

READING THE RESTAURANT: SOCIAL CLASS, IDENTITY, AND THE CULTURE  
OF CONSUMPTION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY FRENCH NOVEL

By

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

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The restaurant, like so many of the institutions of French modern society, developed at a very particular moment in history. In this project, I tell the story of the maturation of the restaurant and study its unique role in the social history of Paris during the nineteenth century. By examining the restaurant as a site of modernity, I illuminate its important role in precipitating class distinctions, locating the emerging consumer culture, highlighting gender differentiation, challenging prevailing views of domesticity, and revealing a debate over public and private space.

Through a close reading of the realist novel as a discourse on daily life, I intertwine cultural history and literary theory to look at some of the critical questions about the nineteenth century restaurant. I examine a sampling of novels in which the restaurant is integral to the author's narrative project. I demonstrate how Balzac uses the

restaurant in *Père Goriot* as a signifier of one's social status and how Maupassant uses the restaurant in *Bel-Ami* to differentiate gender roles. In my analysis of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and *L'Éducation Sentimentale* and of Henry Céard's *Une Belle Journée* I write about the restaurant's unique role as both a public and private space in French society by highlighting its ability to simultaneously satisfy many "appetites." I read Balzac's *Le Cousin Pons*, Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, and Huysmans' *À Vau-l'eau* through the lens of an anxious bourgeoisie trying to navigate the emerging restaurant culture of Paris. In my final chapter, I address the social issues that rose to the surface as a result of the emergence of a nineteenth century consumer society focused around the restaurant through an analysis of Baudelaire's poem "*Les Yeux des pauvres*" and Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*.

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## Introduction

From Paris to New York and on to Shanghai, restaurants can be found throughout the world in large cities and small villages alike where their setup and function are more or less the same. Dining out in a restaurant is more often considered as normal and unremarkable today as eating or drinking at home. Adam Gopnik remarks in *The Table Comes First*; “Most modern urban people mark their lives by their moments in cafés and restaurants, just as ancient people marked their time on earth by visits to the local oracle, or medieval people by pilgrimages: we are courted, spurned, recruited, hired, fired, lured to a new job, or released from an old one at a table while a waiter hovers nearby” (14). The restaurant, like so many of the institutions of modern society, developed at a very particular moment in history. It is my intention in this project to tell the story of the maturing of the restaurant and illuminate its unique role in the social history of Paris during the nineteenth century. The restaurant during the nineteenth century played an important social role just as the salon did during the eighteenth century. Unique to the urban centers of France at this time, restaurants were public spaces in which friends socialized, the bourgeoisie spent their newfound wealth, and the upper classes put on ostentatious displays. Amidst these public spectacles, restaurants were also able to provide private and intimate “cabinets” in which men entertained their mistresses, artists philosophized, and republicans discussed overthrowing the government.

In this project, I demonstrate that the restaurant in nineteenth century Paris was far more than a temple of gastronomy where chefs showed off their culinary skills. Rebecca Spang writes in *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern*

*Gastronomic Culture* that the restaurant has mostly been left out of historical studies of the nineteenth century; “By considering restaurants as little but the incidental sites of “French” culinary extravaganza, previous studies have unquestioningly accepted gastronomic literature’s own, initially quite polemical, claim for its removal from the realms of history and social analysis (as a matter of “taste” alone)” (4). By examining the restaurant as a site of modernity as Sharon Marcus examines the apartment house in *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London*, I hope to illuminate the restaurant’s important role in nineteenth century society in precipitating class distinctions, locating the emerging consumer culture, illuminating gender relations, challenging prevailing views of domesticity, and revealing a debate over public and private space.

By reading the realist novel as a discourse on daily life, I intertwine cultural history theory and literary criticism to look at some of the critical questions about the nineteenth century restaurant. I examine a sampling of novels in which the restaurant is integral to the author’s narrative project. The realist novel emerges at the same time as modern urban culture in France. Sharon Marcus notes that the relationship between the realist novel and modern urban discourse is stronger than “mere historical coincidence” (51). All of the novels I selected for this study take description of the urban environment, and with it restaurants, as important narrative tasks. Addresses, names, and specific identifiers in the narratives serve as mimetic references to the real urban landscape. These “narratives of dining,” which describe in detail dining establishments where exchanges between different individuals take place, map the urban space in terms of social types. Sharon Marcus writes, “Both the narrators and protagonists of many realist novels

deployed the same discursive approach as the authors of the *tableaux and physiologies*: emphasizing the need to contain the city's multiplicity within a unifying narrative or narratorial viewpoint" (52). The restaurants featured in these novels provide a "real" backdrop in which protagonists interact with different members of nineteenth century society.

I incorporate close readings of these novels with a study of the art, journals, newspaper articles, culinary guides, and tableaux written during this period of the restaurant's maturation. *Le Bourgeois de Paris*, *Le Temps*, *La Presse*, and *Le Siècle* printed articles, primarily during the last half of the nineteenth century, on dining culture, restaurants, the world expositions, and important French culinary figures such as Brillat-Savarin, Louis Duval, and Grimod de la Reynière. The articles in these newspapers provide accounts of the ways in which diners during the nineteenth century perceived the restaurant and the role the restaurant played in society.

It is by no means a coincidence that this period in which the restaurant developed into an important cultural institution also saw the publication of some of the first restaurant guides in France. Published intermittently throughout the nineteenth century, these restaurant guides provide insight into Parisian dining culture. Grimod de la Reynière published the *Almanach des gourmands* annually 1803-1812. Honoré Blanc begins *Le Guide des dîneurs de Paris* in 1815 with a discussion of the celebrated restaurant, which still exists today, Au Rocher de Cancale. Honoré de Balzac collaborated with Horace Raison to publish *Nouvelle Almanach des Gourmands* under the "nom de plume" de Perigord in 1825. Charles Monselet published from 1862-1870 an *Almanach des Gourmands* as well. These dining guides highlight the importance of

restaurant dining to nineteenth century culture and establish some of the etiquette involved in dining out.

The mapping of the urban landscape in terms of social types that is evident in the realist novel takes its form from the “tableaux” that appeared during the nineteenth century. Like the well-known Daumier drawings that appeared at the same time, these texts sought to characterize and stereotype members of society. I argue in this project that the restaurant and its diners were included in many of these texts because of their importance to nineteenth century society. Alexandre Dumas and Théophile Gautier published *Paris et les Parisiens au XIXe Siècle* in 1856. *Paris chez soi* was published in 1854 and *Paris Guide* in 1867. Paul de Kock writes in “Les Restaurants [*sic*] et les cartes de restaurateurs” in *Nouveau tableau de Paris au XIXe siècle* in 1830 that every Parisian had to know how to eat in a restaurant. He provides a guide to assist diners in this endeavor. These texts organized Parisian society around social mores, geography, history and styles.

This study sets aside the restaurant’s role as a site of the French gastronomic revolution and considers it instead as a cultural institution that reveals class and gender distinctions, promotes the emerging capitalistic culture of consumption, and calls into question perceived notions about public and private space. Rebecca Spang, in *The Invention of the Restaurant*, approaches some of these topics in her discussion of the restaurant’s birth during the eighteenth century, but her discussion of the emergence of the restaurant ends in the 1820s. I argue that it is precisely during the period from the early 1800s until the end of the nineteenth century that the restaurant enters what can be considered a period of maturation. By 1825, for example, the city of Paris had 2000

restaurants of different varieties that served varying purposes (Drouard 215). Far more important than the number of restaurants that appeared at this time is the extent to which the restaurant became integrated into the social, political, and economic fabric of the city.

In Jacobs and Scholliers' *Eating out in Europe: Picnics, Gourmet Dining and Snacks since the late Eighteenth Century*, Karin Becker contributes a chapter entitled "The French Novel and Luxury Eating in the Nineteenth Century." Becker provides an important comprehensive list of the types of restaurants that existed and are written about in novels from the nineteenth century. She, however, only discusses "luxury eating" and fails to provide any analysis of middle class dining that in many cases was anything but luxurious as we see in Huysmans' novel *À Vau-L'Eau* and Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*. I focus my argument, in a departure from Becker, on the stratification of the city's restaurants that catered to the working classes, the middle class, *and* the wealthy.

Catherine Gautschi-Lanz examines the meal in *Le Roman à table: Nourritures et repas imaginaires dans le roman français 1850–1900*. She focuses her study on the significance of eating and food in novels from the last half of the nineteenth century. While my proposed study follows Gautschi-Lanz's premise that food and mealtimes are integral to many of the texts I am examining, I am emphasizing the cultural significance of the *space* in which this food is consumed. I will discuss food and the composition of meals very briefly. In doing so, the restaurant can be viewed as a site that illuminates the study of space, gender relations, class distinctions, and consumption in my selection of novels.

I separate the novels I chose for this study into groups to discuss some of the different themes each novel brings to the surface and the various ways in which the

novelists develop their characters in relation to the restaurant. After a meticulous examination of these groups of novels, one unifying theme emerges. The restaurant matured in the nineteenth century as a result of Parisian society being faced with a burgeoning consumer marketplace that was made possible by the political and economic changes in French society during this period. The restaurant, then, can be viewed as a site at which Parisians participated in this emerging consumer society. The authors I have chosen for this project use the restaurant to contribute to their commentaries on modern consumer culture. In some cases, as in Huysmans' *À Vau-L'Eau* and Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*, the restaurant is actually portrayed metonymically as the consumer marketplace against which Folantin, Florent, and others direct their opposition. In others, as in *Madame Bovary* and *Père Goriot*, the restaurant is embraced as an access point to consumer society.

