me: What does that mean, exactly?

Jim: Well, we have this plan. What we'd need you to do is wear a belt with pig's
blood and innards and stuff…we have it prepared. You can bring your
wife. And the two of you will be eating like regular diners. We are going
to dress like zombies, rush the restaurant and attack you, spewing blood
and innards and creating a scene.

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[243] Not the restaurant's real name.

Me *(without thought or hesitation)*: Sounds like fun, I'm in.

Jim: Good.

I knew this did not fit the classic mold of participant observation, but I thought I might get to experience a different aspect of the chef underground. Maybe, I thought, all the debauchery and deviancy I had read about occurs *outside* the confines of the kitchen for these contemporary chefs and cooks, and this was a perfect opportunity for me to observe it. Only later, as the night wore on, did I begin to suspect that maybe this plan was more than a simple prank and was instead was some kind of publicity stunt—a way for Parvus to benefit from Grind's increasing publicity and popularity.

The kitchen in Parvus that night had a different atmosphere. A speaker resting on two plastic crates pumped a constant stream of rock music into the kitchen. There was little communication during the completion of prep work, especially with the music in the air. As Jim was readying himself for the night's service, he told me 73 people were on the reservation list, including an eight-top. I did not immediately discern the consequences of this sell-out, but as the afternoon turned to night, the tension in the kitchen was palpable. Once the prep work was nearing completion, however, Jim enjoyed a brief moment of relaxation during which we talked about the current state of the restaurant industry. The conversation started with a simple question:

Me: What restaurant do you really want to try next?

Jim: Here in the city, or…

Me: Anywhere.

Jim: Eleven Madison Park. It was opened by this really famous and respected
    front-of-the house guy, Danny Meyer. Then, this chef, Daniel Humm

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took over the kitchen and completely reworked the menu in an attempt to get four *New York Times* stars. It worked and now he and the restaurant are a big deal. There's a documentary on Netflix I saw about it. I'd really like to try that. I think it's the new French Laundry.

Following his answer, Jim briefly left the kitchen. I thought about his response and new it opened the door for me to discuss food media's role in contributing to the success of restaurants and the how the influence of elite media hype from organizations like the *New York Times* impacted the industry. When Jim returned, I continued our conversation:

Me: What do you think about the popularity of the Scandinavian chefs, like René Redzepi?

Jim: I think Rene's a really great chef and he seems like he's doing good things. I like that he puts a new recipe on Twitter every week, but I just don't connect with what they're doing. I think it's really cool that they source all of their food right around the restaurant and use native ingredients and all that, but in some ways that seems really limiting to me. It's also a generational thing. Just like music, there are certain bands that come along and change the sound and kind of define the generation…it's the same thing with food. When I was coming up, everyone looked to France and guys Jöel Robuchon and then there was Spain and Ferran [Adria], and I connect with them. Now these changes happen much faster and more frequently, and yeah, right now a lot of the focus is on the Scandinavians, like the guy in Sweden, I think the restaurant is Fäviken, he has a farm with 20,000 acres and sources almost all of his own stuff from the land. And he just came out with a book.

Me: How much do you think the changes in popularity in the industry are due to hype?

Jim: Oh, I think that's a big part of it. It's certainly not the only factor, but it plays a huge role. I think there are a lot of food writers out there that want to discover the next big chef. Like when my career began, it was this writer from the *City Pages*. She kept writing all this good stuff about me, praising what I was doing. I think she liked the food, but I'm not even sure. It may have been her just hitching her wagon to me hoping I'd take off and she'd be the one that discovered me.

Me: I think it's like that with customers too, don't you think? Like in music, people want to be the first to discover new bands and stuff, it seems the same thing now applies to restaurants.

Jim: Yeah, I think that's a huge part of it too. Or they see or hear about us somewhere and want to come try it. Like the past two weekends, we've been unusually busy and I think it's because the Bourdain episode just re-aired, so now we have that rush of people wanting to come again because Bourdain said we are good.

Although anecdotal, my conversation with Jim demonstrates the importance of cultural intermediaries in the restaurant industry. Jim's initial success, he believes, was partially due to the championing of his ability by a prominent local food critic. Furthermore, Jim attributed the increased business that night and the previous weekend with the re-airing of the *No Reservations* episode he appeared in. Proving that the re-airing of the episode increased Parvus's business is impossible, but Jim had experienced a similar rush of business when the episode first aired, so the fact that he attributed the increased level of business to viewers of *No Reservations* is not without merit. Finally, Jim's own knowledge of food trends and consumption of food media demonstrates the importance of cultural intermediaries. Like other consumers of food media, Jim expressed a desire to eat at Eleven Madison Park after watching a documentary about it on Netflix. And although he did not relate to the local farm-to-table movement popularized at the time by chefs like René Redzepi and Magnus Nilsson (of Fäviken), he certainly knew a lot about them and their style of cooking.

The ever-accelerating shift in food trends brought about by food media and consumers, Jim later explained, has led to a decreased lifespan for restaurants. For Jim this has led to a perpetual feeling of the need to create and invent new and better dishes. "I want to keep myself interested by evolving and staying relevant," Jim explained, "so there's the fear of younger cooks becoming better than me, there's the fear of going out of business." This then, may explain his planned prank on the younger male chefs at

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Grind. Grind, like Parvus, opened in 2010 and both were named to the city's best restaurant list in 2011 by all of the city's prominent publications. The two restaurants specialized in different styles of food, but nonetheless competed for accolades, publicity, and patrons. Whereas Jim was known for his innovative, intensive preparations, the chefs at Grind, while no doubt also talented chefs, were gaining prominence for their original and jovial approach to service. The chefs themselves served each table and each night was performance, not simply a meal. This, along with the fact that they did not take reservations, had led to a certain level of hype for the restaurant at the time. Eager diners were lining up hours before the doors opened to ensure they could experience the spectacle Grind had become known for. Thus, Jim was certainly aware that ambushing Grind on Halloween and spewing pig's blood and innards would garner attention. Whether he would admit it or not, it's also plausible that he wanted to appropriate some of the *coolness* attained by the chefs at Grind and, in so doing, maintain his relevance in the city's capricious fine dining scene where both food critics and status-conscious consumers are constantly in search of the best new thing.

Opening Up the Kitchen: The Cultural Ascension of Chefs and Cooks

The publication of Anthony Bourdain's ribald food memoir *Kitchen Confidential* in the summer of 2000 immediately transformed the then obscure journeyman chef into a culinary celebrity. Bourdain's meteoric rise to fame, not unlike the many other cultural entrepreneurs who manage to achieve celebrity status, appeared to be "simply the effect

of blind good luck."[244] Due in large part to the success of the Food Network and the celebrity chefs it engendered, popular culture in the late 1990s was marked by a burgeoning interest in food media.[245] The release of Bourdain's book serendipitously coincided with this growing cultural interest in food related media and thus the success of the book, as well as Bourdain's subsequent fame, may simply be read as a product of the times. *Kitchen Confidential*, however, was not Bourdain's first attempt at cashing in on the food media boom. He had previously published two food related crime novels, *Bone in the Throat* and *Gone Bamboo*. Although well received critically, both novels failed to find a popular audience.[246] Consequently, attributing the success of *Kitchen Confidential* solely to its timely release seems an inadequate explanation of its popular cultural resonance. Instead, I contend that the success of the book and Bourdain's sudden rise to fame is better explained by the way in which *Kitchen Confidential* deviated from prior mainstream culinary media offerings, including the two novels he previously penned.

In contrast to the carefully cultivated and consumer friendly food television personalities popular at the time, Bourdain's account of the food industry in *Kitchen Confidential* was blunt and "authentic" in a way that previous food television shows—as well as other manifestations of the food media genre—were not. There was, and largely remains, an illusory quality in much of the food related media content produced by the

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[244] Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 6.

[245] The Food Network debuted in the fall of 1993 with a programming lineup consisting almost entirely of old cooking show reruns*,* interspersed with a few hours of original programming. Devised by media executives attracted to the cooking genre as a promising niche with the potential to draw lucrative advertising dollars from corporations promoting food products, the network eventually achieved profitability in 2000 by greatly increasing its original programming and, relatedly, by developing its own set of cooking stars. See Toby Miller, *Cultural Citizenship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 129-131.

[246] Enid Nemy, "At Lunch With: Anthony Bourdain; Potboiler Dreams: Chef Hopes to Write His Way Out of the Kitchen," *The New York Times*, September 10, 1997.

cultural industries. Cookbooks, while outlining the steps necessary to create a meal, are more often than not accompanied by "colorful and detailed [photographs], showing readers what the finished dishes will look like and how they might be plated."[247] Likewise, televised cooking shows predominantly focus on the end product, as "the money shot is the achievement and presentation of the finished dish, which magically appears at the end along with the dish that was cooked on-air."[248] In Bourdain's account of the restaurant industry, however, any description of food as a finished product was relegated to an auxiliary status, replaced by a deliberate exaltation of the hidden confines of the professional kitchen. Bourdain not only explicitly acknowledged the violent and unsavory aspects of professional cooking, he celebrated the kitchen as a deviant space—a place inhabited by what he termed "a subculture of chefs and cooks" dedicated to an existence opposed to dominant societal norms and expectations regarding appropriate behavior. The act of exposing the subcultural lifestyle of chefs and cooks not only made *Kitchen Confidential* stand out in a media genre preoccupied with sanitized representations of cooking and the production of food, but Bourdain also managed to construct his own anti-establishment persona by aligning himself with this deviant form of existence in the process of rendering it legible to a popular audience.

Legibility is a precondition of control and manipulation. In a detailed examination of the constantly evolving techniques devised to render previously illegible subjects legible to the state, Scott argues, "[T]he modern state, through its officials, attempts with varying success to create a terrain and a population with precisely those standardized

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[247] *Ibid,* 533.
[248] Andrew Chan, "'La Grande Bouffe': Cooking Shows as Pornography," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 3, no. 4 (2003): 52.

characteristics that will be easiest to monitor, count, assess, and

manage…The…frustrated goal of the modern state is to reduce the chaotic, disorderly,

constantly changing social reality beneath it to something more closely resembling the

administrative grid of its observations."[249] In no way do I want to suggest that Bourdain

worked as an agent of the state by detailing the myriad misdeeds of kitchen workers. Yet,

I do want to suggest that Bourdain's public act of exposure did rupture the utopian

potentiality of the subcultural lifestyle of chefs and cooks. Through Bourdain's work,

kitchen deviancy was transformed from a cultural or social refusal with utopian potential

into a commodified and acceptable form of cool behavior. Like the culturally acceptable

and celebrated drug addled and misbehaving rock star before them, the deviancy of the

chef underground became a cultural signifier—a celebrated, fetishized immoral way of

being infused with exchange-value, as legitimated deviancy was rendered capable of

"being re-converted into temporary cultural dispositions (such as 'cool') that can be tried

on and used as a resource for the formation and propertizing of the 'new' middle-class

self."[250]

More than simply "trying on" a cultural disposition, however, Bourdain offers his

audience a continual opportunity for consumption that turns into a compulsion which can

never be truly sated. Signe Hansen suggests that the creation of an appetite for food

media consumption occurs in two basic ways: "First, by keeping us watching, and

second, through food media's sphere of influence beyond television: advertising and,

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[249] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 81-82.
[250] Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 22.

more specifically, the marketing of chef-branded commodities."[251] In the case of Bourdain, I would add a third form of consumption, namely, the ability to actually dine at—and consume the food produced in—the cool, exotic, and especially the "authentic" restaurants he travels to on his global televised excursions. As Beverly Skeggs contends, current forms of symbolic production have "produced a global search for finding, making and selling the 'authentic experience', frequently a search for the 'genuine'."[252] Consequently, not only is Bourdain's audience able to engage in consumption through the acts of watching or buying, but for those middle-class consumers attempting to further distinguish themselves through "authentic" experiences, they can consume in the very nature of Bourdain himself. Once again, however, it must be noted that consumption of food media and actual foodstuff can never be sated. A self-actualized identity built on distinctive consumption achieves value by acquiring novel goods or engaging in unique experiences in relation to the consumptive ability of others. Once one has consumed something the novelty is no longer of value. Likewise, once a cultural experience or good loses its exclusivity, it is time to move on. In this constant search for new forms of cultural goods or experiences from which to construct individual identity "what emerges is more akin to a fickle swarm, driven to attend to new things, demystify current trends, and discard that which seems passé."[253] By rendering the previous utopian subcultural existence of chefs and cooks legible to a popular audience, Bourdain thus subjected them to the surveillance and "fickle" logic of the growing capitalist cultural industry. In the process of establishing the alternative lifestyle of chefs and cooks as cool and culturally

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[251] Signe Hansen, "Society of the Appetite: Celebrity Chefs Deliver Consumers," *Food, Culture, & Society* 11, no. 1 (2008): 51.

[252] Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 106.

[253] Devon Powers, "Notes on Hype," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012), 866.

desirable, those chefs and cooks that previously operated in an illegible subcultural space were thrust out into the public sphere and consequently must acquiesce to the dictates of the capitalist cultural industry in order to survive.

Utopia Lost?

"The industry," Jim explained to me, "has changed greatly by the public perception of—and interest in—food and restaurants, and, you know, the star chef." Jim is certainly not alone in recognizing a sizeable shift within the culinary industry. Largely driven by promotion of the star chef by the cultural industries and the resultant transformation of the public representation of chefs, the culinary industry "has fundamentally changed over the last fifteen years or so."[254] Certain chefs, no longer interested in the comfortable obscurity offered by a subcultural kitchen existence, were equally complicit in the transformation:

> [T]he chefs who drove all of this became personalities, public figures who attracted wannabes and groupies. Legends grew up around them: about their drive, their exploits in and out of the kitchen, their tempers. These stories spread through the ranks of the cooking community and out into the wider world, where they made excellent fodder, growing from rumor to buzz as they mated and melded with the chefs' own self-promotion. Public relations had traditionally been the responsibility of restaurateurs, the public faces of the business; but the new chefs had no interest in letting the guy in the front room take the credit for their talent and hard work.[255]

For chefs, success now depends on creating a unique identity, not just through imaginative culinary creations, but also by distinguishing one's individuality.

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[254] Gwen Hyman, "The Taste of Fame: Chefs, Diners, Celebrity, Class," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 8, no. 3 (2008), 43.
[255] *Ibid,* 45.