Lisa Tiersten writes about the development of a consumer society in nineteenth century France in her book *Marianne in the Market*. While she mainly focuses her study on the role of women in the development of the marketplace and the way female attitudes and tastes helped sustain its growth, she does provide a good general analysis of how the culture of consumption impacted French society at the end of the century. Tiersten identifies a number of these effects in the introduction to her book. Particularly relevant to my study, she highlights the growth of the middle class, society's turn towards individualism, the endowment of value on banal acts such as eating and objects such as food, and the development of a market-based conception of "good taste" (2-11).

As the marketplace grew, so too did wealth and opportunity for the French upper-middle class. I demonstrate that access to dining out in a restaurant was a sign of social

and economic success to which many members of the middle class strove. We see Balzac's Goriot sacrificing his own wealth and comfort in his retirement years to help his daughters and Rastignac advance up the social ladder. Georges Duroy in Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* uses his relationships with various women to gain access to some of Paris' finest restaurants with the hope of improving his status. Frédéric follows a similar course of seduction in Paris's restaurants to join the upper middle class in Flaubert's *L'Éducation Sentimentale*.

The consumer marketplace encouraged Parisians to seek out the finest restaurants in order to display their newfound wealth and their good taste to other members of society. It was at the *grands restaurants du boulevard* that upwardly mobile members of the middle class interacted with members of the upper classes. Tiersten writes, "The phenomenal growth of a consumer marketplace catapulted the bourgeoisie to new heights of economic power and fanned the flames of marketplace individualism" (2). As middle class wealth grew, the upwardly mobile sought out ever-more expensive meals in the city's restaurants in order to also improve their social status. At this same moment, the establishment of the Third Republic gave this group political authority.

Armed with money and a political role in the new Republic, the upper echelon of the middle class participated in the consumer market by paying higher prices for ordinary objects and spending large sums of money to dine out. Tiersten notes that the bourgeois consumer gave value to everyday objects and experiences that increased their prices for all consumers. I demonstrate in chapter one that the price of a meal at a restaurant in the nineteenth century was less often based on the quality of the food or the vintage of wines served at the table. Rather, the atmosphere created by the decor of a restaurant, its

location and the clientele it attracted determined an eatery's prices and whether it would receive accolades in one of the period's dining guides.

Tiersten writes, "The bourgeois consumer endowed goods with value, combining otherwise banal objects into an aesthetic assemblage based on her subjective vision" (7). The evaluation of a restaurant and its food was based on individual subjectivity. Tiersten continues, "Indeed, what I will call marketplace modernism defined the exercise of taste in everyday life as much more than the passive appreciation of beauty, casting the expression of individual aesthetic sensibility, even in mundane acts of consumption, as an active, creative, and even artistic enterprise" (7). The bourgeoisie decorated their homes, dressed fashionably, and ate in the city's restaurants in order to express their good taste and social status. The consumer marketplace gave authors such as Brillat-Savarin and Grimod de la Reynière an audience for their gastronomic guides. One could even argue that the whole notion of gastronomy could not exist without the bourgeois obsession with being included among the ranks of those with good taste. Balzac's Cousin Pons sacrifices his life to amass a collection of fashionable antiques and garner invitations to the city's finest dinner parties and restaurant tables.

Restaurants and the culinary culture that developed around them played a role in reinventing consumption as an art form during the nineteenth century and making "taste" broadly available to the bourgeois consumer public. This market-based conception of taste in a way democratized the distribution of social status by rejecting the *ancien régime* notions of social distinction that were largely defined by family lineage (Tiersten 8). Tiersten notes that this more meritocratic notion of social distinction that was based on individual ability permitted the bourgeoisie to claim distinction for themselves and to

also deny it to “inferiors” that lacked the same cultural capital (8). Lisa Quenu from Zola’s *Le Ventre de Paris* embodies this idea. As an owner of a successful cook shop, she will do all she can to preserve her status in society even if it is at the expense of others. As many of us do today, nineteenth century diners sought out the most exclusive tables in the finest restaurants in the city. This act of dining out in the finest restaurants distinguished these upper middle class diners from their less fortunate peers.

The emergence of the consumer marketplace during the nineteenth century encouraged members of French society to embrace self-interest. Linked to one’s assertion of his or her individual achievements and a display of social and economic status, one’s embracing of the consumer marketplace pitted economic self-interest, which was necessary to fuel capitalism, against civic and domestic values which were traditionally seen as safeguarding the morality of French society (Tiersten 9). We see Flaubert casting the urban restaurant as the antagonist to provincial domestic life in *Madame Bovary*. Emma selfishly craves an escape from Yonville, her husband, and her daughter. The restaurant becomes Emma’s escape from being ensnared in domestic responsibility to her family. While nineteenth century diners sat in the main rooms of the restaurants publicly proclaiming their economic and social arrival, others entertained their mistresses and conducted business transactions hidden away from view in the private *cabinets particuliers*.

After spending an afternoon in one of the clandestine private rooms of the Maronniers Restaurant with Trudon, Madame Duhamain in Céard’s *Une Belle Journée* embraces her domestic life at home with her husband. Coding the restaurant as a private space during Madame Duhamain’s lunch with Trudon, Céard highlights its role as a place

of disrepute where men seduce women. The respectable Madame Duhamain fears losing her virtuous reputation should others find out that she has spent an afternoon with another man in a restaurant's private room. Flaubert also highlights this dichotomy between the domestic sphere and the restaurant in *L'Éducation Sentimentale* where his characters act and speak differently when attending a party at a home than when they have a meal at a restaurant. Paradoxically, the home in this novel is reserved for polite and respectful conversation while the restaurant is used for seduction, the plotting of the revolution, engaging in business transactions, and gossiping. One has the sense that Flaubert's more disreputable characters feel at ease in the restaurant and the more respectable women in the novel even comment that they would never step foot inside a restaurant.

Tiersten draws some of her analysis of the consumer marketplace from Jean Baudrillard's post-modernist critique of consumerism. In *La Société de consommation*, Jean Baudrillard closely follows many Marxist ideas, but he places an emphasis on the act of consumption as the driving force behind the capitalist ideas that ensnared modern French society in the nineteenth century. Jean Baudrillard emphasizes the idea that the act of consumption is impregnated with connotation and meaning in modern society. Modern consumption is not necessarily based on a desire to satisfy particular needs, such as hunger, but according to Baudrillard, is instead based on a fundamental desire to differentiate oneself from some and to identify oneself with others. The objects one consumes and the ways in which one does so, thus, contribute to the stratification of society and the formation of identities within that society. The restaurant as a site of conspicuous consumption can be viewed not only as one of the places in which society

displays wealth, or the lack of wealth, and helps diners to form their identities, but also as a place that supports the society Baudrillard critiques in his book.

Consumer society permeates with abundance and a display of affluence. Objects, services, and material goods are multiplied in order to convey a message of prosperity. Baudrillard writes, “Il y a quelque chose de plus dans l’amoncellement que la somme des produits: l’évidence du surplus, la négation magique et définitive de la rareté, la présomption maternelle et luxueuse du pays de Cocagne” (19). This modern phenomenon of accumulating and consuming, which I argue intensifies during the nineteenth century and is highlighted at the restaurant with its abundant lists of food and wine on its menus, represents a significant shift from the past when objects and things were intrinsically valued. Zola’s Paris in *Le Ventre de Paris* teems with abundant supplies of food and the eateries in which to consume them. Restaurant meals are an ordinary occurrence for many of the wealthier characters, such as Florent and the Quenus. Zola casts one group that benefits from consumer society, *le gras*, against the group that suffers as a result of their success, *le maigre*.

Baudrillard discusses the display of accumulated goods in his text as a sign of the abundance in a consumer society. Zola’s shopkeepers in *Le Ventre de Paris* pay careful attention to how they display the produce and fruits in the marketplace. The Quenus carefully arrange the sausages among other prepared meats in their storefront and on the counter so that each individual foodstuff is viewed within the context of all of the other items. Restaurateurs during the nineteenth century carefully arranged the names of the many dishes they offered to their diners in columns on their menus so that each plate was considered within the context of the whole meal in the restaurant. The display of food

items in a window, or in this case on a restaurant menu, directs diners to purchase not only an individual item, but also what Baudrillard refers to as a “panoplie” or network of items (21). The restaurant became during the nineteenth a center for commerce as well as culture. One simply cannot order *un plat* without also enjoying an entrée and dessert at a restaurant. This, of course, maximizes profit for the *restaurateur* and signals that a diner is knowledgeable about how and what to order in a restaurant. The restaurant is organized in a manner that communicates a lack of scarcity.

This abundance distracts a diner so that all of these calculations about what to order and how much to order take place without him necessarily recognizing that he is being led to purchase and eat more than he needs. According to Baudrillard, an individual engaged in consuming pursues happiness and satisfaction above all of his other needs. While the restaurant started in the 1780s as a humble place that served medicinal bouillons to improve health, it developed during the nineteenth century into a temple of indulgence. Whether one dined out to enjoy the finest food and wine like Cousin Pons or like Trudon to entertain women, the restaurant was constructed to maximize pleasure. Even one who dined in the bouillon Duval or at a host’s table often did so to interact with his fellow diners. The food may not have been as good as that served on the *grands boulevards*, but the convivial atmosphere created in these lower-order restaurants attracted diners of lesser means who sought out conversation, gossip, and a game of dominoes. Baudrillard equates the “artificial” satisfaction one receives from purchasing an item such as a meal at a restaurant to the measurable biological satisfaction a hungry person receives from eating food. He writes, “Il n’en reste pas moins que du point de vue de la satisfaction propre du consommateur, rien ne permet de tracer une limite de

‘factice’” (100-101). Both are authentic pleasures, but the former is manufactured by consumer society.