"When I first started cooking," Jim explained, "reviews talked about the dining room, the quality of service, they would mention *maître d's* or general managers, they talked about the food, but now it starts out with who the chef is, where they buy their product from." Jim's professional kitchen experience dates back roughly twenty-five years, so the true creation of celebrity chefs, at least as he experienced it, occurred within that timeframe. To be more precise, however, the real focus on chefs followed the successful publication of Bourdain's memoir in 2000. Certainly celebrity chefs existed prior to the book's release, but it would be hard to describe chefs like Wolfgang Puck or Emeril Lagasse as *cool* in a rebellious, anti-establishment understanding of the term. Bourdain changed all that. His memoir exposed the cool nature of the chefs and cooks operating within the "dark recess of the restaurant underbelly—a subculture whose centuries-old militaristic hierarchy and ethos of 'rum, buggery and the lash' make for a mix of unwavering order and nerve-shattering chaos."[256] As Bourdain himself laments:

> Times have changed since much of the action described in [*Kitchen Confidential*] took place. Professional kitchens have become—for the most part—very different environments (at least at the top end) than the places described in the text…Though the level of interest in chefs and cooking has intensified, the focus remains almost exclusively on the chef; a cult of personality propagated and perpetuated by the wiling suspension of disbelief by food writers looking for a punchy hook for their articles and by chefs and their publicists (no fools we) who are charged with getting more customers through the door to spend money.[257]

The culinary industry, then, mirrored a more substantial development of the capitalist system largely brought about by the cultural industries and characterized by the "process of cool seduction and enhanced commodity fetishism"[258] in which consumption serves as

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[256] Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential,* 3-4.

[257] Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly*. Updated edition. (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 303-305.

[258] McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism*, 8.

means of establishing one's unique identity and individuality. Thus, in addition to masking the actual conditions of capitalist production, cool commodities become "a badge of identity and an essential tool of social life."[259]

Cool capitalism, one label for the current incarnation of the capitalism, is a peculiar result of the counterculture ethos of the 1960s and is predicated on difference and consumer subjectivity.[260] In response to the mass culture critique leveled at the cultural industries prior to the countercultural revolution, businesses turned to "hip consumerism, a cultural perpetual motion machine in which disgust with the falseness, shoddiness, and everyday oppressions of consumer society could be enlisted to drive the ever-accelerating wheels of consumption."[261] Consequently, individual subjectivity produced through the promotion and consumption of cool products became a fundamental element of capital accumulation and advancement:

> 'Cool' is actually the dominant tone of capitalism today. Corporations have incorporated countercultural traditions and deployed signs of 'resistance' in order to market their wares…Consumers are, in effect, seduced by the delights of high-tech and 'cool' commodities, promising to satisfy their every desire, especially if they are 'different' and vaguely rebellious in tone. Great stress is placed on individual autonomy and the more complex notion of 'individualisation'.[262]

Hence, media exposure of the rebellious and hedonistic subcultural lifestyle of chefs and cooks provided a key avenue for the expansion and promotion of cool capitalism.

The importance and power of cool is not lost on Jim. "There's a crazy movement," Jim explained to me while we were prepping for service on a Saturday afternoon, "the back and forth of what's cool with food." The knowledge of the

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[259] *Ibid,* 119.

[260] *Ibid.*

[261] Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 31.

[262] McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism*, 124.

transitory, yet powerful nature of cool presents an existential dilemma for Jim, especially

related to media promotion:

> When [Parvus] opened we got a lot of flack for our portion size…and then
> Anthony Bourdain came and ate here and said some fantastic things, and then
> everything changed. We became legitimate somehow, more legitimate. It shut
> some people up…yet at the same time, that cemented, on some level, my ability
> to move forward and do what I want to do…I want people to come here because
> they want to try food or have an experience and I want that to be a true experience
> for them…I don't necessarily want them to come here because Anthony Bourdain
> told them to come here. Yet, at the same time, I benefit, greatly, and I sleep better
> at night knowing we've got bookings.

I witnessed the consequences of the need to stay cool or relevant first hand at Parvus.

Reservations are monitored closely, at least on an hourly basis during afternoon

preparation. In addition, a ritual developed somewhere in the restaurant's brief history

whereby—if seventy people are served in one night (roughly the maximum amount

possible)—the staff celebrates by sharing a bottle of champagne after closing. It seems

there exists a constant fear of losing relevance. Although Jim fears going out of business,

he recognizes it as an inevitability, and thus bought the building that houses Parvus as a

contingency plan—an investment for when cool identification moves on to another

restaurant and another chef.

Jim's recognition of the fleeting nature of the restaurant industry perhaps stems

from the fact that the first restaurant he owned abruptly went out of business after nearly

ten years of successful operation. Jim explained that one reason for the sudden failure

was due to public complaints over perceived flaws of the restaurant's

operation—accusations he greatly disagreed with and was clearly hurt by. Parvus, Jim

explained, represented his "desire to basically, say 'fuck you,'" by creating "the first

menu in this city solely of small plates, or a tasting menu that people could still order a la

carte." Thus, Jim saw Parvus as a form of resistance, a kind of symbolic opposition to

those that contributed to the failure of his previous restaurant. However, it is hard to

ignore the fact that this resistant posturing also fits precisely into the cool mold, a type of

ironic detachment and declaration of individuality intrinsic to success in the era of cool

capitalism. In fact, while Jim may view his restaurant as form of resistance, he also

admits to his complicity in the promotional realm of the culinary industry by developing

a distinct identity for himself, and, in turn, Parvus:

> I have to do a certain amount of outreach or PR stuff or events on some level to
> keep my name out there or the restaurant or to introduce myself. There are certain
> chefs who aren't good cooks and they go to the dining room and they shake hands
> and they put on the white jackets. In a way, I think I've created my own identity
> by not doing that, by creating almost a scarcity of that, thus people are drawn to
> me…I think I've created my identity by staying in the kitchen, working all the
> time, being hands on, and gaining the respect of my fellow employees as well as
> my peers.

Although Jim admits his reluctant acquiescence with the promotional requirements of the

cultural industry, it is clear that the kitchen, for Jim, continues to provide refuge from the

demands of the outside world he must—on some level—adhere to, even if that kitchen no

longer resembles the subcultural space he fondly remembers.

Yet, the utopian potentiality that once existed in the simultaneously exploitative

and libratory space of the professional kitchen is not irrevocably lost. As Muñoz

continuously posits, the path toward a utopian futurity is littered with failure. At the same

time, the ephemeral traces left by past utopian failures provide concrete evidence "that

allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present."[263]As long as those traces

continue to haunt us in the present by conjuring up fleeting, yet powerful feelings that the

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[263] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

here and now is "not enough" and "that indeed something is missing,"[264] the possibility

of overcoming failures past by working toward an understanding of the messy and

complicated ways in which those once promising utopian lifestyle formations faltered

offers a path toward future success. If this chapter represents an attempt to look

backward toward a past utopian potentiality in an attempt to understand the way in which

it came to fail and contribute toward the forging of a path of recovery—or at least a

recognition—of that lost ideality in order to begin to move forward into a new and better

temporality, the next chapter is an attempt to determine whether or not that ideality was

every truly lost. Parvus undoubtedly belongs in the upper echelon of the restaurant

industry hierarchy. In the next chapter, I turn my investigation to two professional

kitchens that operate at a different level in this hierarchy.

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[264] *Ibid,* 1.

Chapter Five

SELLING THE FANTASY:
CAPITALISM AND THE SEDUCTION OF CHEFDOM

> You fucking worked in this shit. It's fucking not glamorous. You should have at
> least learned that from what you've fucking done in this research you've done,
> right? I mean it's not fucking glamour.
>> —Chef Taylor on working in the restaurant industry.

On a hot afternoon in June 2013, I presented an early draft of the previous chapter at a

food studies conference in East Lansing, Michigan. It was the summer after my first year

as a doctoral student. I remember the moment well because I was fraught with the kind of

anxiety that arises only when one is absolutely mindful of the very real potential of public

embarrassment. I had presented at academic conferences prior to this one, but this

occasion somehow felt different. The presentation went remarkably well considering the

fact that I felt an overwhelming desire to turn around and exit the room the moment I

walked in. After getting a laugh at the beginning of the presentation, my nervous energy

dissipated. The initial positive reception during the question and answer session

following my presentation assured me that I had not embarrassed myself, and even left

me feeling as though my work was somewhat important, or at least interesting enough to

elicit a response from the audience. Then, an arm stretched up from the back of the room

and a woman asked me, "Do you really believe you can learn anything about the

everyday lives of chefs and cooks from spending a relatively little amount of time in one

restaurant?" Before I could answer, she continued, "I have been working in a restaurant

as a participant observer for a year and only recently have I felt that the staff has truly

accepted me and have begun to treat me as a member of their kitchen culture." My initial

thought was, "Wow, I cannot believe that a professional kitchen would even consider

allowing an academic in their space for such a long period." So I went with it. "I'm not sure what kind of past experience you have in the restaurant industry or in a professional kitchen, but prior to my own experience as a participant observer, I had absolutely none. After a few days, I realized I was largely a liability in the kitchen because of my inexperience and limited skill set." She did not divulge whether or not she had previous experience in a professional kitchen, but instead asserted that in order to build proper relationships with her "informants" and get them to "open up to her" she needed to spend a lot time gaining their trust. "I guess my experience was different," I responded. "The staff at the restaurant opened up to me right away and treated me as one of their own." After my response, the moderator ended the session. As the crowd began to exit the room, a few people came up to me to reassure me that they enjoyed my presentation and did not agree with the criticism I received at the end. I appreciated their kind words and encouragement, and I disagreed with the premise that it is necessary to spend a year working alongside someone in order to get them to "open up" to you, I could not, however, help but to agree with part the woman's critique: How could I really learn anything about the everyday lives of chefs and cooks by only observing and working with the staff of one professional kitchen? I left the conference convinced I needed to expand my participant observation to other professional kitchens, and, if possible, to restaurants in different geographic locations.

When I got home, I was overwhelmed with the thought of how to proceed with my project. Should I try to reach out to other restaurants that Anthony Bourdain had visited on his television show? Surely that would help me connect my ethnographic research with the critical research I was doing on Bourdain and his media productions.

Yet, I was unsure that doing so would be all that useful. I had worked alongside a chef that was featured on *No Reservations* and gained a lot of insight into how that exposure affected him and his restaurant. Visiting another restaurant that had been legitimated by Bourdain was not going to provide me with a substantially different perspective from which to attempt understand how the cultural valorization of chefs and cooks *really* affected the everyday lives of chefs and cooks, most of whom were plying their trade at restaurants not glorified in popular media.

A few weeks after the food studies conference, I left my home in Minneapolis to visit friends and family in my hometown, still unsure of how I wanted to proceed. The trip was intended to provide an escape from my never-ending focus on research and some much needed relaxation before the start of the fall semester, but it turned out to offer an unlikely solution to my problem. On the first night back in my hometown, my parents took my wife and me to a local restaurant. As we pulled into the parking lot, I thought I recognized a man smoking a cigarette out front. Once we got out of the car and walked toward the entrance, the man turned toward us. It was indeed who I thought it was: my sister's ex-boyfriend. They dated for much of my adolescence and he was close with our family, but it had been years since any of us had seen him. As we all shared a somewhat awkward exchange, Taylor[265] put out his cigarette and introduced us to his girlfriend. He explained that they were in town visiting from Aurora[266], a resort town located in a national park in the Badlands region of the Rocky Mountain Front, where he had moved to take a job as an executive chef at a fine-dining restaurant. Seeing an opportunity, my

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[265] For confidentiality, all of the names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.
[266] Again, for purposes of confidentiality, this is not the real name of the town.

mom—in typical motherly fashion—quickly responded that I was working on a research project about chefs and cooks and looking for a restaurant to conduct research in. Taylor, seemingly interested, asked me about the project. After a brief explanation, he gave me his phone number and told me if I was interested in doing research in his kitchen to call him and he would make arrangements. Once I got back to Minneapolis, I reluctantly called him, not knowing whether his invitation was sincere or simply a conciliatory gesture. I was on the road to Aurora a few weeks later.

In this chapter, I contrast my experience as a participant observer in Aurora with my experience at Parvus, as well as another restaurant in Portland, Oregon—which I will refer to as Minos Cafe—where Taylor took a job as an executive chef a few months after I completed my fieldwork in Aurora. Taken together, the three restaurants offer insight into the divergent working conditions and operations of kitchens occupying distinct levels in the contemporary restaurant hierarchy. Although conducting fieldwork at these three restaurants does not begin to encompass the varying experiences of chefs and cooks that work in over one million professional kitchens nationwide[267], it does, however, provide evidence of the transformation of the everyday lives of chefs and cooks following the cultural valorization of their profession.

Aurora

I arrived in Aurora on a Monday August evening. The long and largely unremarkable drive did not prepare me for the beauty of Aurora at sunset. Only a few miles before my

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[267] National Restaurant Association, "Facts at a Glance," National Restaurant Association. http://www.restaurant.org/News-Research/Research/Facts-at-a-Glance [accessed July 9, 2016].

interstate exit, the land was flat, grassy, and filled with billboard signs advertising jobs in the area's booming oil industry. Once I turned off the interstate, however, a narrow, winding road brought me through beautiful buttes, mesas, hoodoos, and other unique rock formations that vibrantly reflected the orange, setting sun. Whatever doubts I harbored about my impetuous decision quickly dissipated. At the peak of the winding road, the landscape opened to reveal the river valley below. The quaint community of Aurora lay at the floor of the valley, mirroring the contours of the meandering river.

The following morning, Taylor met me at the hotel that housed the restaurant. After filling out paper work and getting my identification card, he sat me in the dining room and told me to order lunch in order to experience the "other side" of the restaurant. I didn't quite know what to expect, but the menu was large and more progressive than I thought. I was nervous—it was my first day on the job and I was in a new, remote location—so I just ordered a roasted beet salad and a sandwich. After lunch, I made my way through the swinging doors that separated the dining room from the service area, and then again through another set of swinging doors that led to the kitchen. The kitchen was large—exceptionally large—with plain white walls, a red brick floor, and a wall in the middle that separated the space. The side nearest the dining room housed the line stations, or the "hot side." On other side of the room was the "cold side," replete with a large stove, four ovens, and four large rectangle stainless steel worktables. Behind the prep area were two massive walk-in refrigerators. The space was much larger than Parvus. "This place is huge, I didn't expect this," I said to Taylor as he finished giving me a tour of the place. The space was larger than the average professional kitchen, he explained to me, because besides serving as a space to daily prepare and cook food for the dining

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room, the kitchen also had to be able to accommodate occasional catering jobs for the banquet rooms of the hotel—something his tone of voice and facial expression made clear he was not fond of.