The desire for diners to eat in a restaurant rather than to cook a meal at home is based on a desire to socially differentiate oneself rather than to satisfy a bodily hunger. Consumption can be viewed as a system of communication. Baudrillard writes, “La logique de la consommation, nous avons vu, se définit comme une manipulation de signes. Les valeurs symboliques de création, la relation symbolique d’intériorité en sont absentes: elle est toute en extériorité” (174). Diners are not consuming alone at a restaurant, but rather participate in an exchange with their fellow diners and others around them. It is an exchange of social values that we see at play when Daniel carefully observes his fellow diners in the café and is at the same time keenly aware that they are observing him in Dujardin’s *Les Lauriers sont coupés*. While the food he eats does satisfy his bodily hunger, it is the approval Daniel receives from his fellow diners that gives him the true pleasure he seeks. Baudrillard writes, “On jouit pour soi, mais quand on consomme, on ne le fait jamais seul (c’est l’illusion du consommateur, soigneusement entretenue par tout le discours idéologique sur la consommation), on entre dans un système généralisé d’échange et de production de valeurs codées, où, en dépit d’eux-mêmes, tous les consommateurs sont impliqués réciproquement” (110). Through a display of mutual values in restaurants, diners reinforce the system of classification that stratifies modern French society. Consumer society is based on this system of coded signs and differentiation.

In Chapter 1, I provide a history of the restaurant in the nineteenth century. Continuing from where Rebecca Spang ends her historical analysis in *Invention of the*

*Restaurant*, I use a number of primary sources and secondary sources to define the restaurant, describe its characteristics, and its function in nineteenth century society. During this period, authors used a number of different terms to describe what we, today, would refer to as a “restaurant.” The opulently decorated expensive restaurants of the upper class were often referred to as “grands restaurants” or “grands restaurants du boulevard” and differed greatly from other food establishments. Café owners, such as Jean Véfour who converted the celebrated Café de Chartres into the Grand Véfour in 1820, began to serve food in addition to drink, and in many ways transformed their establishments into restaurants (Grévy 60). A similar phenomenon occurred with wine and cheese merchants who sold a small selection of prepared foods out of their shop fronts. These establishments differed from inns that served food at a “table d’hôte” or as a “brasserie,” or “pension” which provided full meals but very little food selection. Both types of establishments essentially provided one set menu at a mealtime. In 1855, Pierre Duval copied this model of providing a small selection of food at a very reasonable price and institutionalized it by opening a series of restaurants called “bouillons Duval.” The “guinguettes” and “cabarets” provided food, drink, dancing, and other spectacles.

Each of these establishments provided a different atmosphere and attracted a particular clientele. I argue that authors of the novels I have selected for this project would have been aware of this and intentionally used particular terminology to evoke meaning around the dining establishments they introduce into their writing. Becker highlights one example of this; “When a scene contributes to the progress of the story, to the description of the characters or to evoke a milieu or setting, the restaurants are described with details that improve the authenticity and historical realism. It is rare that

the reader is not provided with the name or the address of a restaurant. We may therefore speak of the minimal formula of enseigne plus adresse. (201)” This localization of restaurants also highlights the authors’ use of the rhetoric of the various restaurant guides of the time.

In chapter 2, “A View from the top: Confronting class, status and gender in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Restaurant,” I write about the culture of the “grands restaurants du boulevard” in Paris against which the emerging bourgeois dining establishments are measured. I look at Balzac’s *Père Goriot* and Maupassant’s *Bel-Ami*, in which the authors place their characters in different types of restaurants to communicate class distinctions and highlight the role that the “grands restaurants” played in forging social identities. Many of these “grands restaurants,” such as the Grand Véfour, which combined with its neighbor the Véry in 1869, were located in the tree-lined Palais-Royal area of Paris. These restaurants showcased the finest cuisine of the city, employed the celebrity chefs of the era, and were therefore quite costly. Frequented regularly only by those who could afford to dine there, these restaurants primarily hosted the upper class elites. Jérôme Grévy argues that by the early nineteenth century, these restaurants and cafés replaced the salons of the eighteenth century as the spaces in which political and cultural ideas were discussed amongst important members of society. Dena Goodman writes about the continual decline of the salon that began at the end of the eighteenth century in *Republic of Letters*. It is for this reason that de Maupassant found himself regularly dining at the top of the Eiffel Tower. The Restaurant Tour Eiffel hosted princes, czars, and other important nineteenth century figures, such as Thomas Edison. During the expo, important wealthy members of society rode elevators to the top of the tower to dine

while the bourgeoisie picnicked on the lawn below creating a visual example of the stratification of society that the emergence of the restaurant encouraged.

In chapter 3, “Private Appetites in Public Spaces,” I write about the restaurant’s unique role as a place to satisfy many “appetites” at the same time. The restaurant provided a space in which men had private discussions and illicit affairs and simultaneously provided a stage on which individuals displayed their wealth. Habermas writes about the emergence in the nineteenth century of a culture characterized by *Öffentlichkeit*, or the public sphere. Habermas argues that the culture of the public sphere replaced France’s pre-revolutionary representational culture in which the state controlled most discourse. Along with the fall of the monarchy came the active participation of citizens in governance through discussion and debate in the public sphere. The restaurant provided a space for important dialogue and debate for citizens in post-revolutionary France. I write about Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and *L’Éducation Sentimentale* as well as Henry Céard’s *Une Belle Journée*. These authors highlight the restaurant’s unique role as both a public and private space. The restaurant provides a space for those such as Emma Bovary in *Madame Bovary* who wanted to participate in the social spectacle of dining out and for those who sought a space that would conceal their affairs and private discussions.

In chapter 4, “The Spectacle of Dining Out and Invention of the Middle-Class Restaurant,” I write about the development of the eateries that catered to the emerging middle class, the climate that encouraged their development, and how middle class dining differed from the “grands restaurants du boulevard.” In 1854, Duval opened the first of what would become a chain of restaurants known as “Bouillons Duval.” Duval’s system

was designed to provide him and his company with the largest profits. He turned the luxury and spectacle of dining out into a commercial venture. I read Balzac's *Le Cousin Pons*, Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, and Huysmans' *À Vau-l'eau* through the lens of an anxious bourgeoisie trying to navigate the emerging restaurant culture of Paris. Some will succeed in adapting to the restaurant culture, but others will not.

In chapter 5, "*Le Maigre et le gras*," I address the restaurant's role in highlighting class distinctions between Parisians through an analysis of Baudelaire's poem "*Les Yeux des pauvres*" and Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*. I discuss the large segment of nineteenth century society that is left out of the emerging restaurant culture because of the cost of dining out. The restaurant as an urban space reinforced economic distinctions and class stratifications in a way that had never been seen before. While food consumption had always differed by class and region in France, the restaurant moved dining out of the private domestic realm and placed it on display for all to see, thereby showcasing the differences between the "*le maigre et le gras*," to borrow Zola's terms.

This study of the maturing of the restaurant and its literature illuminate the unique role the restaurant played in the social history of Paris during the nineteenth century. By reading the restaurant and its literature through the lens of the consumer society, the restaurant reveals itself to be an important institution that helped shape the urban landscape of Paris, its culture and its literature.

## Chapter 1- A Brief History and Analysis of the modern restaurant

The restaurant emerged in France at a particular moment in time as a result of a number of factors. Multiple accounts of the birth of the restaurant exist. Some authors, such as Grimod de la Reynière in his 1803 *Almanach des Gourmands* have credited the invention of the restaurant to unemployed cooks who were formerly employed in aristocratic households and scattered throughout Paris as a result of the fall of the monarchy and weakened influence of the aristocracy. According to this narrative, unemployed cooks used techniques perfected in private homes to open restaurants that fed legislators who moved to the capital to form a republican government (177). A second narrative attributes the emergence of the restaurant in France to the break-up of the food guild system. This Ancien Régime guild system supported laws that restricted the sale of every type of food to its particular guild. With the exception of caterers, the sale of a prepared meal was illegal under this system as meats could only be sold by butchers, the sale of bread was restricted to bakers, and wine merchants reserved the exclusive right to sell wine. Only with the weakening of this rigid system could the restaurant develop (Spang 9-10).

I would argue, however, that the history of the development of the restaurant in France during the Eighteenth Century is a more complicated story that involves entrepreneurial individuals embracing a changed culinary landscape at a particular moment in history. One such entrepreneur, an avant-garde restaurateur named Boulanger, challenged the restrictive Ancien Régime food merchant laws by daring to sell prepared foods without their permission. As a result, he was brought before the magistrates by the

cook-caterer guild. Because of this single act of defiance, some have credited Boulanger with operating the first “restaurant” in Paris in 1765. Eugène Briffault writes in *Paris à Table*, an 1846 restaurant guide, that a man named Lamy opened the first “grande institution” in 1774 in the Palais-Royal quarter of Paris (148). Brillat-Savarin writes in *La Physiologie du goût* that towards 1770 the general consensus was that the inns and taverns in Paris were bad, so an enterprising man decided to open an establishment that would provide good meals at a set price throughout the day (310).