After the tour, Taylor put me to work alongside Vicky, a young woman from the Philippines, whose sister, Violet, also worked in the kitchen. For my first task I quartered onions and chopped carrots and celery to add to a pot of water along with chicken scraps, bay leaves, and pepper to make a chicken stalk. Following that, I peeled carrots and placed them in water. Both tasks were mundane, but allowed me to get into the rhythm of the kitchen. Taylor put on music, and his penchant for singing along to the songs lightened the mood of the entire kitchen. During the carrot peeling, Steven, one of the cooks came in. He was dressed in standard chef whites and a black baseball cap. His hands were behind his back tying the strap of a navy apron. He appeared distinctly more disheveled than the rest of the kitchen staff despite the fact that his uniform was the same one shared by all of the cooks. A patchy beard fitfully covered the bottom half of his oblong face and a thin, oval pair of classes rested on the bridge of his nose. Taylor introduced me and as Steven walked over and warmly greeted me, the smell of marijuana permeated the air. After shaking my hand, he brashly announced to the kitchen that he was late because he partied at the trailer park until 6 a.m. I looked at the clock—it was 1 p.m. He was supposed to arrive for work at 11 a.m. Steven's act of openly divulging this information—in front of his boss, no less—was not accompanied by an apology to his co-workers, nor do I believe was it meant to. Instead, it seemed to merely be a prideful boast. At that moment I knew I was in a far different environment than the extraordinarily orderly and efficacious kitchen Jim helmed at Parvus. Perhaps, I thought to myself, I may

have located a remnant of the culturally deviant chef underground popularized by Bourdain after all.

Taylor

After graduating with a degree in economics and accepting a job at an international bank in Portland, Taylor said he knew he had to make a change in his life, "I was always into cooking and I didn't like my job at the time in the financial industry, so I thought [going to culinary school] would be a good move and I was still young enough to start cooking." Despite warnings from his dad and others about the downsides of the restaurant industry, he quit his job and enrolled in culinary school. During culinary school, he accepted a side job at a local Asian restaurant. As a Japanese American, Taylor was excited about the opportunity to work with and learn from Asian cooks. His first day on the job, he shadowed a cook and felt as though it was a good place to learn a style of cooking not taught in culinary school. On the second day, he scooped build-up from a grease pit for nine hours. He was paid in cash and never called back. "That was a low point," Taylor explained, "I thought, maybe my dad was right."

Yet, after graduating at the top of his class in culinary school and landing a coveted internship, he earned a job at one of the most critically acclaimed restaurants in Portland. Taylor said that experience lifted his confidence and it was at that point that he realized he might actually be good at cooking and make a decent career for himself. After working as a line cook at a series of successful restaurants, Taylor eventually landed a coveted job at a restaurant across the Columbia River from Portland in Vancouver, Washington, that had already earned both local and national acclaim. The restaurant was

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owned and run by an acclaimed chef that had previously worked at the restaurant where

Taylor got his start in Portland. At the restaurant in Vancouver Taylor, established a

reputation in the Portland restaurant scene, working his way up from line cook to *chef de*

cuisine. However, in a curious move for a chef that achieved his level of success in a

significant metropolitan area, he gave up his position as *chef de cuisine* to the take the job

in Aurora. At the time, he explained, he was burned out, wanted to be closer to family,

and the job in Aurora significantly increased his salary. Also, he said, he wanted to

challenge himself:

> I mean when I was driving to Aurora, this is even before I lived here, I was wondering if they had a salad bar. I was hoping they didn't. But I didn't know. I knew it was going to be an uphill battle. I needed to take a fucking shitty situation and try to make it better.

More than improving the food, however, teaching people with relatively little experience

or skill proved to be the most difficult part of the transition for him:

> In any restaurant that I worked at until I moved here the training was minimal because there are more decent cooks available. When you come here the most frustrating thing is teaching a guy that has supposedly cooked for twice as long as me, but is shocking vegetables and putting them in bowl of ice and mixing it around. It's frustrating because he's been doing this for this long and he still sucks…You take the average white kid in America who thinks he wants to be a cook, but he never had the work ethic in the first place. It's frustrating. It's kind of like Steven, have you seen him when he gets here? He has some talent but if you can't apply it or you don't have the work ethic, training is just a nightmare here. Mainly, I don't like dealing with people and training in a town like this with a population so small. You're trying to do better food but the people aren't capable of doing it, or there are two out of ten that are. That's frustrating on a daily basis.

I had already witnessed the frustration he felt. I knew Taylor was an experienced and

accomplished chef, yet on my first day of work in Aurora, after I completed my

paperwork and finished lunch he was still doing basic prep work alongside the other

cooks despite the fact he had spent hours in the kitchen. He had also warned me that he

was going to be extremely busy while I was there because—on top of his other duties—he had to work the grill station in order to replace the "experienced" cook he referred to in the above quotation, who was fired after showing up drunk to work and attempting to start a fight with Taylor during dinner service. Even in place like Aurora, with a population that hovers around 100 people, there are limits to the challenges one is willing to endure.

Steven: Evidence of the Kitchen as an Autonomous Space of Refuge?

On my second day working in the kitchen in Aurora, it was clear that to me that Steven's deviant behavior and nonchalant attitude toward his work—however much it may have resembled the kitchen subculture Bourdain detailed in his memoir and represented in his media productions—was not evidence that the Aurora kitchen served as a space of refuge for subjects on the margins of society. For Steven, a thirty-year-old white male that grew up in what he openly described as a relatively wealthy family—his parent's owned many fast food restaurants in and around the town he grew up in—the space did indeed provide him with the opportunity to lead a life on the fringes of normative, bourgeois society. Yet, if the utopian potential of the professional kitchen was predicated on *collective* autonomy and resistance to hegemonic cultural norms and values, the professional kitchen in Aurora did not provide that. Steven was an anomaly in Aurora. As he made painfully obvious, his behavior mimicked what he thought to be cool. He was aware of the deviant reputation of chefs and cooks in popular media, even going as far as to bring in a number of issues of *Lucky Peach*—an alternative food publication founded by celebrity chef David Chang, former *New York Times* food columnist Peter Meehan, and

Zero Point Zero Productions (the production company that produces Bourdain's television show)[268]—for me to read on my "downtime" while in Aurora.

Steven was clearly attracted to the life of a cook because of its celebrated status in contemporary in popular culture. His alternative lifestyle was not overtly anti-hegemonic; instead, any reading of his behavior as progressive or resistant would involve "arbitrarily divorcing the person he was from the imagined, idealized person he [may become]."[269] And although the previous chapter was dedicated to the utopian potential the professional kitchen once held—and may still hold—for marginalized subjects, neither Steven's subject position or his individualistic deviant behavior demonstrated any form of latent resistance. Instead, he *bought into* the popular image of chefs in media and deliberately attempted to embody that image in order to project a cool persona to his peers. Unfortunately, this self-presentation of individualistic deviance was not well received by his co-workers. As the only local person working in a kitchen otherwise staffed by temporary migrant workers, his co-workers resented his behavior and enjoyed mocking him and the fact that he seemed to be totally unaware of his unique position of privilege in Aurora. A number of factors coalesced to allow Steven the ability to evade the rules all of the others had to follow, as Taylor explained to me when I asked him about it in a later conversation:

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[268] The promotional description that appeared on Amazon.com upon the publication's release: "*Lucky Peach* is a new journal of food writing, published on a quarterly basis by McSweeney's. It is a creation of David Chang, the James Beard Award–winning chef behind the Momofuku restaurants in New York, *Momofuku* cookbook cowriter Peter Meehan, and Zero Point Zero Productions—producers of the Travel Channel's Emmy Award–winning *Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations*," https://www.amazon.com/Lucky-Peach-Issue-Chris-Ying/dp/1936365464 [accessed July 9, 2016].

[269] Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 162.

> [Steven only got away with it] because of isolation and the time period that you have to make shit happen in Aurora. Because it's not as easy to just can someone and find someone else, you know? And, Steven was valuable in other ways. He was good grill cook and a decent expediter when he worked sauté. So, he was just a privileged motherfucker. But, the expectations are always the same. You show up on time, set up your station, and execute properly. I mean it's always the same. The only difference being, in an isolated environment…I mean Steven knew, I never had to take him aside and be like, "Hey man, you gotta fucking change to be here." I would just look at him and he knew by the look in my eyes, and I could tell by the look eyes, that he actually felt bad for a short period of time, you know?

Taylor's ambivalent statement highlights Steven's privileged position in contrast to the other cooks. Yes, the *expectations* were the same for everyone, but Steven did not always show up on time and Taylor even critiqued his work ethic and acknowledged his unique position of privilege. Steven did not fear losing his job. He knew that as long as he simply showed up (on time or not) and worked (hard or not) he was unlikely to face any significant form of discipline simply due to the fact that finding a replacement capable of immediately filling his role would be nearly impossible, and training someone else to fill his position would be incredibly difficult considering all of the other tasks Taylor needed to complete on a daily basis. And, even if he were to get fired, he had the ability to seek new employment, either in Aurora or any other place he desired. His co-workers, however, lacked this privileged mobility.

Temporary Labor: Violet, Aurora, and the U.S. Guestworker Program

When I worked alongside Violet the first day, she was largely quiet and went about her work. She was kind to me though, and willing to assist me in locating the proper equipment I need to complete my tasks. Once dinner service began I assisted Raphael, a cook from Argentina, with plating slices of red velvet cake for a catering event. Raphael

was nice, but he was very particular about the presentation of the cakes and clearly serious about his work. The cakes were either a last minute addition to the menu, or the catering staff had neglected to inform the kitchen staff that they were included in dinner menu. Raphael was visibly stressed about rushing to complete the desert for the waiting guests. So, in an attempt to ease the tension, I engaged him in conversation about soccer. The fact that I followed the Argentinean league came as a surprise to him; in fact, explained he was more a fan of the Spanish league, especially Barcelona and their Argentinean star Leo Messi. Once the deserts were plated and placed on a food cart, Raphael hurried out of the kitchen to deliver them to the catering event staff. Violet, having witnessed Raphael's criticism of my initial work, came back to the prep station while I was cleaning up. "Don't worry about him, he thinks he runs the place sometimes," she said. "You haven't eaten dinner yet, so I made you some queso dip." Taylor shouted new orders from a dinner ticket to the line cooks, so I could only briefly offer my gratitude as she returned to her station, but her kind gesture made me feel welcomed in their space.

The following day, Violet and I were again stationed next to each other during morning prep work. This time I immediately struck up a conversation with her, as I felt gratitude and a connection to her since she had gone out of her way to make me feel welcomed the night before. Violet was twenty-six-years-old and said she had come to United States on as a guestworker when she was twenty-two. Prior to that, she worked at a call center for a U.S. bank that outsourced much of its customer service work to the Philippines. She said she wanted to come to the United States to be with her sister, Vicky, who was already employed as a guestworker at two seasonal restaurants in the country.

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Initially, Violet said her guestworker visa was denied because she applied to do restaurant work in the U.S. through the companies that employed her sister, but she lacked any previous restaurant experience. Eventually she was able to obtain a visa and started working as a server at a resort restaurant in Miami, Florida. Once there, she managed to convince her employer to let her work in the kitchen—even though she admitted that she did not even know how to dice a tomato at the time—because she felt the cooks got to eat better food than the dining room staff.

Prior to working in Aurora, I was largely unaware of the U.S. guestworker program. Like any informed food—or food media—consumer, I was aware of the fact that many restaurant kitchens across the country are known to employ immigrants, but prior to my arrival in Aurora, I did not expect the entire kitchen staff—besides Taylor and Steven—to be made up of immigrant cooks. I found it strange that they were even aware of Aurora's existence due to its isolated location. Yet, I quickly learned that because Aurora has few permanent residents and is far removed from the more heavily populated areas in the region—along with the fact that its tourist season lasts only a few short summer months—the foundation that operates most of the tourist attractions and hotels in the town relies almost entirely on the recruitment of seasonal guestworkers employed through the federal government's H-2B work visa program in order to function. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's website, "The H-2B program allows U.S. employers or U.S. agents who meet specific regulatory requirements to bring

foreign nationals to the United States to fill temporary nonagricultural jobs."[270] In order to participate in the government program, employers must prove that "there are not enough U.S. workers who are able, willing, qualified, and available to do the temporary work," and that "employing H-2B workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers."[271] How exactly a perspective employer or "petitioner" goes about proving these preconditions to the government is unclear in the application materials, but many critics of the program question whether there is truly a shortage of labor in the U.S. significant enough to warrant such a program.[272] Instead, some critics view the guestworker program as a manufactured form of labor scarcity that benefits U.S. employers to the detriment of both guestworkers and the country's native labor force. As Kristin Surak argues, "For employers, guestworkers supply a convenient reservoir of labour that can easily be dispensed with and which offers the advantage of depressing wages."[273] Equally problematic is the lack of autonomy such workers must agree to in order to participate in the program.

In Violet's situation her visa was petitioned for by her employers in Miami and Aurora, and thus her legal status in the U.S. was contingent on her satisfying the demands of her employers, with little freedom to contest unlawful or unethical treatment without fear of losing her job, and consequently, her visa. The fact that guestworkers are tied to particular employers gives those employers immense power over their temporary

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[270] U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "H-2B Temporary Non-Agricultural Workers," Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security, https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-2b-temporary-non-agricultural-workers#Period [accessed July 17, 2016].

[271] *Ibid.*

[272] For example, see Ruben J. Garcia, "Labor as Property: Guestworkers, International Trade, and the Democracy Deficit," *The Journal of Gender, Race, & Justice* 10, no. 1 (2006): 27-65; Philip L. Martin and Michael Teitelbaum, "The Mirage of Mexican Guest Workers," *Foreign Affairs,* November/December 2001.

[273] Kristin Surak, "Guestworkers: A Taxonomy," *New Left Review* 84 (2013): 89.

employees. In their uniquely subservient position, guestworkers are left with little

government oversight over the conditions of their employment and almost none of the

basic rights that would be granted to a citizen of the U.S. hired for the same position. As

Anna Stilz explains:

> Guestworkers are often admitted to receiving countries with visas tied to a
> particular employer, such that if they are fired or attempt to switch jobs, they can
> be deported. This renders them highly dependent, because the costs of exit from
> the employment relationship are so high. The employers, in turn, are able to wield
> a good deal of power over their guestworkers, who may be exposed to abuses and
> threats. While some employers may treat their guestworkers with respect, these
> restrictions make the guestworker overtly reliant on a particular person's goodwill
> and benevolence.[274]

For Violet, the conflicting treatment she received by her two employers exemplifies the

capricious nature of the experience for guestworkers based solely on the individual

ethical and legal deference possessed by the specific employers they are contractually

bound to. Violet said she really liked Aurora because of Taylor, the laid back working

conditions, and the treatment she received from the foundation that employed her. She

said she was satisfied with her bi-weekly paychecks, which were equivalent to one or two

months' pay in the Philippines. The free housing and three meals per day she received

while employed in Aurora allowed her to save money and even send some back home to

her family. In addition, the foundation reimbursed her expenses to travel to Aurora. In

Miami, however, she explained that the chef was very strict and the work was more

demanding and intense. She liked the resort and its beauty, but felt her employer did not

treat her with dignity or respect. In fact, her Miami employer had never reimbursed any

of the travel expenses she incurred during her three years of employment there, although

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[274] Anna Stilz, "Guestworkers and Second-Class Citizenship," *Policy and Society* 29 (2010): 303-304.

they were legally obligated to do so. When I asked Violet why she did not take legal action against them, she looked at me with a smirk that instantly made me cognizant of the naivety of my question. "Its not worth the trouble," she obligingly responded.

Space, Time, and Autonomy in the Aurora Kitchen

Although the tenuous nature of the guestworker program significantly limited the autonomy of the cooks and other service workers in Aurora in important and unequal ways, they nonetheless appeared to enjoy a welcomed status in the community. This treatment, however, may be to do to the fact that the migrant guestworkers provide a vital supply of labor needed to handle the influx of summer tourists that constitute an indispensable source of revenue for the local community. Moreover, the guestworkers themselves contribute to the local economy by buying goods and services that are not included in their guestworker contracts. In a more pernicious sense, the guestworkers also perform the jobs the locals are unable or unwilling to perform, and because the government—through the H-2B visa program—heavily monitors their movement and activity while in the country, the migrant workers provide little risk of permanently settling and thus offer little threat of altering the way of life for the local population.[275] As Surak argues, guestworker programs are the ideal solution to patterns of global

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[275] According to the Department of Homeland Security website, employers are required to notify U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services within two business days if any employee does not arrive to work within five days of their scheduled start date, if an employee leaves work without notice is gone for five days, if an employee is terminated, or if an employee finishes the labor for which they were hired prior the date specified in the H-2B petition. See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Employment-Related Notifications to USCIS," Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security, https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-2b-temporary-non-agricultural-workers#Period [accessed July 17, 2016].

migration as guestworkers provide malleable labor without the threat of becoming permanent "unwanted members" of society.[276]

Importantly then, for the guestworkers employed as cooks in Aurora, the professional kitchen provided a space to work without significant daily scrutiny of their activities and outside surveillance by upper management. This was due to both Taylor's management style and the closed environment of the kitchen in Aurora. Foundation management and other employees had little reason to enter the kitchen, unless they needed to speak with Taylor or the catering manager, both of whom had an office at the back of the space. As long as the foodstuff was ordered, stored, and prepared correctly, no one had any need to question Taylor. "Here," Taylor explained to me, "I'm never micromanaged much." Pointing in the direction—but out of sight—of the catering manager, I asked him, "What about her, she seems to consistently monitor what you are doing?" Taylor quickly shot back, "She's not my fucking boss—if she was I would have left a month ago." Taylor passed on the sense of autonomy he felt to his cooks. "As long as they show up, are willing to learn, and do their work," he explained, "I want them to be able to enjoy themselves while they are here." This philosophy engendered an atmosphere where the daily stress of the job was assuaged by the open encouragement of play and camaraderie between the cooks in the Aurora kitchen.

The cooks in the kitchen at Aurora unquestionably worked hard, but the manner in which they completed their tasks was very different from the methodical approach of the cooks at Parvus. Whereas the pace during dinner service at Parvus resembled a well-orchestrated dance, where each table's course selections coincided with a particular

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[276] Surak, "Guestworkers: A Taxonomy," 86.

station so there would be a steady and consistent flow of food prepared by each cook, the pace of the kitchen in Aurora more closely resembled the stop-and-go nature of the dance floor of a local bar. Like the rhythmic chaos of the dance floor that quickly subsides the moment an unpopular song is played on the jukebox, the cooks in Aurora dealt with brief periods of frenzy when a ticket would come in from the dining room, followed by long stretches of idleness. It was during these lulls that the cooks would often engage in play and their close bond became apparent. This, Taylor explained to me, was the joy being a cook and working in a professional kitchen:

> The last guy I worked for—who had been working for thirty years at this point and was now the owner said it well, "You know even to this day whatever happens outside of work, when I get to the kitchen it's time to relax." Which is kind of a contradictory statement of what you think when you come into a kitchen, but it's really kind of true. The kitchen culture, if you have a good group of people, it's an attractive work place because you are doing what you want to do, you're hanging out with your buddies and cooking. I've always been a smartass, a loudmouth when it comes to those things and that's a very useful tool in most kitchens. You are always talking smack to each other and joking around because, basically, you're a slave. You are in the back room doing all this crap and no one sees you. They see the server and what comes out on a plate, but you're back there slaving away, so it's like every kitchen I've worked in, you hear people randomly singing songs, it's like slave songs…You've got to keep it light or you'll go insane. Especially in a kitchen this size, you've got to keep it light. If you have the right crew and you are friends, on a work level, the kitchen is an awesome environment.

The collective respite—and even pleasure—offered by the kitchen culture in Aurora, however, was always tempered by the knowledge of its fleeting nature. All of the individuals that bonded over the shared working conditions were keenly aware of the kitchen's limited function as a space of autonomous refuge due to the transitory labor arrangements for the majority of its cooks. Months after my visit, Taylor left to accept a position as executive chef at Minos Cafe in Portland and the foundation promoted Steven

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to take his place as executive chef in Aurora. The guestworkers, on the other hand, either headed south to their various places of winter employment or were forced to return to their home countries if their three-year nonimmigrant status had expired.

Portland

Portland is a renowned food city. In 2015, it was ranked as one of the top ten food cities in the country by at least three national publications, and was ranked as the number one food city in the U.S. by *The Washington Post* food critic Tom Sietsema.[277] Minos Cafe, however, was not among the critically acclaimed restaurants that garnered national attention for Portland's food scene. That is not to say it is not a good or generally well-respected restaurant[278], but in a city that champions independent, local, and innovative restaurants, the fact the Minos Cafe was the flagship restaurant for a regional beer, food, music venue, and hotel conglomerate—even a successful and popular one— meant it inherently lacked the cultural capital of many of Portland's most critically acclaimed restaurants. Perceived authenticity is "a key element of how foodies evaluate and legitimate their food choices."[279] For these "foodies" or individuals whose individuality and cultural status is largely built and maintained through an overt display of their "alleged" superior culinary knowledge and taste, chain restaurants or restaurants owned by large corporations are denigrated in favor of independent restaurants either run by

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[277] Tom Seitsema, "The Ten Best Food Cities in America, Ranked," *The Washington Post,* December 21, 2005. See also, Zagat Staff, "Top 17 Food Cities of 2015," Zagat, https://www.zagat.com/b/the-top-17-food-cities-of-2015#2 [accessed July 20, 2016]; Katrina Brown Hunt, "America's Best Cities for Foods," Travel + Leisure, http://www.travelandleisure.com/slideshows/americas-best-cities-for-foodies/13 [accessed July 20, 2016].

[278] At the time of writing, the restaurant had rating of four stars out of a possible five on Yelp.com based on 197 user reviews.

[279] Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 69.

critically acclaimed chefs or exotic Others. As Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann explain, "By establishing food as having an idiosyncratic connection to a specified creative talent or family tradition, authentic food is distinguished as 'quality' artful food, and distant from industrial foods' faceless, mass-produced lineage, obvious commercial motivation, and unfortunate dearth of authenticity."[280] Minos Cafe, simply due the fact that it was part of a well-known regional corporation, could never achieve significant critical acclaim or cultural distinction in the Portland culinary scene. Thus, it was not the status of Minos Cafe or its potential that attracted Taylor. Instead, one of the main reasons Taylor took the job at Minos Cafe was its general manger, Sal.

In the Portland restaurant industry, Sal was a well-known figure. He gained notoriety in Portland after playing a pivotal role in the launch of a James Beard Award-winning restaurant where he served as general manager for sixteen years. Prior to his success in Portland, Sal spent nearly a decade working in San Francisco, including serving as the general manager at the first restaurant owned and run by the now internationally renowned chef Bradley Ogden. So it was Sal, with whom Taylor had previously worked and maintained a close relationship—along with what Taylor described as the depressing isolation of Aurora in the winter—that engendered his return to Portland.

For Taylor and Sal, both of whom had experienced success in establishments with a much higher status in the Portland restaurant hierarchy, Minos Cafe appeared to me to offer a space for the duo to collaborate on the professional margins, outside the purview of what Sharon Zukin refers to as the "critical infrastructure" of Portland's foodscape.

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[280] *Ibid,* 85.

"Members of the critical infrastructure," as Zukin explains, "produce the didactic prism through which cultural values are appreciated."[281] Restaurant reviewers form an influential part of a city's critical infrastructure by producing the critiques status-seeking consumers rely upon in order to evaluate the cultural capital of given restaurant, as Zukin explains:

> They visit restaurants, writing up reactions to dishes and comparing them with the composite menu of their collective experience. By these activities, the critical infrastructure establish and unify a new perspective for viewing and consuming the values of place—but by so doing they also establish their market values.[282]

In their role as cultural intermediaries, members of the critical infrastructure are tasked with constantly locating and promoting *new and original* goods and services for their audience to consume. Restaurant reviewers, reliant on "foodies" in order to maintain their exalted cultural status, must inherently concern themselves with the ever-shifting perceptions of cultural authenticity. In this cultural milieu, distinction for status-conscious consumers is secured through the display of an "exclusive" taste in food and knowledge of authentic, critically vaunted restaurants. Thus, for members of the critical infrastructure as well as the "reflexive consumers" that rely on their brand of "expertise" in order to distance themselves "from other social groups,"[283] Minos Cafe is of little cultural value or concern. That fact, however, did not prevent the owners of Minos Cafe from attempting to imbue their establishment with an air of authenticity. They are, of course, successful businessmen.

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[281] Sharon Zukin, "Gentrification, Cuisine, and the Critical Infrastructure: Power and Centrality and Downtown," in *Cities and Society*, ed. Nancy Kleniewski (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 192
[282] *Ibid*.
[283] *Ibid.*

The Appropriation of Authenticity: Place, Space, and the Aesthetics of Minos Cafe

Minos Cafe is located on the street level of a boutique hotel in downtown Portland that shares the same ownership group as the restaurant. Prior to being converted into a hotel and restaurant, the building had housed a prominent gay nightclub and bathhouse that was an integral facet of Portland's "Gay Triangle" neighborhood for nearly thirty years until it closed in 2007. Characteristic of the process of gentrification, however, by the time I arrived any remnants of the neighborhood's past as a sanctuary for Portland's queer community were gone. The neighborhood's alternative past instead provided new residents with a sense of residual historical authenticity. This form of "manipulate[d] authenticity for new residents' needs," as Zukin argues, "enable[s] them—not so innocently—to stake their own claim to the neighborhood."[284] Thus, across the street from Minos Cafe, a new high-rise condominium—flanked by a two-story American Apparel retail store—advertised its luxurious, loft-like living spaces with photos featuring young white urban professionals leisurely enjoying their apartments. On the opposite side of the restaurant and hotel, a California Closet showroom and Whole Foods store—both presumably catering to the same clientele the condominium developers were attempting to attract—stretched the length of the block.

The restaurant itself was long and narrow, with floor-to-ceiling windows on both sides of the space, offering prominent views of the downtown Portland streets. Outside, near the main entrance to the restaurant, a line of small, round tables ran the length of the building, providing ample sidewalk dining space. An open kitchen anchored the interior

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[284] Sharon Zukin, "Consuming Authenticity: From Outposts of Difference to Means of Exclusion," *Cultural Studies* 22, no. 5 (2008): 734.

of the space, allowing the patrons seated at the surrounding tables and booths a clear view of the cooks preparing food. A stairway opposite the main entrance led downstairs to a lengthy, narrow hallway. The walls of the space were decorated with old black and white photos showcasing the building's alternative past. Shots of drag shows, disco parties, bathhouse scenes, gangsters, and an original extortion note received by a previous owner—among other token vestiges—were tactically placed to elicit an authentic aura and remind present guests of the building's countercultural origins. On one end of the hallway, a large window framed a rock-walled pool; its blue lights filled the small, dark room with a mysterious ambience. I was told the pool was an original remnant of the building's bathhouse history, but now functioned as amenity for hotel guests—although in my entire time working there, I never saw anyone use it. Like the vintage photos, it seemed to me to be a strategic adornment intended as an overt allusion to an illicit past so as to consistently remind present passersby of the space's historical authenticity. A door to a live music "den" and bar sat at the opposite end of the hallway from the pool. In between these spaces open to paying members of the public, were two doors off limits to guests. The first door led to a small, cramped office shared by Taylor, Sal, and an accountant for the restaurant and hotel. The second door opened up to a cacophonous, almost cellar-like space that served as the restaurant's prep kitchen.

The architecture was admittedly impressive. The subtle attention to detail gave the meticulously remodeled space a feeling as if it had always been there. Even as a cynic of the kind of vast and sundry forms of cultural appropriation shamelessly on display[285] in

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[285] I managed to get a copy of the building's "walking tour" instructions for employees. In addition to the images that link the present incarnation of the building to its own past, the instructions boast, among other notes, that the "Re-milled wood around the bar is from a dismantled barrel house a the Jim Beam

Minos Cafe, I have to concede that once I was fully immersed in the restaurant's space, its astounding and extraordinary impudence was awe inspiring—and for a second—nearly won me over. The abstracted sensibility of the space, however, did not strike me as an authentic preservation of the building's noted history, but instead imbued the restaurant with a fantastical whimsy. As one Yelp user noted of the ambience in his review of Minos Cafe:

> Nothing is left to chance at this charming restaurant with pleasing interior decor and and (sic) outdoor seating that exudes the lost European way of life (eat, drink and be merry).