Jean-Paul Aron lists the Cadran Bleu, Méot, Bernard, Chevance, Robert, and Beauvilliers as some of the first restaurants to emerge in Paris in the late eighteenth century that continued operation into the nineteenth. He attributes the proliferation of restaurants in central Paris to haberdashers, embroiderers, jewelers, goldsmiths, and others engaged in the luxury trades who had lost their employment as a result of the Revolution (20-24). Between 1795 and 1800, Aron indicates that prices for basic necessities increased by twenty times their price prior to the revolution and luxury items cost even more. Only the cost of food according to Aron was still affordable, so many of the merchants became restaurateurs or traiteurs to earn an income.

While the accounts of who opened the first restaurant in France differ, they do all agree that the first restaurant emerged in the late 1700s and was the creation of an enterprising individual who saw the need to develop a new space in which to enjoy the nouvelle cuisine of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In her book, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, Rebecca Spang presents a detailed account that traces the origins of the modern restaurant to the 1760s when a self-promoting entrepreneur, Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau, opened an establishment on Rue St.-Honoré that sold restorative bouillons.

These establishments that sold soups became known as “salles de restaurateurs” (Spang 9).

Roze de Chantoiseau had spent much of his life devising a scheme to try to reduce France’s debt by issuing “letters of credit.” Under his plan, merchants of luxury goods could obtain credit from banks to enlarge their businesses and eventually stimulate France’s economy. After the États-Généraux rejected his plan and he was arrested for circulating an incendiary pamphlet that promoted his idea, Roze de Chantoiseau focused his attention instead on the business of selling food. In *The Invention of the Restaurant*, Rebecca Spang writes:

For Roze de Chantoiseau, selling restorative bouillons to individuals was less like running a tavern than it was like peddling credit schemes to the monarchy- both of his life’s tasks seemed equally viable, compelling, and innovative activities. The ‘invention’ of the restaurant, the creation of a new market sphere of hospitality and taste, was but one component in Roze’s plan to fix the economy, repair commerce, and restore health to the body politic (Spang 13-14).

Roze de Chantoiseau’s varied interests in finances, trade, politics, and health intersected in his restaurant where he sold restorative bouillons that consisted of meat cooked in a kettle for a long period of time without the addition of any liquid. The resulting meal was a condensed easily digested consommé that was thought to warm the body and improve circulation (Spang 2).

It is important to note that the eighteenth century restaurant developed alongside other dining establishments- it did not immediately replace them. In other words, Roze de Chantoiseau did not invent “dining out.” Throughout history, retail drink and food merchants, as well as innkeepers, nourished hungry travelers. I would argue that at any point in history during which people traveled, dining outside of the home occurred. In

France, fortunate travelers dined in private residences with family or friends, while visiting strangers dined at a “table d’hôte” in an inn or food merchant’s store. These establishments existed in France as early as 1694 when the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* lists a usage for the term “table d’hôte” to describe dining at a hotel or inn for a fixed price. Here diners would sit at a communal table at a specified time to eat a meal. Diners were served, but they did not have the opportunity to order anything in particular.

Thus the novelty of Roze de Chantoiseau’s invention had less to do with providing Parisians a space to dine outside of the home than with the way in which he delivered his meals to his diners and publicized his new business venture. Chantoiseau introduced the concept of choice to his dining establishments. Chantoiseau had spent much of his life working with merchants of luxury goods and he knew the importance of choice for consumers. Diners could visit one of his “Salles de restaurateur” at any time of day, order from a limited menu of items, and sip healthful “restaurants” at individual tables. He provided a reliable healthy meal to travelers and locals alike. Unlike its predecessors, these dining establishments made the sale of a prepared dish to customers their sole purpose. Just as one could go to a café at any time of day to drink coffee, one could visit one of Chantoiseau’s restaurants to drink a warm broth.

Perhaps as a result of Chantoiseau’s self promotion, by 1798 the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* would include the definition for “Restaurateur”- “un Aubergiste chez lequel on trouve à toute heure des alimens sains et choisis [sic].” Chantoiseau publicized his new food venture by printing a directory of businesses and trades in Paris that included a new entry for “Restaurateur.” Seizing on the Enlightenment period’s

value for knowledge and following the *Encyclopedists'* method of cross-referencing and organization, Chantoiseau categorized each entry in the almanac by type of business and also provided a list of related businesses to assist readers with finding information. The inclusion of the “salle de restaurateur” in this comprehensive guide helped to legitimize his new business venture.

### Laying the Foundation for the “Nouvelle Cuisine”

While the contributions of entrepreneurial individuals like Chantoiseau to the development of the restaurant are indisputable, I would not point to the actions of a single individual or event as the driving force behind the creation of the first restaurant. I would argue that the restaurant emerged in France during the eighteenth century as a product of a changed culinary landscape that encouraged diners to be more discriminating towards their food and to reimagine French cuisine. This inspired entrepreneurial cooks to become “restaurateurs” so that they could showcase their culinary inventions. Prior to the eighteenth century, eating was often linked primarily to health and medicine. Louis de Jaucourt, the most frequent contributor to the *Encyclopédie*, wrote its article on “cuisine” in 1754. In his article, he emphasizes the needlessness of preparing foods to stimulate taste and eating beyond what is required to sustain human life. He refers to cuisine as “ce luxe,” among other terms of excess. He writes, “Tous ces termes désignent proprement le secret réduit en méthode savante, de faire manger au-delà du nécessaire” (4:537). He provides a brief history of the development of food consumption in the human race and underscores the medicinal effects of eating certain foods. He highlights particular spices and their utility in remedying ailments. Jaucourt and many of his contemporaries,

including Rousseau, limited the role of food in society to the preservation of health. He writes, “Il faut pourtant convenir que nous devons à l'art de la cuisine beaucoup de préparations d'une grande utilité, & qui méritent l'examen des Physiciens” (4:538). Food should be prepared to maximize its benefit to health and well-being.

In contrast to this traditional view of food's role in society, we find a number of texts that highlight new methods of preparing food and equate cooking with artistry and technique during this same period. The Enlightenment period has been characterized as a time in French history during which writers and thinkers promoted the use of one's free expression in order to free oneself from governmental, religious, and societal restraints. Jean-François Revel writes of the emerging “nouvelle cuisine” of the Enlightenment period in *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*:

The feeling of something new at hand was so constantly present in the eighteenth century, in this domain [cuisine] as in others, that people of the period could not help but be amazed by the continuous renewal of their cuisine. Just as there was talk in the realm of ethics and science and philosophy of the progress of enlightenment, so people constantly congratulated themselves on belonging to the century of modern cuisine. (Revel 177)

Chefs and cookbook authors shared their ideas about removing Ancien Régime restrictions on food preparation and consumption. The recipes and ideas in the cookbooks written during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, such as Vincent La Chapelle's *Cuisinier moderne* in 1735, François Marin's *Les Dons de Comus* in 1739, and Menon's *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* in 1746, are examples of the changing attitudes toward food preparation and consumption that provided a fertile soil in which the restaurant would grow.

It is important to note that the emphasis on taste and the pleasure of eating that La Chapelle, Marin, and Menon write about in their cookbooks was not unique to the eighteenth century, but rather is remarkable because it stood in stark contrast to the

utilitarian scientific and medicinal uses of food that many Enlightenment authors, such as D'Alembert and Rousseau, highlighted in their writings. In *Acquired Taste: The French Origins of Modern Cooking*, T. Sarah Peterson traces the concept of eating food for pleasure and enjoyment to Arabic culture that influenced French cuisine in the Middle Ages (12). By the thirteenth century, cookbooks that circulated in France favored a style of cooking that embraced Arabic techniques that included added certain spices to food.

Traders and military expeditions in the 800s had brought sugar, pomegranate seeds, citrus juices, rose water, and almond milk to Europe from the Middle East where they were added to dishes to enhance their flavors (1-3). Cookbooks from the fourteenth century, such as *Viandier de Taillevent* by Guillaume Tirel, included aromatic spices from the Middle East such as ginger, cinnamon, clove, cardamom, pepper, mace, saffron, and nutmeg to enhance aromas and flavors of prepared dishes. Peterson writes, "A multitude of aromatics were available, and it is significant that when cookbooks once again emerged in Europe, the spices they called for were strikingly similar to those named in the Arabic cookery texts" (6).

Greco-Roman food traditions from antiquity that placed a similar emphasis on the sensuality of eating food influenced French cuisine during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to Peterson, Renaissance culture revived and appropriated the culture of the "ancients" to counter the culture of the Arabic world that had become prevalent throughout the middle ages. Humanists sought the true roots of their culinary heritage that was untainted by the foreign Arabic influence (46). She highlights the introduction of the concept of "the gastronome" and the assigning of a high status to those foods from antiquity. In opposition to Plato's pronouncement that titillation of the

palate was an animalistic instinct, humanists during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries pointed to passages that demonstrated the lengths to which the ancients went to satiate their desires; “The texts of the ancients offered numerous derisory descriptions of the voluptuous style, but rather than thwarting the Renaissance development of sensuality, they served as wells of inspiration” (47).