Minos Cafe did have an indistinctly European, almost Parisian bistro-like ambiance. Yet, for a building in downtown Portland, the vaguely European atmosphere—rather than provide the restaurant with an air of authenticity—exposed its superficiality. Thus, coupled with the fact that Minos Cafe was part of a regional service industry conglomerate, the clearly calculated—yet ineffective—attempt to instill an authentic atmosphere in the space guaranteed the restaurant a status outside the elite restaurant hierarchy of Portland. However, the fact that Minos Cafe was free of the pressure and scrutiny of the city's critical infrastructure did not—as I would quickly discover—mean its workers were liberated from the multifaceted demands of external surveillance.

On the Job? My First Day in Minos Cafe

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distillery in Kentucky," and that the "Grand Chandeliers…came from Egypt. Not antiques, but sensational." This architectural bricolage gives the building a historical—but imprecise—feel.

The Friday prior to my arrival in Portland, a random city health inspector found a series of code violations and gave Minos Cafe a score of 79 out of a possible 100.[286] The grade was a major concern, as a score in the seventies meant the restaurant barely passed the inspection and another random inspection was necessary in order to ensure the violations were rectified. The main violation the inspector found was that a cooling drawer in the upstairs kitchen was not able to lower to the required temperature and had been operating at a temperature deemed hazardous to the food contained within it. The restaurant staff had to immediately throw out all of the food contained in the cooler in full view of the inspector, meaning they also had to quickly prep food to resupply that station in order to complete the orders coming in from customers. More importantly, however, Sal and Taylor, as managers of the restaurant, had to attempt to quickly schedule a company to repair the unit and explain the embarrassing low score to upper management.

      The stress induced by the low inspection score was evident the moment I arrived with Taylor for my first day of work on the Tuesday following the inspection. As we walked through the front door of the restaurant, Sal rushed toward us and quietly informed Taylor that the repairperson had not arrived as scheduled. Taylor immediately called the company and was informed their service workers were overscheduled and they would get there as soon as possible. It was not the answer he wanted to hear. A follow-up inspection could occur at any time and the unit was not operational. On top of that, Taylor was clearly in state of hypervigilance due to the immanent return of the inspector, and my presence compounded his stress. "I need you to stay here in the office and complete a food handler's test on the county website before I can allow you in the

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[286] A score below 70 means the restaurant must immediately shut down all operations and is not allowed to reopen before correcting all issues and passing a later inspection.

kitchen," Taylor informed me as he inputted the prior weekend's low revenue figures into the corporate database. "I cannot afford to have the inspector show up with you in the kitchen without a license, I'm not sure they'd understand your research position." After briefly studying the county's food handler's handbook, I passed the test, printed my license, and went upstairs to find Taylor. "I passed with a perfect score," I joking gloated to him. "Did you cheat?" he asked me. "No," I responded, "I took it seriously—I actually learned some valuable information." He laughed and mockingly said, "You should've just cheated. They allow you to have the handbook open at the same time as the exam software. Everyone cheats. It would've saved you some time."

Even with my license in hand, I spent the entire day in the upstairs kitchen observing the cooks, but not permitted to participate. Taylor was hesitant to allow me to do any work, so instead I stood in the cramped kitchen, dodging the chefs as they maneuvered around the tight space. I was painfully aware of the inconvenience my intrusion into their space caused. I was constantly in their way and there was no safe place to escape. Feeling helpless, I repeatedly asked if there was something I could to—anything, but I was met with rejection each time. The repairperson finally showed up in the late afternoon and with his presence in the already confined space, I was forced to leave. I sat at an empty table in the corner of restaurant, watching orders slowly trickle into the kitchen while Taylor oversaw the repairs being made to the cooler.

Although seated at the table and no longer in the way of the cooks, I still felt like a nuisance. A member of the wait staff brought a glass water over to me—out of pity, I assumed. Even her kind gesture led to a feeling of discomfort because as soon as the water in my glass was low, a member of the wait staff would inevitably come fill it. I was

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not there to be waited on, so it was awkward. The only respite that afternoon came during

my scheduled interview with Sal. Taylor, knowing Sal's years of experience in the

industry and the potential invaluable insight I might gain by interviewing him, asked Sal

if he would be willing to sit down and talk with me. Sal agreed to meet with me when the

service slowed. Already feeling exposed and uncomfortable at the corner table, I kept

watching the pace of the kitchen and the flow of patrons into the front door, anxiously

awaiting the chance to speak with Sal. Eventually, he walked over, took a seat and said,

"Alright, you've got thirty minutes, let's do this." The conversation was effortless and Sal

was open and honest with his answers, even admitting the limitations he felt working at

Minos Cafe:

> If I had my drothers, I wouldn't be here right now. Unfortunately I'm sixty-four-
> years-old and I would love to be somewhere else where I can utilize my skills,
> manage people, teach more. I dish wash three days a week. I dish wash, buss
> tables, I host, I seat, I greet. I do all the shit I've done in my past but that's not my
> primary job. My primary job is to dress nice, to schmooze, and to expedite. I run
> food and do wine service, all that stuff. But here it's like I'm treated like an
> hourly employee. Even though I'm the head manager, I'm not, because I have too
> many layers. And all those layers, they just don't do anything for me. It's this big
> company, I've got layers and you have to justify those layers. They make a lot of
> money, but the way I see it, the success of the restaurant is Taylor and the people
> and the sum of the parts.

I was surprised he was so honest and open with me about the downside of working in a

corporately owned restaurant. Before our conversation, I assumed he chose to work at

Minos Cafe to escape the pressures associated with working at critically acclaimed

restaurant. In my mind, I had envisioned that he took the position at Minos because it

provided him job security and the fringe benefits most independently owned restaurants

were not financially capable of offering their employees. Instead, even with all of his

accomplishments in the restaurant industry, he clearly harbored regrets about some of the

choices he made—both in his personal life and his career:

> Would you say I've drunk the Kool Aid? Maybe to some degree I have because at
> my age it would be difficult for somebody to take a risk on me, you know because
> they are going to hire somebody younger, who's going to have a little bit
> more…they'd be thinking, 'This guy is going to retire in three years.' But I'm
> good, I'm going to probably go another eight years or at least until I'm 70. The
> thought is that if I have my own restaurant, I could be successful. I mean I haven't
> had it because way back when, I had the fear of failure and having a family. At
> that time I'm thinking, "Jesus, I don't want to put myself in that situation." Part of
> it too is that's the reason for my first divorce because I wasn't around as much as
> I should have been, perhaps. And who would have, you know, the hindsight to
> stick with accounting. I often reflect and think I wish I would have never gotten
> into the business. Once you're in and you're in for a good amount of time, you're
> hooked. Then it's your life.

After listening and contemplating Sal's situation, I hesitantly turned the conversation to

Taylor, "I know you've expressed your displeasure with your current situation, do you

think Taylor's success is limited by the corporation and the fact that they have to approve

of something before he puts it on the menu as well as the fact that in this region the

corporation is such a well-known brand?" Sal responded without hesitation:

> That's part of the downside. I want to back up a second, because the other thing
> you just mentioned is he's limited in what he can do because, this goes back to the
> broader restaurant culture. You are not going to attract the culinary student to
> come here because they are going to see that there's like ten great chefs in the city
> and that's where culinary students are going whether they're coming from outside
> the state or in state. The ones that want to become something, they are going to
> want to study or work in that establishment to learn…Whereas here it's like a
> struggle. Taylor has the best staff he's had since he's been here—we've had the
> best staff since he's been here. He took those leftovers from the previous chefs
> and developed them…He can't get real creative when you're picking up, when
> there is an item on the menu and there are steps to it. You've got to limit it to
> maybe three steps…Then it's thrown in the sauté pan and boom…you do one,
> two, three steps, it's on the plate, it looks great…So Tayor is tied to that and he's
> tied to labor once again that affects the number of people you have in our kitchen,
> therefore, all the sudden he's cooking everyday, he has no time to be creative.
> Because this is the formula: You forecast your sales, you fold it into this
> computer, your computer spits it back and gives you your labor percentage for the

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day, your hours for the day, and that's what they drive this company by. And as a result, the brand is successful. I know the brand is big, but I think they could do a lot better and they'd have a better reputation, but it's not about just about food, you've got to remember. They've got music venues and they've got hotels. That stuff brings in a lot of revenue.

After our conversation—which lasted far longer than the originally promised thirty minutes—Sal went back to work and I was left at the table pondering what he had told me. Clearly, members of the critical infrastructure contribute to the cultural perception of value in the restaurant industry for consumers, but their influence is much broader as they even influence the behavior of status-conscious young cooks attempting to ascend the ranks of the restaurant hierarchy. For these young chefs, fresh out of culinary school and attempting to establish a reputation in the restaurant industry, the critical prestige of a given restaurant largely dictates their career choices. The "leftover" chefs at Minos Cafe, I thought, must not fit the mold of the entrepreneurial cooks influenced by the heightened status of the profession contemporary culture due to the valorization of chefs and cooks in popular media. What were the motivations of the cooks working in Minos Cafe, then? Was it an alternative space where they could escape, even if momentarily, the bourgeois norms impressed upon them by society? Or was it just a job? I knew I would never be able to answer these questions by merely observing the cooks work; I had to convince Taylor to let me work alongside them.

Into the Dungeon: Laboring in The Prep Kitchen

On my second day, after proving to Taylor that I was fully insured through the university and not a liability to his company, he reluctantly agreed to let me work in the prep kitchen. A celebration for the fourth anniversary of the hotel and restaurant was planned

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for the following day and a lot of employees from the corporate headquarters were scheduled to attend. Taylor ordered ribs and planned a Southern-style menu for the party. I already knew from working with him in Aurora that he was not a fan of catering events, and this "birthday party," as the company labeled it, seemed like a glorified catering event. He was not excited about it. "Find a rib rub recipe online and put it on the ribs that are on the rack in the walk in," he told me. "But I'm not sure you should do anything with knives." I nodded and sat down on the computer to find a recipe.

The sound of hip hop music filled the air as I entered the prep kitchen. Noah, a cook that I met briefly the previous morning, was working alone. He was thirty-one-years-old, but appeared much younger due to his coiffed black hair and thin build. "So, you get to work today," he said lightheartedly. "Yes, but I was told not to use sharp implements," I responded. He laughed and shook his head. "It's all this pressure from the inspection, Taylor is on edge," Noah explained. Mixing the ingredients for the rub and putting it on the ribs did not take long. Quickly, I was once again left with nothing to do. Noah had a list of tasks on a dry erase board that he needed to complete. "Here, take this," he said handing me a knife, "you can help me cube these potatoes." Without hesitation, I grabbed the knife and started helping him. We worked together for the rest of the morning, telling stories and introducing one another to our favorite independent hip hop artists using playlists from our phones connected to the kitchen's Bluetooth speaker.

Noah was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, but was adopted by a family from Utah when he was an infant. He grew up in a suburban town outside of Salt Lake City in what he described as an oppressively religious community:

> My family was extremely religious—we did all our activities with the same Mormon families and for most of my life that was all I knew. It wasn't until I did my mission in San Antonio that I experienced a different style of life and I kind of went wild. I did all the stuff I was not supposed to do on the mission. I lost my virginity, smoked pot, and basically neglected my Mormon duties.

After his two-year mission in San Antonio, his dad recognized his personal transformation and sent him to Salem, Oregon, to work with a family friend as a sales representative. He hated the job and his family's persistent attempts to "save him" through their religious dogma. Eventually, he moved to Portland to be with his pregnant girlfriend. They had another child together, but never married and ultimately separated. In Portland, he pursued a job at a talent agency because he was a fan of the Ari Gold character on the television show *Entourage.* Through persistence, he got the job and was given a few local models as clients. He worked his way up in the company and when the agency's president was sent to prison, he took over as the acting president. The job was difficult, Noah explained, largely due to its location in Portland, "I was able to get my clients local modeling jobs and roles in regional commercials, but unless you're in Los Angeles, the business is not really sustainable." Burned out, he quit the company and took a job as a dishwasher at Minos Cafe because he "wanted a mindless job." After a year working as a dishwasher, Taylor promoted him to the position of prep cook and then to morning line cook.

Noah liked food and cooking, but I could tell he was not satisfied working at Minos Cafe. He told me that for the past year he was basically homeless. He was dating a woman who was employed as a full-time house sitter, so he would move with her from house to house. "The people who can afford to hire house sitters are wealthy, so I'm usually living in mansions," he explained to me, "but it's not that great of a situation."

His transient living situation and lack of a permanent address meant he had difficulty gaining partial custody of his children. That, coupled with the fact that he had difficulty maintaining his child support obligations because he was not earning much more than minimum wage and rarely worked a full forty-hour week, meant he did not get to see his children as much as he would like to. Two of Noah's friends had recently earned a large sum of money by selling a company they started. Noah, along with those two friends, planned to open a bacon-themed food truck using wild game meat.

Admittedly, I liked Noah. He was kind and welcoming to me. His life story was interesting and I felt sorry for him. Not only did he not get to see his children as often as he wanted to, his family had also shunned him for having children out of wedlock and disaffiliating himself from the Mormon church and its way of life. Not all of his co-workers, however, shared my affection and sympathy for him. Taylor generally liked Noah, but did not feel sorry for him. "He made bad choices, man," Taylor told me after I expressed my sympathy for Noah's situation with him. "He should have known better, I mean he knocked up "a piece of shit" twice and is now dealing with the consequences." When I asked Taylor about Noah's plan for his food truck, he shrugged his shoulders and said, "I wish him nothing but luck, I mean I hope he succeeds because that would mean I taught him some valuable cooking skills, but does the world really need a food truck serving wild game bacon dishes?" Jonathan, one of two *sous* chefs at Minos, shared an even greater skepticism of Noah's food truck aspirations:

> I mean the guy has only been a cook for a year, and most of that was spent as a prep cook, and now he wants to start his own food truck? You saw him, he was in here today asking me how to make a Cuban sandwich, a *Cuban sandwich*. I think a Cuban would be a good choice to throw some bacon on, but, come on, if you

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don't know how to make a Cuban sandwich, are you really ready to own your own food truck?

I understood Jonathan's position, but his tone seemed to convey more than a simple skepticism about Noah's abilities as cook. Instead, I sensed Jonathan harbored some jealously or resentment over the fact that Noah had investors and the actual potential to succeed without really paying his dues in the industry. When I asked Taylor about this, he confirmed my opinion:

> The funny part is your talking about a guy like Jonathan, who has little-to-no motivation—his motivation level is less than most cooks. He will never be an executive chef if you ask me. And if he is it will be somewhere that doesn't fucking matter. I mean, that sounds terrible, and I'm friends with him, but the bottom line is there's a sense of jealously in there because if Noah's down there [in the prep kitchen] writing those menus and then a year later he's successful, like I wouldn't give a fuck. I would actually pat myself on the back because I gave him the opportunity. And he's doing something that's not related to what I'm doing anyway, doesn't matter. But Jonathan would be jealous because he never has fucking motivation to make any of that happen.

Taylor's harsh judgment of Jonathan's lack of motivation was warranted. On my fourth day in Portland, after Jonathan attended a concert with Taylor and me at a venue owned by the same company as Minos Cafe, he showed up late to work and then proceeded to leave after working for only an hour. While working the line, he claimed he received a phone call from his wife saying she was ill and needed to go to the hospital. His wife may have indeed been ill, but I had some prior insight that made me question the sincerity of Jonathan's story. The day of the concert, I worked alone with Jonathan in the prep kitchen and asked him what time he was scheduled to work the following day. It was an innocent question. I was simply curious to know if I would be working with him again in the prep kitchen. Jonathan's answer was a bit surprising, "I'm scheduled as one of the morning line cooks, which means I'm expected in around seven, but between you me,

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I'm planning to go all-out tonight, so, more than likely, I'll be in around ten." After showing up late and leaving early, Jonathan called in the following day to let Taylor know his wife was still ill and he needed to stay home to look after her and their kids. It was a Sunday, so the kids could not go to their regular daycare, and Jonathan said his wife was not in a state capable of taking care of them.

The Birthday Party

Hal and Taylor were visibly stressed the morning of the scheduled birthday party, so I immediately sought refuge in the prep kitchen. Noah and Jonathan were already at work in the space. By then, the two of were comfortable letting me handle nearly any of the prep work, so I set up my station and started on the first task on the dry erase board that was not checked off as complete. I thoroughly enjoyed the freedom and pace of the prep kitchen. The close working quarters ensured a certain level of interaction between the cooks. We talked music, food, women, and—for lack of better or more accurate expression—gave each other shit. At first, I was the brunt of the jokes. My lack of experience naturally led to me asking questions the cooks considered naïve. I initially took their jokes in stride, but eventually, as I grew more comfortable with them, I started to join in on the game. When Jonathan rolled his eyes at the way I was stirring a desert, I quickly quipped, "Did you just roll your eyes at me?" Jonathan started to defend himself, but I sarcastically interrupted, "If there's a better way to do this, why didn't you tell me before I started instead of letting me make a fool of myself and then acting like you were surprised it happened—you know this is all new to me." We all laughed at the absurdity of the situation. Later, when Noah and I were in the alone in the walk-in at the same time,

he said, "I'm so glad you called him out on his eye roll, he does that to everyone all the time and I've been waiting for someone to call him on it." It was apparent to me at that point that once I started to join in on the jabs, I was fully accepted as one of *them.* I was not a cook, but I had gained their approval and was no longer merely an interloper in their space. Plus, through the hours I spent downstairs in the prep kitchen I had actually gained some practical knowledge and skill. I made mistakes, a lot of them, but the other cooks were not flawless in their work either.

In the middle of completing our prep work, Taylor rushed in and announced that he needed someone to help him carry in cakes for the birthday celebration. Noah, Jonathan, and I looked at each other for a moment before Taylor impatiently said, "Fuck it, Justin, you're coming with me." On our way upstairs, Taylor complained about the atmosphere upstairs, "I hate when all these corporate people come in here, everyone's on edge knowing they have to put on a performance for them." After we brought in the cakes, Sal and Taylor debated about where to store them. Taylor had placed them on the edge of the kitchen counter where food is placed in when it is ready to be expedited. Sal rushed over, "Those can't be left there, we need that space for expediting." Taylor responded, "Calm down Sal, I wasn't planning on leaving them there." "Well, we need to find a place to store them," Sal responded tersely. Sal, as the general manager, clearly felt an even greater pressure to impress the corporate employees. I could not wait to get back to the basement. "Do you need anything else from me," I asked Taylor. "No, you're fine." I rushed back down to the prep kitchen. Jonathan asked me if it was chaos upstairs. "Yes, a bit, they cannot decide where to put the cakes," I told him. Jonathan shook his head, "Jesus, how hard is it to store a cake? I wish that was all I had to worry about."

Shortly after I had hastily retreated to the calm atmosphere of the prep kitchen, Dustin, the morning line cook, came downstairs with the cakes and put them in the walk-in. "Man, they are losing their shit up there," he said. "I'm glad I'm down here today," Noah responded.

After Noah's shift ended, Jonathan and I were left alone in the prep kitchen. The basic prep work was mostly complete, so I cubed potatoes while Jonathan filleted and deboned a salmon. It was our first time working alone together in the prep kitchen, so I took the opportunity to find out more about him. Jonathan started culinary school after working at an electronic supply store. He wanted a new career path and liked to cook, so with the encouragement of his parents, he enrolled in a culinary program at a local community college. He envisioned cooking as his ticket to explore the world, thinking he could find a cooking job to support himself anywhere in the world he traveled. During school, however, he met his wife and his plans changed. He took a job at a lower-status, yet independently owned, local restaurant and bar after he finished school, which happened to be Taylor's favorite spot to drink and unwind after work. The two became friends after spending time there and when Jonathan wanted a new job, Taylor hired him at Minos Cafe.

Jonathan, however, did not envision a lengthy career for himself as a chef. He liked to cook, but did not like the odd and unpredictable hours now that he had children. Instead, he sought out the *sous* chef position at Minos Cafe to enhance his experience and resume in the hopes of landing a job teaching at a culinary school:

> I'm still in contact with my mentor at the school I went to and I'd like to go back there or a place like it to teach. I like the idea of still being involved in the

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industry and using my skills, but I think the hours, benefits, and atmosphere of working in an educational environment would better suit me.

I now understood why Taylor was unimpressed with Jonathan's work ethic. Jonathan was not there because he was passionate about the position; instead, he viewed it as a necessary step to get to where he truly wanted to be. Taylor, having hired Jonathan, viewed his poor work ethic as an affront to their friendship and believed Jonathan's casual regard for his role at Minos made him look bad because his cooks constantly complained about Jonathan's lack of effort and did not want to work the line with him. Jonathan mentioned to me that he had heard that Dustin—a young cook who was openly one of Taylor's favorite employees—had complained about him to Taylor. Jonathan, in turn, complained to me that Dustin received unwarranted preferential treatment and was "just a young punk who thinks he knows everything, but there's a big difference between being a fast line cook and a good cook." When I casually mentioned Jonathan's dislike of Dustin—who admittedly came across as arrogant and entitled to me as well—Taylor defended Dustin and immediately transitioned our conversation to a criticism of Jonathan:

> [Jonathan] doesn't get it. The funny part is Jonathan hates him. Well, Jonathan shares a lot of his attributes, except he's twelve years older. I saw a guy who did not share the attributes that Dustin has when Jonathan was his age. Dustin shows up on time at six in the morning—he'll come in early—because he knows that he has prep due by seven. He will fucking cook his heart out until he gets bitchy and whiny when it gets slow and then I will send him home. He's twenty-three, who gives a fuck? That doesn't mean anything to me.

A few days after this exchange, I was again working with Noah in the prep kitchen. Noah and Dustin were friends both at work and outside of it. Dustin walked into the prep kitchen and complained to Noah that a former *sous* chef at Minos Cafe had come by his

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apartment the night before and told him he needed to get his shit together. "I mean, what the fuck, I've been working hard and asking Taylor for a raise or promotion," Dustin proclaimed. "Fuck him, some of us are happy with our lives just the way they are," Noah assured him.

Noah's response confounded me. Nearly all of the cooks I met at Minos Cafe were in some way dissatisfied, either due to the work itself, the pay, or their general positions in life. Noah himself expressed his entrepreneurial aspirations and desire to improve his personal situation. Even Sal and Taylor expressed their displeasure with the daily corporate responsibilities and interference they experienced at Minos. Yet, on some level, the two kitchens at Minos—particularly the prep kitchen—provided a type of sanctuary from the pressures and problems of the outside world. Once on the job, the kitchen offered camaraderie and a creative outlet. Although Sal criticized the creative constraints inherent in running a corporately controlled restaurant like Minos Cafe, the chefs were still creating good food from scratch on a daily basis. It was tough and surprisingly physical work—I developed a large blister in the thenar area of my hand from chopping, suffered numerous burns, and my legs and feet ached at the end of each day—but it was also rewarding. I thoroughly enjoyed the escape offered by working in a prep kitchen with no windows and or other obvious way to gauge the passage of time. It was surprising to me how fast the time passed as I aided in the completion of the daily prep list. Yet, due to my lack of skill and the experience necessary to work in harmony with a group of cooks manning different stations, I was not allowed to work on the line upstairs. In the upstairs kitchen the cooks were constantly on "stage," performing—consciously or not—for the patrons that surrounded their workspace. They

also faced greater pressure due to the fast paced environment, the expectations of both quality and brevity from consumers, and the oversight of management.

Conclusion

In 2000, Victor Valle and Rodolfo Torres argued, "Throughout the restaurant industry, but especially in the style-setting nouvelle restaurants, Latino and immigrant workers play the role of unskilled physical labor while college- and academy-trained chefs play the role of culinary artists."[287] The fact that the publication of their book coincided with the release of *Kitchen Confidential* is telling. Bourdain's exposure of the chef underground in his memoir transformed the popular image of chefs. Chefs became *cool*. Culinary media had already made some "chefs" stars, but Bourdain's authentic representation of the deviant lifestyle of the chef underground promoted a very different kind of celebrity chef. No longer constrained to standard television demonstrations, Bourdain's memoir and subsequent media productions "brought chefs out of the kitchen and into the mainstream," and in so doing "made cooking look like an attractive, exciting career choice, instead of a menial job."[288] The glorification of chefdom in popular media led many young members of the middle-class to seek a career in the restaurant industry. In 2011, enrollment at for-profit culinary schools had risen twenty percent per year since 2009.[289] This professionalization of the restaurant industry has resulted in significant

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[287] Victor M. Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres, *Latino Metropolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 71.

[288] Gwen Hyman, "The Taste of Fame: Chefs, Diners, Celebrity, Class," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 8, no.3 (2008): 45.

[289] I attempted to contact all of the leading culinary schools in the country seeking enrollment data. Only one responded to my inquiries. In an email, the a senior vice president for the company wrote, "Good morning Mr. Bergh – we will not be able to supply you with that information, but wish you the best in your

changes in the recruitment of restaurant employees. Instead of hiring Latino or immigrant

workers for low-end positions, chefs can hire young culinary graduates for the same low

hourly salaries, or even recruit interns willing to work for free in critically acclaimed

restaurants in order to both gain knowledge and experience as well as parlay the

restaurant's prestige into a paying job at another establishment.[290]

In the years following Bourdain's memoir, competition television shows like *Iron

Chef, Top Chef, Hell's Kitchen,* and even *The Taste*—co-hosted and co-produced by

Bourdain—promised aspiring chefs money, fame, and the potential of gaining entry into

the elite global restaurant hierarchy. Taylor admits the seduction of fame and cultural

status has altered the type of individuals entering the industry:

> Before all the hype, your parents wouldn't even want you to become a chef. The
> whole media jumble has glorified the position. I don't even tell people I'm a chef.
> I never did that even when I was a *sous* chef when I first had a chef involved in
> my title…I'm a cook. That's what it comes down to. I'm a cook that has to point
> fingers. Sometimes, I don't want to be in that realm. I'd rather be a cook than a
> chef to be honest. I like the cooking aspect that much. Ten to twelve years ago,
> cooks were branded like criminals or refugees. There were still great chefs out
> there doing great things, but they didn't get the hype back then. The people that
> are on these foods shows, half of them were not or have never worked in a
> professional kitchen.

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dissertation." For information on the enrollment data cited here, see Kayla Webley, "*Top Chef* Dreams:
Are Cooking Schools a Rip-Off?" *Time.com,* July 27, 2011. http://content.time.com/time/nation/
     article/0,8599,2085467,00.html [accessed July 23, 2016].
     [290] The changes in labor expectations in the restaurant industry are readily apparent in a *New York
Times* article titled, "Not Enough Cooks in the Kitchen." In the article, the author quotes many chefs that
complain that they cannot attract skilled cooks for their entry-level positions. Ultimately, the article
attributes unrealistic job expectations brought about in large part by food media, generation mobility, and
the unwillingness of young cooks to work their way up to the level they expect to start at. The article never
mentions Latino or immigrant cooks, but instead focuses entirely on "young cooks" coming out of culinary
school. According to the author, "Cooks joining the profession now are more particular about the kitchens
they want to work in, better equipped to move from job to job and from city to city, less willing to work
long hours for low wages and more impatient to rise." For more, see Julia Moskin, "Not Enough Cooks in
the Kitchen," *New York Times,* October 20, 2015.

When I questioned whether the notoriety is good or bad, Taylor remained ambivalent. On

the one hand he benefits from the exposure and popularity of chefs because it generates a

broad cultural interest in fine dining and eating out, which provides him job security. Yet,

it also creates problems for him in his training and maintaining good cooks. He pointed to

Noah as an example, who quit without notice after I left Portland:

> Noah's a piece of shit. I mean, I gave him the opportunity to cook. He was a
> dishwasher. Which I don't mean in a derogatory way, but he was a dishwasher at
> thirty, not a dishwasher at eighteen, you know? So if they're a reliable
> dishwasher, you give them a chance to cook as motivation and hope they are
> young enough to have aspirations and maybe get a grasp on the fact that
> cooking's cool. Noah grasped onto the fact that food is cool, but he's got kids and
> he was older and didn't want to put in the effort or work. He just wants to do his
> own thing.