By 1735, Vincent La Chapelle published *Le Cuisinier moderne*, which he had published in England three years prior to its printing in France. Jean-Louis Flandrin writes that La Chapelle was “le premier à réclamer une véritable rupture avec les pratiques du passé et à qualifier sa cuisine de moderne” (651). As the title suggests, La Chapelle’s cookbook was a departure from the rigid formulaic cooking practices of the Ancien Régime. Priscilla Parkhurst-Ferguson writes about the importance of the term modern in the title of La Chapelle’s culinary treatise; “The very term modern speaks to the effort made to tie the new and the different to the state-of-the-art and to progress, an effort that inevitably entails categorical dismissal of one’s predecessors” (39). In the preface to his cookbook, La Chapelle objects to using the techniques invented by his predecessors and instead embraces new techniques that stimulate his own creativity as a chef.

La Chapelle reclaims cooking from the kitchens of Versailles and other aristocratic homes and wrestles it out of the codified Haute Cuisine techniques of the seventeenth-century. He treats cooking, instead, as his individual artistic expression of himself. He indicates that he will lay out his own individual technique for preparing food in his cookbook. He writes:

A cook of Genius will invent new Delicacies, to please the Palates of those for whom he is to labour; his Art, like all others, being subject to change: For should

the Table of a great Man be serv'd in the Taste that prevail'd twenty Years ago, it would not please the Guests, how strictly soever he might conform to the Rules laid down at that Time. This Variation in Cookery is the Reason of my publishing the ensuing Work . (i)

La Chapelle refers to cuisine as an “Art” in this preface and underscores the dynamic nature of cuisine to draw a distinction between the old cuisine of the Ancien Régime and the new cuisine of the eighteenth-century. La Chapelle wrote his cookbook to contrast with what had become the standard text on French cuisine, Massialot’s *Le Cuisinier roïal et bourgeois*, which had been published first in 1691 and then again in 1712 and 1730 (Flandrin 651). La Chapelle writes:

*The Cuisinier Royal & Bourgeois*, was translated into English by Persons of my Profession: But those who will take the Trouble to compare that Piece with mine, will find them entirely different I may be so bold as to assert, that I have not borrowed a single Circumstance in the ensuing treatise from any Author, the whole being the Result of my own Practice and Experience. (ii)

La Chapelle separates himself directly from Massialot, and therefore separates himself from the past and the constraints placed upon cooking during preceding centuries in order to introduce a new method for cooking.

La Chapelle’s cooking technique breaks most abruptly from the past in his de-emphasis on preparing foods to enhance their medicinal effects and his emphasis on cooking to enhance flavor. In other words, La Chapelle elevates French cuisine from the realm of the “diététique” to the realm of “gastronomie.” Patricia Parkhurst Ferguson defines gastronomy as “the socially prized pursuit of culinary excellence” or essentially enjoying food as an end in itself instead of as a means to better health (84). To this end, La Chapelle introduces flavor-enhancing sauces and encourages the use of other additives such as pepper and salt to improve on the taste of food. He emphasizes the sensual

pleasure one can receive from eating food rather than its medicinal function. In *Le Cuisinier moderne*, La Chapelle is credited with inventing “sauce espagnole,” a mother sauce used to make many other sauces in French cuisine today such as *sauce Bourguignonne*, *sauce aux champignons*, and *sauce chevreuil*. La Chapelle also includes recipes for *roux*, *mirepoix*, and other stocks that continue to make up the foundations of French cuisine today. (Revel 182-183).

In 1739, François Marin published *Les Dons de Comus*. Like La Chapelle, Marin includes inventive recipes that break away from the rigid “haute cuisine” of the Ancien Régime. Whereas La Chapelle addresses his cookbook only to professional chefs, Marin does not make any assumptions about his readers’ expertise in cooking. Instead *Les Dons de Comus*, “stands out as the first really modern cookbook, in the sense that it is a methodical and exhaustive book in which Marin reviews all methods of preparing, of cooking, of executing recipes” (Revel 186). Marin seeks to educate a larger population about cooking techniques than his predecessors. He writes:

On a tâché, autant qu’on a pû, de rendre cet Ouvrage utile à tout le monde. L’Officier de bouche y trouvera de quoi s’affermir & se perfectionner. Le Bourgeois avec les mêts les plus ordinaires, & sans presque augmenter sa dépense, pourra faire envier sa table, & ceux qui par amusement veulent scavoir un peu de cuisine, non seulement trouveront de quoi s’occuper, mais pourront encore avec les principes, & les idées qu’on leur fournit, imaginer une infinité de sauces & de ragoûts différens. (v)

Marin shares his inventive culinary techniques with professionals as well as with the general literate public. Ferguson ties the articulation of cooking methods to the masses as critical to the development of a cuisine. She writes, “These words, the narratives and the texts shaped by them, are what translate cooking and food into cuisine” (10). Marin’s sharing of his individual cooking methods with the general public as well as with the

professional cooks contributed to the development of the “Nouvelle Cuisine” of the eighteenth century that broke away from the “Haute Cuisine” of Ancien Régime France.

Marin embraces the ideas from previous centuries and emphasizes a shift in the perception of contemporary French cuisine from the medicinal considerations that were popular during the eighteenth century and towards an emphasis on taste and composition. He writes, “Le palais agréablement chatouillé, fait trouver du goût dans tout ce qu’on mange, & l’on n’a pas besoin, pour le gratter, d’avoir recours à des caustiques & à des acides, comme on est obligé de faire pour piquer un palais usé.” Marin’s emphasis on the palate in his preface to *Les Dons de Comus*, places gastronomic considerations above dietary considerations. The remainder of Marin’s preface to his cookbook is a treatise on French cuisine where the “Nouvelle Cuisine” is defended against its critics. Jean-François Revel attributes the preface to two Jesuit priests, Father Brunoy and Father Bougeant, who are actually never named in the text. Revel writes:

This text is as important in the history of cuisine as Parmenides’ poem in the history of philosophy. In it, cuisine is made the object of thought and no longer simply that of sensation- and here I am of course speaking of its execution and not of its consumption. (187)

In the preface, arguments are laid out to show how doctors during the eighteenth century blame the “nouvelle cuisine” for poor health in France. Brunoy and Bougeant present evidence to show how illnesses are caused by elements outside of the control of chefs and cooks. They write “C’est ici que la Médecine triomphe: c’est à l’art de la cuisine toujours suspect, qu’elle en veut principalement, c’est contre la Cuisinier qu’elle tourne ses batteries: on nous fait la guerre dans nos foyers, cèderons-nous, sans rendre de combat (xvi-xvii) ?” *Les Dons de Comus* is a justification for the “Nouvelle Cuisine” and for Enlightenment ideals, which equate cuisine with science and art. They continue;

On distingue aujourd'hui parmi nous la Cuisine ancienne & la Cuisine moderne... La cuisine moderne est une espèce de Chymie. La science du Cuisinier consiste à décomposer, à faire digérer, & à quintessencier les viandes; à tirer des sucs nourrissants, & pourtant légers, à les mêler & les confondre ensemble, de façon que rien ne domine &, que tout se fasse sentir. Enfin à leur donner cette union que les Peintres donnent aux couleurs, & à les rendre si homogènes que de leurs diverses saveurs il ne résulte qu'un goût fin & piquant, & si j'ose le dire, une harmonie de tous les goûts réunis ensemble. Voilà tout la fin du métier, & le grand œuvre en fait de cuisine. (xx-xxi)

The authors of the preface indicate that modern cuisine does not rely as much on established rules and codes as did the cuisine of previous centuries. The modern cooks of the eighteenth century are artists that blend together foods to create new masterpieces that vaguely resemble the original ingredients in appearance and taste. The emphasis in Marin's cookbook is no longer on adding great quantities of spice, pepper, and salt to food, but instead attempting to create new tastes by combining food ingredients together. Marin writes about a pâté that combines truffles with trout and the use of champagne in various dishes.

Perhaps the most "enlightened" element of this text, however, is the equating food preparation to the art of painting. The authors of the preface write:

On ne s'est peut-être jamais avisé de chercher du rapport entre deux objets aussi éloignés que paroissent l'être l'art de la Peinture & de la Cuisine. Mais sauf la hardiesse de la comparaison, & à l'irrévérence près, je n'ai point trouvé d'image plus propre à rendre mes idées sensibles. (xxi)

For Marin, the role of the chef is to combine food ingredients together to create works of art in the same manner that a painter does. This relating of food preparation with a fine art is a great shift away from the medical or clinical perception of food preparation. Prior to the eighteenth century, chefs followed a distinct code established in the aristocratic

households throughout France that was modeled on the elaborate culinary celebrations at Versailles for Louis XIV. The author(s) continue:

L'union & la rupture des couleurs qui font la beauté du coloris, représentent assez bien, ce me semble, ce mélange de suc & d'ingrédients dont le Cuisinier compose ses ragoûts. Il faut que ces ingrédients & ces suc soient noyés & fondus de la même manière que la Peintre fond ses couleurs, & que la même harmonie, qui dans un tableau frappe les yeux des connoisseurs, se fasse sentir aux palais fins dans le goût d'une sauce. (xxi-xxii)

Marin strives in his cooking to produce the same sensations in the mouth as an artist does in the eyes with his painting. *Les Dons de Comus* projects food preparation into the world of art. Rebecca Spang notes that it was this very association of food with art and the rejection of scientific or medical uses for food that inspired many of the Philosophes to criticize the “nouvelle cuisine” of the eighteenth century (43-44).

In 1746, Menon published *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*, and in so doing, he further expands the nouvelle cuisine of the eighteenth century to social classes beyond the aristocracy and to women as well. Jean-Louis Flandrin writes, “Compendium de trois arts de la table (cuisine, pâtisserie, et office), cet ouvrage doit sans doute en grande partie son succès au fait que la cuisine bourgeoise du XVIIIème siècle est une cuisine fondée sur le sens de l'économie et de la simplicité qui s'inscrit entre la cuisine aristocratique et celle des artisans et paysans” (653). Menon's cookbook was reprinted many times and is the only French cookbook printed before 1789 to have been reprinted after 1800. The cookbook was printed into sixty-two editions, which produced 93,000 copies in only fifty years (Flandrin 653-654).

Menon is credited with using the term “nouvelle cuisine” for the first time. Menon also revolutionized how cookbooks were to be written during the eighteenth century and

in subsequent centuries by including illustrations of how to prepare specific dishes in his cookbooks. Previously, authors had only included diagrams of instruments used in cooking and examples of how to set the table. The publication of Menon's *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* is important to the articulation of the nouvelle cuisine of the eighteenth century in that the text expanded its reach to social classes beyond the aristocracy and "haute bourgeoisie." He also addressed the book specifically to women. Ferguson writes about the importance of texts like Menon's in the development of French cuisine:

Certainly, cuisine cannot exist without food; nor can it survive without words. A more or less coherent repertory of culinary preparations, usually structured by the products at hand, becomes a true cuisine only when its status as a repertory becomes apparent. That is, culinary preparations become a cuisine when, and only when, the preparations are articulated and formalized, and enter the public domain. (Ferguson 19)

Being the most popular, comprehensive, and most accessible, Menon's *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* was perhaps the most influential cookbook to be written during the eighteenth century in France. With this in mind, it is important to note that Menon includes recipes for foods that were restricted by the Church, and promoted their preparation during forbidden periods, such as meats during the season of Lent. His cookbook thus came into conflict with the Catholic Church's long-standing regulations on food preparation (Flandrin 688). The Catholic Church had developed strict rules pertaining to fasting and restricted the types of food that could be eaten during certain seasons of the year. Cookbooks, such as Menon's, encouraged readers to feast at any time of the year on foods that tasted good.

On the first page of his cookbook, Menon writes, "ce livre doit avoir plus de Lecteurs que tout autre" (4). He continues:

Son Auteur, pour se rendre utile aux diverses conditions, après donné dans les premiers Traités des préceptes dont la pratique ne peut guère avoir lieu que dans les Cuisines des Grands, ou de ceux qu'une grande opulence met en état de les contrefaire, en a voulu donner qui fussent assortis aux personnes d'une condition ou d'une fortune médiocre; & c'est ce qu'il fait ici. (4)

Menon indicates immediately that his text is a cookbook for the rich as well as for the poor. He chooses to share his recipes for the “nouvelle cuisine” with a wide audience and he is one of the first culinary writers to acknowledge the difference in preparing a meal for a wealthy family and a family on a budget. He refers to economic factors throughout the preface. He writes, “Ce n'est plus pour les Nobles qu'il écrit, c'est pour les Bourgeois; mais on peut dire qu'il ennoblit les mets roturiers par les assaisonnements dont il les rehausse” (4). Menon's acknowledgment of the economic difficulties facing the French people at the time demonstrates a stratified culinary environment that will affect the development of different types of restaurants during the nineteenth century.

As do La Chapelle and Marin, Menon emphasizes the importance of a food's taste over its traditional utility in the treatment of ailments. He writes instructions on how to “donner aux plus communs une saveur qui ne sera pas commune” (4). Menon indicates that his recipes help lift the flavors out of foods in direct opposition to traditional cooking methods that sought to meld flavors together. He hopes to erase the Bourgeois method of cooking and replace it with his own. Menon views his cookbook as a way to instruct the Bourgeoisie on how to “comprendre & pratiquer, sans peine, des préceptes qu'il a pris soin de mettre à leur portée, en les dégageant de cette embarrassante multiplicité d'assaisonnements raffinées, & d'industriels déguisements, qui ne demandent pas moins d'habileté dans les Cuisinières, que d'opulence dans leurs Maîtres” (5).

The eighteenth century in France was a period during which writers questioned the restrictions placed upon society by the government, the church, and by society itself. Culinary writers questioned the restrictions placed upon food preparation and promoted their own culinary styles. They rejected the “Haute Cuisine” of the Ancien Régime and instead promoted gastronomic considerations of food preparation over medicinal considerations; launched the concept of “taste” into public discourse; encouraged culinary creativity; and referred to food preparation as a fine art. The culinary culture that developed in pre-revolutionary France paved the way for the maturation of the restaurant culture of the nineteenth century in France and allowed for French cuisine to become one of the most inventive and characteristic cuisines in the world.

#### The “Restaurant Matures”

After the revolution, the artist-chefs who had previously worked exclusively for the aristocracy and clergy, now were able to share their culinary creations with the common man. As the bourgeoisie gained power in French society, they sought the luxury, ostentation, and sensual delight that had been denied to them prior to the revolution. The great aristocratic feasts from Versailles and other wealthy households served as blueprints for the new restaurant meals served in the city’s *grands restaurants* (Aron 10).

With his authoritarian and absolutistic policies, Louis XIV brought to France “la grande cuisine française” in the seventeenth century (de Broglie 57). Louis XIV showcased his extravagant tastes and set the standards for French cuisine at Versailles, where he maintained control over every aspect of life, including dining. Gilles and

Laurence Laurendon write about the important role Versailles played in both Louis' attempt to control the nobility and the propagation of the French national cuisine:

Sans doute échaudé par la Fronde, Louis XIV chercha toujours à assujettir la noblesse, dont il redoutait la versatilité. Versailles n'avait pas d'autre fonction que de 'tenir son monde.' Maintenir les nobles et les courtisans auprès de lui grâce à un système complexe et très élaboré de charges, de pensions et de titres, c'était le plus sûr moyen d'éviter complots et cabales. Nourrir les courtisans, les distraire, les flatter, les entretenir, c'était les contraindre, les surveiller, les punir. (viii)

Louis XIV brought the nobles from every region in France together at Versailles where they participated in spectacular dining events that showcased the best of French cuisine. The king began his day when a valet would enter his chamber to remove the remnants of his nighttime snack, which consisted of bread, wine, and water. Once the king awoke, he would eat his breakfast, which, depending on the season, would consist of a soup, a cup of sage or fruit juice. The king would also be informed of his menu choices for the remaining meals of the day. At 1 o'clock, the king would eat a lunch in his royal chamber, alone or with the queen.

De Broglie describes the elaborate lunch time scene, often referred to as *le grand couvert*; "Le dauphin, les princes du sang, les cardinaux se tenaient debout et le regardaient. Quelquefois, Monsieur se voyait offrir un tabouret, en échange de quoi il présentait la serviette à son frère. Sur une nappe courte en lin des Flandres était posée la fameuse nef de Louis XIV" (74). The king's napkin, spices, and poison detectors were kept inside this golden, elaborately decorated vessel, an item that came to symbolize the extravagance of French cuisine at Versailles. At the base of the "nef," which weighed 26 kilograms, two golden tritons and two mermaids stood on top of six turtles decorated with ten diamonds and twelve rubies. The two ends of the vessel were decorated with diamond crowns and the king's crest. On the cover of the vessel, a cupid held a crown of

rubies and diamonds between two dolphins (74). The importance Louis XIV placed on dining at Versailles is embodied in his expensive and elaborate tableware such as his “nef.”

After the king finished his lunch, the court would host a hunt or a garden party where meats, pâtés, salads, fruits, and pastries would be served at a buffet. The king would eat nothing, but would drink water infused with orange. Supper was served at 6 o'clock in the presence of the entire royal court. Once again eating alone and seated on a large chair at a big table, the king would consume frozen wine, four types of soup, an entire pheasant, a partridge, salad, ham, lamb with garlic, eggs, pastries and fruits (De Broglie 76). This culinary presentation took place every day in front of visitors from throughout France. Weddings and other festivals at Versailles consisted of even more elaborate displays of culinary inventiveness (De Broglie 77).

These festivals at Versailles and other aristocratic homes from the eighteenth century would be the models for the dinners that would be hosted at restaurants in the nineteenth century. Meager soup shops of the eighteenth century would grow to become temples of gastronomy that excited Parisian palates and satisfied appetites during the nineteenth century by mimicking the feasts of the ancient régime. By 1820, one would count more than three thousand dining establishments of different types and varieties in Paris (Ferguson 87). In 1803 and for nine years afterwards, Grimod de la Reynière would publish his *L'Almanach des Gourmands*, which is considered to be the first published restaurant guide and predecessor to the Michelin and Zagat guides of today. In his almanac, Grimod de la Reynière provides location and price information for these newly established restaurants. He writes in the introduction to the guide that the changed

culinary landscape in Paris required such a guide to assist Parisians and travelers alike with navigating a unique and disjointed system of eateries; “Le cœur de la plupart des Parisiens opulens s’est tout à coup métamorphosé en gésier; leurs sentimens ne sont plus que des sensations, et leurs désirs que des appétits; c’est donc les servir convenablement que de leur donner, en quelques pages, les moyens de tirer, sous le rapport de la bonne chère, le meilleur parti possible de leurs penchans et de leurs écus” (x). Grimod de la Reynière highlights the importance of being able to purchase a good meal for a fair price. The modern restaurant emerged partially as a result of a renewed public interest in “nouvelle cuisine” where it flourished during the nineteenth century, but I focus in this project instead on the restaurant’s cultural and social role.