When I asked Taylor to compare the work ethic and ambitions of the cooks in Aurora to

the cooks Portland, he was quick to answer:

> When it comes down to it, say for instance, Violet and Vicky, they just want
> fucking money. So they are malleable in the sense that they will, if you tell them
> to do something—and inside they are going to hate it—but you know what, they
> are going to do it as good as anybody here because they want the money. In
> Portland, you get cooks who went to culinary school and they think they're going
> to be fucking Gordon Ramsey or some shit, I don't know like Dan Baber,
> whatever. Doesn't matter. They have these grandiose fucking ideas when they are
> coming from a different background. I mean Violet and Vicky came from shit.
> Look at it from this perspective, you saw it. Any of the cooks in Aurora that you
> met, they all cared for the most part, and they have worked in Florida,
> Arizona…all those places that are billionaire's boys clubs, you know? And the
> people they are cooking for probably don't want them here, unless they are legal.
> That's the fucking hypocrisy of the whole thing, it's that the people I worked with
> in Aurora I saw as co-workers and friends, but the food they're putting out at the
> places they work, for the most part are for people who, more than likely, are anti
> the idea of them even performing those tasks.

Taylor's passion for the people he worked with in Aurora was evident when I was there.

Yet, it made me curious about the cooks he worked with in Portland, who were all young

men—almost all of them white—between the ages of twenty and thirty-five and. If he felt

white chefs felt entitled, why did Taylor not hire a more diverse staff? Is this evidence of

a larger displacement of marginalized cooks and chefs due to the rapid

professionalization of the restaurant industry? Maybe the lack of diversity in Minos Cafe

was due to the fact that it was a corporate run restaurant and the people in charge were

cautious of hiring immigrant workers due to questions over their legal status. Yet, I find

that hypothetical explanation insufficient in explaining the overwhelming presence of

white, male cooks in Minos Cafe as well as Parvus. As Valle and Torres argue,

restaurants function "as important gateways and clearinghouses for global labor

recruitment," which positions restaurant work as an important transnational enterprise

that is largely undocumented.[291] If, in 2000, Latino and immigrant workers made up the

backbone of the restaurant industry as Valle and Torres point out, what other explanation

could justify the complete absence of immigrant cooks in both Minos Cafe and Parvus

beyond a rapid and substantial influx of young, middle-class individuals seduced by the

glorification of the restaurant industry in popular media and culture? Perhaps Taylor's

above quotation, which alludes to the inferential discrimination faced by guestworkers

may provide an alternative—yet not unrelated—answer.

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[291] Valle and Torres, *Latino Metropolis*, 70.

CONCLUSION

On March 28, 2014, *The New York Times Magazine* published a feature article about a

fifteen-year-old cook gaining notoriety in his native Los Angeles and across the

country.[292] By the age of fifteen, with the support of his parents—who are reportedly well

connected in the area's entertainment industry—Flynn McGarry, who, as the article

notes, "prefers not to think of himself as a kid chef, but rather a kid who happens to have

aspired to be a Michelin-starred chef since he was 12,"[293] had already amassed an

impressive résumé. At the age of eleven, he began hosting a supper club with a $160-per-

person entry fee in his parents' home, which was modified to provide Flynn a space in

which to conceptualize and execute his elaborate tasting menus:

> When the counters in the kitchen proved too high, they made him a prep kitchen
> in the dining room that was modeled after [chef Thomas] Keller's at French
> Laundry. When McGarry decided he wanted a private space to create menu ideas,
> his dad constructed a kitchen in his bedroom to resemble Alinea's in Chicago.
> They redid the electricity, built the tables and removed the closet doors to convert
> it to a pantry; McGarry would get an induction burner for a birthday, a vacuum
> sealer for Christmas. When McGarry eventually visited the restaurant, he
> remarked, "This is what I put in my bedroom."[294]

McGarry did not simply visit Alinea, a three-starred Michelin restaurant, he *staged* in the

restaurant's kitchen, working alongside its renowned chef Grant Achatz. In addition to

McGarry's experience working in Alinea, according to the article he also *staged* at Next

(also run by Achatz) during his time in Chicago and had *staged* a total of five times at

chef Daniel Humm's Eleven Madison Park in New York City. McGarry had even

managed to secure a gig cooking on the White House lawn during the annual Easter Egg

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[292] Carina Chocano, "The Kid's Table," *The New York Times Magazine*, March 28, 2014, 33-39.
[293] *Ibid,* 35.
[294] *Ibid,* 36.

Roll after working with then-White House pastry chef Bill Yosses in the kitchen of Modernist Cuisine's The Cooking Lab in Seattle at a charity dinner event.

At the time of the article's publication, McGarry was working with an experienced television producer on a documentary reality series in which McGarry would travel the globe as cameras captured him working alongside star chefs in many of the best kitchens in the world. After completing this project, he planned to move to New York when he turned seventeen to work at "Eleven Madison Park or somewhere like it for a year, maybe a year and a half, an then start work on his restaurant by 19."[295] McGarry's experience and self-promotion at such a young age point to the stark transformation of the status of chefdom in contemporary popular culture. The professional kitchen is no longer a reserved site of refuge for immigrants, felons, and various other cultural misfits in most metropolitan areas of the United States. Instead, the valorization of chefs and cooks in popular media has created an exalted status for the small number of chefs able to reach the zenith of the culinary industry, and has contributed to a surge of young middle- and upper-class individuals—like Flynn McGarry—entering into the restaurant business with the hope of following their route to stardom. The ongoing cultural valorization of chefs and cooks has contributed to the dissolution of the chef underground by transforming the daily lives of those who work in the restaurant industry, including altering the make-up of the individuals working the lines, prepping the food, and washing the dishes in restaurants in across the U.S. In addition, the cultural valorization of professional kitchen workers effectively obfuscates the structural and social inequalities that exist in the food production system. Bourdain's elucidation of the chef underground

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[295] *Ibid,* 39.

and the subsequent cultural valorization of chefs and cooks effectively perform "the classic illusionist effect of the fetish that Marx described over a century ago"[296] by concealing the dangerous, degrading, and often intentionally hidden labor performed by those at "the bottom" of the U.S. food production industry.

Legibility and the Dissolution of the Chef Underground

Much like the "innumerable subcultural manifestations"[297] identified in the cultural studies project, the chef underground was predicated on a certain disillusionment with the norms and conditions established by a capitalist way of life. However, unlike most subcultural manifestations, the chef underground was not based upon an identifiable "style" or "fashion" meant to facilitate its members' distinction from—and materialize their disillusionment with—capitalist society (although no doubt many within the subculture did share visible similarities). Instead, the chef underground was rooted in a shared dedication to an alternative way of life, namely retreating to kitchens filled with like-minded individuals in order to find solitude and escape from the daily pressures of contemporary society. Most chefs and cooks, as Anthony Bourdain explains, "probably got in the business in the first place because interacting with normal people in a normal workspace was impossible or unattractive…[m]any of [them] don't know how to behave in public—and don't care to find out."[298] The chef underground—as opposed to subcultures based on an overt alternative or oppositional style—did not provide visible

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[296] Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, *Greening the Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 89.

[297] Jim McGuigan, "The Politics of Cultural Studies and Cool Capitalism," *Cultural Politics* 2, no. 2 (2006): 150.

[298] Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000)*, xiv*-xv.

resistance or explicit opposition to capitalism or hegemonic bourgeois society. Instead, "members" of the chef underground retreated to the kitchen in order to perform and confirm their identities outside of the public gaze, or as Bourdain put it, they preferred to live their lives "behind closed doors."[299]

Bourdain's exposure of the chef underground, however, altered its very function and the conditions of existence for its loose network of adherents. Following the success of Bourdain's memoir, the chef underground instead became an identifiable cultural signifier, attracting both individuals interested in adopting its subcultural mores as a means of establishing their own distinct identities, as well as astute members of the cultural industries who recognized in the alternative subculture a new avenue through which to expand their means of capital accumulation. Thus, in his elucidation and the subsequent popular dissemination of the chef underground, Bourdain effectively proscribed its continued existence by promoting chefdom as a glamorous occupation and, importantly, a ready-made alternative form of existence.

The Pursuit and Construction of Identity

Within cultural studies, meaning and identity are not understood as fixed, but instead the result of shifting cultural systems of representation "through which we represent the world to ourselves and one another."[300] Although these systems of representation determine, in the end, the way individuals experience and interpret their existence, the fact that meanings are always subject to transformation and the systems are never wholly

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[299] *Ibid,* xiv.
[300] Stuart Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2, no. 2 (1985): 103.

fixed or closed leaves open the possibility for resistance and the generation of individual

subjectivity. Subjectivity, in this sense, is understood not as individual autonomy *per se*,

but instead as an individual's ability to identify and find meaning through the forging of

social alliances. This "cultural process," as John Fiske argues, "is the generation and

circulation meanings and pleasures: these meanings and pleasures can only be generated

at the point where the individual dissolves into the social."[301] Although this process

occurs under the auspices of the capitalist social and economic structure, for Fiske

meaning is not always ideologically forced upon a passive individual. Instead, individual

meaning is determined by a person's social and material history experienced "through

communal social formations and discursive practices."[302] In this way, identity is

understood as a "project, a constant repetition of stylized acts that are not founded on any

secure structure, but instead are enmeshed in constantly changing, socially constructed

forces."[303] Consequently, while the formation of identity through social relations is

subject to the influence of a dominant ideology, these social allegiances are also capable

of presenting a challenge to hegemony through the formation of oppositional meanings.

 Scholars, however, all too often view the pursuit of individual identity and social

distinction as a natural and intrinsic human endeavor.[304] As Marie Moran asserts:

> Even theorists who assert the socially constructed, inessential nature of personal
> and social identity nonetheless assume that the *search* for identity, or the
> collective or individual attempt to build, consolidate, mark, or construct an
> identity—however "fluid", "negotiated" or "fictive" that identity might be—is a

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[301] John Fiske, "Critical Response: Meaningful Moments," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5 (1988), 247.

[302] Fiske, "Meaningful Moments," 247.

[303] Greg Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (2007): 5.

[304] See Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1-47; Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008).

human or social capacity that pre-existed our extensive reflection on what exactly an "identity" is.[305]

Contrary to this hegemonic understanding of the genesis of the human pursuit of individual identity, Moran argues that "what we now think of routinely as 'personal identity' actually only emerged with the explosion of consumption in the late twentieth century."[306] As such, "The idea of identity, as we now know it, cannot be separated from the cultural political economy of the capitalist societies in which it came to prominence."[307] Thus, whereas the professional kitchen did not originally provide a means of establishing a unique and culturally recognizable identity or facilitate the means of individual distinction for members of the chef underground, once their subcultural way of being was exposed by Bourdain, *being* a chef or cook took on a new cultural meaning. Once the individual dispositions of the chef underground were "dissolve[d] into the social" understanding of chefdom, *becoming* a cook enabled those seeking to build a distinct identity a new method through which to do so. Likewise, for status-seeking consumers, consuming the food produced by *cool* chefs or cooks that represented a newly venerated alternative subculture provided a novel way to accumulate cultural capital and acquire social distinction. Finally, for the capitalist cultural industries, the exposure of a subculture composed of individuals opposed to the capitalist way of life provided a means of incorporating—and thereby neutralizing—a previously illegible alternative mode of existence and also presented an opportunity to further expand capital accumulation by promoting and profiting on the dissatisfaction created by the capitalist system. Thus, rather than present a challenge to hegemony, once popularized, members

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[305] Marie Moran, *Identity and Capitalism*, (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 3.
[306] *Ibid*, 4.
[307] *Ibid.*

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of the chef underground were largely displaced by individuals seeking to build a distinct

identity and a culturally venerated career through the appropriation of a once alternative

way of life. In the process, the new breed of chefs and cooks—replete with their own

overt subcultural style and putative alternative identities—have contributed to the

articulation of *cool* chefs with young, rebellious, and innovative white males in popular

culture.

Bourdain and the Popular Representation of Chef and Cooks

In both his television shows and best-selling books, Bourdain has consistently

acknowledged and lauded the work of immigrant chefs and cooks, whom he describes as

"the backbone of the American restaurant business."[308] Bourdain, however,

acknowledges that the influx of young, white male chefs has led to a transformation

within the restaurant industry:

> Lately, things have changed…a little. The off-the-books, below-minimum-wage illegal has to some extent disappeared from view, at least in the good restaurants I worked in. The strata of Latino labor has enlarged to include sauté, grill, and even sous-chef positions. But you don't see too many chefs of French or Italian or even "New American" restaurants with a last name like Hernandez or Perez or Garcia. Owners, it seems, still shrink from having a mestizo-looking chef swanning about the dinning room of their two- or three-star French eatery—even if the candidate richly deserves the job. Language skills are not the issue. Chances are, Mexicans or Ecuadorans speak English a hell of a lot better than most Americans speak Spanish (or French for that matter). It's…well…we *know* what it is, don't we? It's racism, pure and simple. I'd go on, more than happy to open the *next* can of worms—the How come I don't see African Americans in good restaurant kitchens? question—but I'll leave that to another, more reasoned advocate, hopefully one with better answers than I have.[309]

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[308] Anthony Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits: Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bones* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006.

[309] *Ibid,* 45-46.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, Bourdain's unequal representation of white male chefs in the "Brooklyn" episode of *No Reservations* reproduced the historical devaluation of the culinary contributions of Black, immigrant, and female chefs and cooks. Bourdain's reluctance to "open the *next* can of worms" is indicative of his failure to regularly feature successful Black chefs on *No Reservations* and in his various other media productions. Instead, Bourdain's visits to culturally venerated restaurants almost always reflect—and reproduce—the racist stereotypes that contribute to the cultural articulation of *cool* chefdom with white masculinity.

The social construction and continued circulation of the stereotypical image of the cool chef as both white and male contributes to the very racist proclivities present in the culinary industry that preclude minority chefs and cooks from attaining a greater status within it. Bourdain may openly lament the racism that works to relegate non-white chefs and cooks to lower-status positions in the restaurant industry, but his hesitancy to advocate for change in the above passage creates the impression that the culinary system is in some way fixed and merely reflective of historically established social and culinary industry inequalities. Yet, his reluctance to critically reflect on the absence of Black chefs in acclaimed restaurants in his writing and the related absence of Black chefs in his television shows—even if one may claim that the lack of Black chefs in Bourdain's shows merely reflects the broader conditions of the industry—contributes to the reproduction of the cultural understanding chefdom and who is deserving of status and recognition within the restaurant industry. Bourdain's representation—and reproduction—of chefs as stereotypically white and male has real, material consequences for those who consume his media productions. As Stuart Hall explains,

> Every time you see this kind of image, these are the limited range of
> characteristics, which one assumes is going to be implicated in the image. It's
> how a stereotype functions. People have assumed that therefore what this is doing
> is a powerful way of circulating in the world a very limited range of definitions of
> who people can be, of what they can do, what are the possibilities in life, what are
> the natures of constraints on them. I mean, the image is producing not only
> identification…it's actually producing knowledge; what we know about the world
> is how we see it represented.[310]

Bourdain's avoidance of "opening the can of worms" that is the racist oppression of

Black people within and beyond the culinary industry contributes to what Hall refers to as

the "closure in representation" that effectively "naturalizes the representation to the point

where you cannot see that anybody ever produced it."[311] Instead, the representation

becomes an entrenched form of cultural "common sense," or a hegemonic belief that the

social inequalities and practices that the stereotypical image represents are simply how

things have always been and will continue to be.

Despite Bourdain's reluctance or unwillingness to adequately address—let alone

contest—the racial oppression of Black chefs and cooks, his repeated praise of the work

ethic and cooking ability of "Latino" immigrants is well documented. In fact, he has

repeatedly criticized what he perceives as the entitlement of white chefs coming out of

culinary schools and their unwillingness to accept low-level positions in the industry and

has frequently used this observation as evidence of the necessity of immigrant labor in

the culinary industry.[312] Yet, according to the to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, of

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[310] Stuart Hall, "Representation and the Media" (paper presented at the Media Education Foundation:
Challenging Media, Northampton, MA, 2007): 20.

[311] *Ibid*, 21

[312] See Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits*, 46. Also, in the first episode of season five of *No Reservations,*
Bourdain visited the Mexican city of Puebla with Carlos, the cook that succeeded him as Executive Chef at
Les Halles. In the episode Bourdain extols the virtues of the illegal immigrants from Mexico he's worked
with and visits Carlos's family in an attempt to understand why Mexican immigrants "cook so well."

the approximately 11,037,983 people employed in the restaurant industry in 2015[313], only

1,772,373 were foreign-born.[314] In contrast, estimates of the migrant farm laborer

population in the U.S. range from 750,000 to 12 million and it is further estimated that 81

percent of farmworkers in the U.S. are immigrants, 95 percent of whom were born in

Mexico.[315] These migrant farmworkers, not the immigrant chefs and cooks, are the real

"backbone" of the contemporary U.S. food production industry. Consequently, while

Bourdain's support of immigrant chefs and cooks may be admirable, his focus on the

immigrants employed in the restaurant industry effectively masks the extreme labor

exploitation and inequalities that exist within the broader U.S. food production system.

In his ethnographic study of migrant farmworkers in the Skagit Valley region of

Washington State, Seth M. Holmes described the living conditions he and the migrant

workers were forced to endure:

> During the first and last phases of my fieldwork, I lived in a 10-by-12 foot unit
> that the farm calls a *cabina* (cabin) in the middle of the largest labor camp on the
> farm. It might be more appropriately called a "shack." Normally, a minimum of
> one family would share a shack of this size. Mine had one old, damp mattress
> with rust stains from the springs on which it rested, a tiny sink with orange-
> colored water from separate hot and cold hoses, an old and smelly refrigerator,
> and a camping-style dual-burner gas stove. The bathrooms and showers were
> shared in separate, large, plywood buildings with concrete floors. Shacks like
> these, where thousands of workers and their families live in the county, are most
> often hidden away from public view, in compounds behind the farm company's
> tree stands or behind other farm buildings.[316]

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[313] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "All Employees, Thousands, Food Services and Drinking Places, Seasonally Adjusted." http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES7072200001?data_tool=XGtable [accessed August 25, 2016].

[314] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics—2015," http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/forbrn.pdf [accessed August 25, 2016].

[315] Seth M. Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

[316] *Ibid,* 47-48.

Unlike the "Latino" immigrants Bourdain referred to, the farmworkers that made up the

berry-picking labor force of this large family owned and operated farm were indigenous

Triqui and Mixtec people from the Southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. The migrant

farmworkers spoke little-to-no Spanish (let alone English), but instead spoke the

languages native to their Triqui or Mixtec heritage. As Holmes explains, the indigenous

roots and language barriers of the Triqui and Mixtec people contributed to their low

status positions on the farm:

> The indigenous Mexicans live in the migrant camps because they do not have the
> resources to rent apartments in town. Because they live in the camps, they are
> given only the worst jobs on the farm. Unofficial farm policies and practices
> subtly reinforce labor and ethnic hierarchies. The position of the Triqui workers,
> at the bottom of the hierarchy, is multiply determined by poverty, education level,
> language, citizenship status, and ethnicity. In addition, these factors produce each
> other.[317]

The indigenous farmworkers who occupy "the bottom" of both the farm and culinary

industry hierarchies are not only physically hidden from public view on the private land

on which they work, but they are also rendered culturally invisible due in part to the

contemporary cultural glamorization of chefs and the restaurant industry as well as the

related infatuation with the farm-to-table movement.

Although I argue in previous chapters that Bourdain separates himself from other

contemporary culinary celebrities through his commitment to demonstrating the violent

and unsavory aspects of food production, his revelations of the harsh realities of the

procurement of food that remain hidden from food consumers is almost always related to

the slaughter of animals for the procurement of meat. In his televised trips around the

world, he regularly engages—often reluctantly—in the killing and butchering of animals

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[317] *Ibid,* 78.

alongside the locals he encounters in order to prepare and share in a communal meal. These violent acts, however, are limited to small, family-run farms or the hunting of wild game. Not only do such practices reinforce his masculine persona, they also work to erase the even greater unsavory aspects of factory farming and the exploitative labor of migrant farmworkers that provide the majority of the food produced and consumed in the U.S. by presenting a consistently intimate image of the harvesting of foodstuff.

The conditions faced by the migrant farmworkers highlight the problems of Bourdain's focus—as well as that of the broader of the cultural and culinary industries—on the small-scale production of foodstuff and, even more often, food as a finished product. By glamorizing chefs and the food they produce, the labor conditions faced by those that provide the raw materials for professional chefs and cooks are effectively erased. In this representation of the food and restaurant industries, Bourdain contributes to what Holmes refers to as the "structural violence" imposed upon migrant farmworkers by the forces of "market rule and later channeled by international and domestic racism, classism, sexism, and anti-immigrant prejudice."[318] Thus, while Bourdain may champion immigration reform for restaurant workers, his employment of "the metacategory 'Latino',"[319] reinforces a "misrepresentation [that] supports the prevalent attitude that indigenous Mexicans are less important, even less *Mexican*, than mestizo Mexicans."[320] This devaluation of the lives of indigenous migrant farmworkers allows for the continued exploitation of their minds and bodies in order to produce the

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[318] *Ibid,* 52.
[319] *Ibid*, 100.
[320] *Ibid*, 189.

affordable commodities that sustain the U.S. food production system and the culinary industry.[321]

Notes From the Aboveground

After my visit to Portland, Taylor again switched jobs, this time to accept a position at a critically acclaimed Portland restaurant working as co-executive chef alongside a friend who co-owns the restaurant. When I asked him about his new job, he admitted that he enjoyed the freedom to consistently change and create his own menu, but was audibly stressed by the pressure of the work. The restaurant has only three full-time cooks. When I asked him how they are able to function, Taylor explained:

> I have to constantly be on my phone. I mean, we hire…there are mercenary cooks from all over the city, who because they make such a shitty wage, I mean they make twelve to thirteen bucks [per hour], maybe, working 35 hours per week. They are not getting overtime. They want to pick up shifts. That's a benefit to us depending on the person because most of the cooks that I deal with work in great places in town and they're like twenty-six. So they are younger, they can do the shit, and they are good cooks, for the most part.

When I responded that I felt bad for the cooks and their lack of pay, Taylor agreed, but did not view his temporary employment of these "mercenary cooks" as a form of exploitation, but instead saw it as a mutually beneficial exchange. "That's the thing," he responded, "they get paid cash the following Thursday, under the table."

Cooking, even in the best restaurants, is clearly not glamorous and rarely leads to stardom or six-figure salaries, so will the hype and increased interest in working as a chef or cook start to fade? Jim of Parvus, who had reached the upper-echelon of the restaurant

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[321] As Holmes details, migrant farmworkers endure the poorest health conditions in the agricultural industry. Such health problems include "increased rates of many chronic conditions, such as malnutrition, anemia, hypertension, diabetes, dermatitis, fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, anxiety, memory problems, sterility, blood disorders, dental problems, and abnormalities in liver and kidney function." For more, see Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies,* 99-103.

industry, at least in his city, was perplexed by the increased interest of working in the

professional restaurant industry. He explained:

> The quality of people, you know, cooking is not rocket science, so it will always
> have a certain element of an undereducated or menial work environment, but we
> had an intern in a couple months ago that basically dropped out of pre-med
> because she wanted to cook. It just boggled my mind. You're on the road to
> becoming a doctor, you can like meaningfully help people, or change things, and
> you did that. So obviously you're smart enough, you've got options in your life,
> so it just boggled my mind that you would work in a cramped box for twelve to
> fifteen hours a day for twelve dollars an hour, in a world that is similar to
> professional sports; the amount of people that actually make it or can do what
> they want to do is really, really small.

Jim, without explicitly saying so, seemed to believe that once the reality of daily life in a

professional kitchen sunk in for people with other "options in their li[ves]," they would

ultimately elect to pursue those other options. Taylor, likewise, doubted whether most of

the people seduced by the glamour of chefdom perpetuated in popular media had the

perseverance or work ethic to make it in the professional restaurant industry:

> In what I've seen, most of the people who drop something large like med school
> or they used to be an attorney or whatever and then enter into the restaurant
> industry, it has a high failure rate. Like this one guy I went to culinary school with
> and then I knew it would happen to him afterwards. He was an attorney, like
> thirty-two, and did well as an attorney. He drove a BMW SUV to culinary school.
> He just had this grandiose idea…when you're in an environment like an attorney
> or even med school the people you're surrounded by usually like good things…so
> this guy knew about food he always read about food. Eventually he threw caution
> to the wind. He had money to go to culinary school and it didn't matter that he
> was making nothing. I think the person that has this idea of giving up a great
> career for a culinary career, I'm not saying they all fail, but he did. The best chefs
> that I worked for did it from day one and they did it from the ground up. They
> were dishwashers and prep cooks. Then they were line cooks and then sous chefs.

Maybe the professionalization of the restaurant industry is simply temporary, and traces

of the once utopian potential of the professional kitchen remain. Such a positive

regression, however, remains unlikely since chefs are now a powerful engine of capital

production, circulation, and accumulation. Not every individual needs to find success as a

chef in order for the restaurant industry to prosper and expand. Instead, the cult of

individuality will always produce chefs capable of attracting consumers and sustaining

the industry because

> …once people are persuaded that they "have" an identity—in part by its very
> invention—they are motivated to try to find it. And in a consumer society, the
> psychological problem of finding an identity finds a ready solution in engagement
> in practices of consumption which allow for the visible marking of that identity,
> thereby "finding" and "marking" it at the same time.[322]

If status-seeking consumers continue to locate and mark their identity—at least in

part—through their ability to distinguish themselves from others in consumption, food

will likely remain a fundamental element in the project of identity construction. As any

identity project must, by its very nature, be conspicuous in order to achieve its purpose,

as long as the consumption of food continues to serve as a marker of social distinction,

the status of a restaurant's chef will remain an important means of distinguishing the

cultural value of a given culinary experience.

Chefs used to be an inconspicuous feature of the dining experience "due to the

low social status of the artisan/artist or chef relative to his employer."[323] Instead, the

ability to dine in fancy, culturally celebrated restaurants or having the means to employ a

chef in one's home—like the commissioning of fine art—traditionally served as a marker

of status. The ability of chefs mattered only in so far as the quality of the food they

produced contributed to the prestige of the dining experience, but the chefs themselves

remained obscure, often by design. "Upper-class households," as Priscilla Parkhurst

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[322] Moran, *Identity and Capitalism*, 138.
[323] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 155.

Ferguson explains, "generally situated the kitchen well away from the dining area, in a separate building altogether, in a semidetached wing or, at the very least, in the cellar."[324] Likewise, restaurants traditionally hid the often-unpleasant cooking process behind closed doors, and the dining room—not the kitchen—was the center stage for the status-seeking consumers engaging in conspicuous consumption. The cultural rise of chefs and cooks in contemporary culture, however, has altered the nature of the dining experience. "As production moved to the fore as a feature of the restaurant experience," Ferguson explains, "architects put kitchens where customers can see what's going on and who is doing what."[325] Thus, professional kitchens now function as the stage upon which the chefs perform. Perhaps the conveyer of status in the culinary industry will continue to shift and chefs may once again be relegated to an auxiliary status as another aspect of the dining experience gains prominence and cultural capital, but currently, chefs are unquestionably the stars.[326]

Like rock stars before them, the cultural status of a given chef is likely to fluctuate over time as consumers and critics seek out new chefs and culinary trends, and, due to nostalgia, inevitably return to old favorites. The promise of becoming the "hot" new chef, much like the chance of becoming the "hot" new band, will always produce a steady influx of young, aspirational cooks—like Flynn McGarry—hoping to make it big. And like the aspiring musicians, most cooks will not achieve an elite status, but instead

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[324] *Ibid,* 155.

[325] *Ibid,* 161.

[326] Sommeliers and brewmasters, for example, are gaining cultural notoriety and media attention. In particular, Dustin Wilson, after a featured role in the documentary *Somm*, earned a prominent position as the head of the wine program at Eleven Madison Park and is persistently a subject of media attention. For more, see Christopher Barnes, "'Somm' Star Dustin Wilson Is Going To Reinvent Wine Retail," *Grape Collective.com*, January 21, 2016. https://grapecollective.com/articles/somm-movie-dustin-wilson-reinvent-wine-retail [accessed August 3, 2016].

burnout or toil away in the various lower levels of the industry for the entirety of their careers. But as long as there remains the promise of hope, there will be individuals willing to endure suffering and hardship in order to chase it.[327] Moreover, the culturally—and physically—invisible farmworkers that produce the foodstuff that makes restaurant work possible will also, unfortunately, continue to face even greater hardships in their attempt to simply survive.

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[327] As McGuigan argues, "After all, capitalism has many attractions, especially insofar as it promises to realise all people's desires in consumption, though offers rather less realisation in production." See *Cool Capitalism*, 114.

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