Unique to the urban centers of France at this time, restaurants were public spaces in which friends socialized, the bourgeoisie spent their new-found wealth, and the upper classes put on ostentatious displays. Amidst these public spectacles, restaurants were also able to provide private and intimate “cabinets” in which men entertained their mistresses, artists philosophized, and republicans discussed overthrowing the government. Brillat-Savarin, in *La Physiologie du goût*, remarks that prior to the invention of the restaurant, only rich and powerful people could eat well. The restaurant changed this as different types of eateries with different prices emerged throughout Paris that catered to many different people (311).

In this study I treat the restaurant during the nineteenth century in France as more than the showcase of nouvelle cuisine or as a response to the collapse of aristocratic life. The maturation of the restaurant can be viewed as a cultural artifact of a society that commodified sociability and many types of leisure. Having mostly been left out of socio-

historical studies of the nineteenth century, the restaurant has often only been viewed as the host of a gastronomic revolution. As Brillat-Savarin however indicates in his 1825 text, the restaurant, as a space which attracts many different types of people, provides a view of a variety of human situations which novelists at the time use as a type of source-material to construct their realist narratives.

During this period, authors used a number of different terms to describe what we, today, would refer to as a “restaurant.” Each of these establishments provided a different atmosphere and attracted a particular clientele to its tables. Brillat-Savarin describes a typical scene in a restaurant where in the back, a crowd of solitary workers on a lunch break sit at a counter, order loudly, eat quickly, pay, and then leave in a rush. Visitors from outside of Paris, probably foreigners from Britain, sit at tables in the center of the room and sample a few “exotic” dishes. They savor the foreign tastes and examine their surroundings. He describes two Parisians who have undoubtedly dined in a restaurant many times before and sit bored at a table nearby. Two young lovers sit in a corner ordering all of the delicacies on the menu and stare into one another’s eyes. The “regular” diners sit at a counter in the center of the dining room. They order their usual dishes and all of the servers know their names. Brillat-Savarin’s restaurant scene highlights the diversity of diners visiting particular eating establishments during this time. Paul de Kock writes in his tableau of the restaurant scene in Paris that everyone in Paris had to know how to eat in a restaurant. Émile Goudeau emphasizes in *Paris à Table* the social aspect of dining in a restaurant; “L’établissement des restaurateurs fut un fait social. Sous le régime auquel ils succédaient, la bonne chère était le privilège de l’opulence: les restaurateurs le mirent à la portée de tout le monde” (148-149). While it is true that

anyone could dine in a restaurant, the type of restaurant one could dine in varied depending on how much one could afford to pay. A study of the restaurants of nineteenth century Paris, therefore, is a study of socio-economic status.

In this study, I have divided the various types of restaurants discussed in the dining guides and novels of the nineteenth century into three categories which represent those restaurants that catered to the masses, those for members of the middle class, and those that truly only catered to society's elites. I recognize that even within these three groups, restaurant prices and quality could vary immensely, as Brillat-Savarin described in his scene of a "typical" restaurant. To this end, I rely on the restaurant almanacs, dining guides, tableaux, and travel guides written during the period to guide me as they guided nineteenth century diners through the complex culinary landscape of their city. The cost of dining out determined which establishment a particular social class group would visit, therefore preserving the exclusivity of the most expensive restaurants in the capital. Paul de Kock writes in "Les Restaurants [*sic*] et les cartes de restaurateurs" for *Nouveau Tableau de Paris au XIXe siècle* in 1830 about the different types of restaurants in France and their diners. He begins his caricature of the Parisian dining scene by focusing on the financial aspect of dining out:

À Paris il n'y a rien de si facile que de dîner: ce repas est mis à la portée de tout le monde; il faudrait n'avoir pas seize sous dans sa poche pour se refuser cette satisfaction; oui dans Paris, cette cité brillante, qui donne le ton, les modes à toute l'Europe; dans cette moderne Babylone qui éblouit les yeux de l'étranger et attire vers elle de tous les points du globe, on peut dîner pour seize sous; il n'est donc pas besoin d'avoir cinquante mille livres de rentes pour venir vivre à Paris. (73-74)

Having the appropriate amount of money alone, however, did not guarantee a decent meal or access to the finest dining establishments in Paris during the 1830s. Knowing the

appropriate behaviors and customs related to dining in a restaurant provided additional social cachet to open the doors to the most exclusive dining establishments in Paris.

Paul de Kock explains that knowing how to navigate this intricate dining scene was nearly as important as being able to pay for it. He writes, “Un homme qui aura de l’or plein ses poches peut dîner fort mal, faute de discernement, de connaissances dans le choix des mets; tandis qu’un amateur économe, un connaisseur, un homme de goût et de bouche enfin, fera avec trois ou quatre plats choisis un repas excellent” (81). The dining landscape of Paris consisted of different types of eateries each with its own customs. The most complex eateries to navigate were those that offered a menu with meal choices. Knowing how to read these menus was imperative for a diner to secure a decent meal. De Kock recounts stories of bourgeois and peasant diners visiting restaurants and foolishly ordering simple dishes such as beef with cabbage or skate cooked in a butter sauce because they do not recognize anything else on the menu. Aside from the need to understand the terminology used on the menus, one had to understand the placement of the items on the menu. He recounts stories of inexperienced diners selecting dishes in the order in which they appear on the menu so that they fill up on a meal that consists of every type of soup that appears on the menu (83). They are not aware of the conventional way of reading a menu, which entails jumping between its sections in order to select dishes for each phase of the meal. He writes, “Ceux-là, du moins, ne péchaient que par ignorance, et ils eurent encore l’esprit de goûter de ce qu’ils ne connaissaient point” (83).

Some novelists writing during this period, such as Gustave Flaubert, use this notion of access to restaurants, or more commonly inaccessibility to these social institutions to illuminate the social commentaries running through their realist novels. In

*Madame Bovary*, Emma lacks both the social cachet and the money to dine in any of the restaurants she sees on her trips into Rouen. Her lack of access and dismay over her position in society contrasts with the sentiments of her provincial neighbors in Yonville who see beauty and find great joy in rural life. They enjoy cooking at home, raising children, and many other elements of domestic life. Emma, on the other hand, yearns to leave the countryside for the city and to join high society. When seated at her table in her own home, she often refuses to eat and eventually ignores her daughter and husband. Emma would rather dine in a restaurant in the Rouen town square surrounded by strangers than enjoy domestic life with her family.

De Kock's advice to diners who wish to demonstrate their prowess at navigating the restaurant culture of the nineteenth century and avoid the pitfalls of inexperienced diners is to visit popular restaurants that may cost a bit more than the average *traiteur*. He advises diners to look for clean dining establishments that have menus with clearly labeled sections. He notes that many good restaurants offer special dishes that are printed on the menu by hand. Often these "specials" cost more, but are worth the extra cost as they appeared rarely and by ordering one of these plates, one communicated a certain *savoir-faire* to his fellow diners. He writes:

Paris est la ville où on dîne le mieux quand on sait commander son dîner; mais pour cela il faut savoir choisir, et ne pas se laisser éblouir par les cartes de restaurateurs. Dans une ville où la gastronomie a des autels où l'art culinaire fait chaque jour de nouvelles découvertes au profit de notre gourmandise et aux dépens de notre estomac, ce n'est point une connaissance futile que celle des cartes de restaurateurs (80).

One of his final pieces of advice to inexperienced diners is to invite a friend who enjoys life to dine at a restaurant and observe him. Dining in pairs and sharing plates was acceptable and often advisable in most restaurants as portions for one were sufficient for

two, so the cost of inviting a friend to dine was not much more than the cost of dining alone. One would always learn something from a cultured friend who had experience dining out (84). He urges his readers to try new dishes and to not be afraid to ask questions.

Brillat-Savarin highlights in *La Physiologie du goût* the convenience that these new eateries provided to diners. He was so enamored with restaurants that he referred to them as a gourmand's "Paradis" (311). One now had far more food choices with spices, coffees, liqueurs, and French and foreign wines appearing on many of the new restaurant menus. One could eat at different times according to one's own schedule. At a restaurant, one would know before eating what the cost of his meal would be. All of these conveniences helped to push restaurants to the center of urban society during the nineteenth century.

#### The Modern Woman Dines out in Public

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Parisian dining scene during the 1800s was the public access to society it provided to women. By the middle of the nineteenth century, French society largely accepted a woman's presence in the public sphere of the restaurant. Most of the literature from this period that comments on and finds the presence of women in restaurants in France remarkable was written by tourists to the city, not locals. John Scott writes as early as 1814 in his tableau of the city of Paris that "crowds of both sexes" poured into the restaurants at dinnertime and the presence of women sitting among the crowds of men "startles the English visitor" (128). Scott is astonished that Frenchmen would bring their wives to a public space where she will

encounter mistresses, prostitutes, and men of questionable morals. As a British visitor to the city, he asserts that seclusion from society is “necessary to the preservation of the most valuable female qualities” (128-129). J. Steward’s *Guide to Paris*, which was printed primarily for British tourists in 1837, remarks, “The French live anywhere rather than at home; and families having respectable establishments of their own frequently dine *en ville*. Ladies visit these establishments” (30).

The 1881 Baedeker Guide to Paris comments that women may dine at the best restaurants of the city “with perfect propriety” and may enter the bouillon restaurants without hesitation (10). Women in Paris during the 1800s enjoyed access to urban society through the restaurant that was not available to women in Britain and other cities. It is important to note that while the modern Parisian woman frequented cafés and restaurants during this period, her counterparts in other parts of France enjoyed less access to the public dining establishments as Scott comments about Londoners during the same period. His reaction to seeing Parisian women dining alone or amongst other women in restaurants would be similar to many living outside of Paris.

Women’s access to the restaurant, its diners, and its culture challenged the traditional notion of domesticity. Scott compares the women in London to the women in Paris and finds that in Paris, “women of the town are less a peculiar class than those of England” (131). He concludes that the home in France, and all of its comfort, quiet, and virtue, is less sacredly preserved than in England. In her book *Apartment Stories*, Sharon Marcus writes about the Victorian notion that home and industry should be separated and divided along gender lines which assigned the domestic realm (home) to women and the public realm (industry) to men. Restaurants and other public spaces, such as cafés,

department stores, newspaper kiosks, and parks in Paris introduced women to the public sphere thus blurring the lines between domestic and public. The traditional gender distinctions in Victorian London could not be sustained in Paris. Restaurants in the nineteenth century challenged the role of the home as the space in which all domestic affairs took place. Further blurring the line between domestic and public, “restaurateurs” adopted the interior decoration of the home by using curtains, fireplaces, mirrors, and carpets in the same way that the lady of the house would in her own home (Thiollet 12). One could dine in a restaurant that resembled his or her home, thus, visually replacing the home as the center of “domestic” life.

#### A Typology of Restaurants Prevalent in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Paris

I describe here the dining culture and the many varieties of restaurants one would find in the city of Paris during the nineteenth century. It is important to first acknowledge that by discussing restaurants and dining establishments in Paris during the nineteenth century, there is a segment of the population for whom dining out was not a reality. Jean-Paul Aron notes that between 1821 and 1830, only 17% of the persons who died during this period had their funerals paid for privately (165). The remaining 83% lacked the 15 francs required to finance their own burials. One can infer then that most of the individuals that died during this period did so as paupers who probably could not afford a 15 franc meal at a restaurant either. He adds that by 1846, when a lower than expected wheat harvest increased the price of bread, 610,000 of the estimated 900,000 inhabitants in the Préfet de la Seine were eligible for public assistance (Aron 166). Some of these poorest members of society, those that Émile Goudeau refers to as “those who ate

poorly,” could not afford to purchase food and passed many nights on the streets hungry (204). While these individuals may not eat in any of the dining establishments I discuss in this project, they will play an important role in my later discussion of conspicuous consumption during the late nineteenth century. The spectacle of dining out requires an audience. The main dining room of a restaurant often had large windows that looked out towards the street through which passersby could observe diners. Often these spectators were those who could not afford to dine out, but participated in the emerging restaurant culture as observers.

The least expensive restaurants in the city at this time consisted of “traiteurs,” “marchands de vin,” taverns, “crémeries” and boarding houses which provided meager meals at a reasonable fixed cost. Many of these establishments traced their origins to the Ancien Régime before Roze de Chantoiseau began selling broths. Meals were generally served at 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening at a host’s table without a server or any decorative embellishment in the room’s furnishings or on the plates. De Kock refers to these establishments as philanthropic enterprises for members of the working class. He writes, “Il faut que tout le monde vive. Ceux qui bâtissent les maisons comme ceux qui les achètent” (74). J. Steward in his 1837 *The Stranger’s Guide to Paris* advises his readers to actually avoid these types of restaurants because the food and wine served were of poor quality and quantity. The 1863 *Guide Parisien*, indicates that these establishments “n’ont d’ailleurs rien qui puisse attirer un étranger ou lui donner quelque idée des mœurs et des habitudes parisiennes” (21). The lower economic classes of society visited these types of establishments because of their lower prices.

Many of these establishments were located between the Panthéon and Jardin des Plantes neighborhoods along the rue Lacépède and rue St.-Jacques. Because of their low fixed prices, the restaurants with a table d'hôte attracted visitors, students, and manual laborers, who enjoyed knowing the cost of their meal in advance. These restaurants would advertise their prices on boards in the streets of Paris that emphasized the fact that one could eat a decent meal for a fair price. One such sign read "C'est à ne pas le croire, dîner excellent à vingt-trois sous!" (Martin 75). Often these single-table restaurants served a meal that consisted of a *potage*, two main dishes, dessert, a carafe of wine and an unlimited amount of bread. The idea was to have diners eat inexpensive bread to satisfy their hunger so that the host could serve less of his or her more expensive food items. Paul de Kock, however, remarks on the inconsistency of the food quality in his tableau of these dining establishments. He notes that often water was substituted for the traditional carafe of wine and if one ate too much of the unlimited bread at a boarding house, the owner would ask you to eat elsewhere for your next meal.

Following a meal at a host's table, diners, particularly those who slept in the boarding houses, often engaged in a game of cards and socialized with one another. Some of the most vibrant scenes and lively conversations in Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* occur around Madame Vauquer's table in the boarding house. The food served at the table may have been mediocre, but these men and women who worked hard throughout the day found enjoyment in the playful atmosphere of these eateries. Goudeau writes, "On travaille à la lumière du jour: on ne s'amuse, on ne commence à vivre qu'à la lumière artificielle" (214). While some of the more elaborate dinners in the elite restaurants in the Palais Royal neighborhood were only just beginning, the tables in the boarding houses

and taverns were cleared at 7:00 in the evening to make room for games and other activities.

The *Crémerie-Restaurant Polidor*, which still stands today in the 5<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris and gained its current celebrity for hosting a number of authors such as Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine when they were struggling artists, was established in 1845 as a cheese shop with a host's table. While this particular restaurant that once only hosted students, struggling artists, and manual laborers now serves scores of tourists at a number of different tables, many of the table d'hôte-styled restaurants and boarding houses began closing by the middle of the century for financial reasons as they could no longer sustain themselves (Martin 77, Joanne 21).

At around this same time when many of the restaurants that fed the lower socio-economic classes were closing, more middle-class restaurants opened in Paris, signaling a change in the French economy that increased access to wealth. In 1854, a butcher named Pierre Louis Duval opened the first of what would become a chain of restaurants known as "établissements de bouillon," which according to the 1881 Baedeker travel guide to Paris were "very popular with the middle and even upper classes" (17). These predecessors to modern-day lunch counters and fast-food restaurants provided a simple meal, such as soup, at a very reasonable price. Waitresses wearing neat black and white uniforms rapidly served diners at unadorned tables in large rooms. Auguste Renoir immortalized the image of Duval's waitresses in an 1875 painting "Une serveuse chez Duval," which depicts an expressionless, but neatly dressed server. This graceful woman stands in front of an unadorned wall, which most likely represents the simple decor of these restaurants. These uniformed waitresses became representative of Duval's bouillon

restaurants. Émile Goudeau notes in his tableau of the Parisian dining scene in 1893; “Mêmes petites bonnes, devenues fameuses, et ayant eu réclame du théâtre, comme les demoiselles du téléphone. Elles demeurent toujours le signe distinct du ‘bouillon.’” (128-129). A bouillon without the customarily-dressed waitresses was simply not a true bouillon restaurant. This “digne nonne de cuisine,” would present diners with a ticket at the end of the meal, which they handed to a cashier along with payment upon exiting (Goudeau 133). Dining at one of these bouillon restaurants was far from luxurious, but it was a step upward from the host table establishments of the past.

Unlike at the host table restaurants, diners in the bouillon restaurants selected their meals from a short menu to supplement their standard soup dish. The menu consisted primarily of roasted or boiled meat, fish, vegetables and dessert. Supplemental charges were added to each diner’s bill for wine, bread, napkins, sparkling water, and service. According to the 1881 Baedeker guide, the largest bouillon restaurant was located at 6, rue Montesquieu near the Palais Royal, which had become the city’s principal restaurant-dining district by the middle of the nineteenth century. These restaurants were so popular that they attracted many repeat customers. In Goudeau’s 1893 tableau, he remarks that these repeat customers developed more refined tastes to which the bouillon restaurants adapted. They made a number of substitutions such as replacing seltzer water with eau-minérale and bread with croutons. They would eventually add even more refined dishes to the menu. In general, one could satisfy his hunger at a bouillon restaurant with good quality food. The lack of atmosphere and décor, however, separated these restaurants from the more upscale establishments of the period that were priced similarly. Their system of pricing everything “à la carte,” including

service, napkins, and water made a diner's check expensive. Goudeau writes, "Mais ce qui est vrai, c'est qu'au bouillon Duval on ne consommé pas 'à l'œil.' Au total, avec son système de lichettes qui, partant de chiffres modestes arrivent des vingt et trente sous pièce, le bouillon Duval est un restaurant hors de prix" (134)!



Figure 1- "Une serveuse du restaurant Duval," painting by Auguste Renoir in 1875, reproduced digital image in Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2013 Metropolitan Museum of Art Digital Collection. 9 August 2013 <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/61.101.14>

The middle-class restaurant, such as those Duval built around the city, provided novelists during the nineteenth century with settings in which to recount their stories of middle class malaise. Joris-Karl Huysmans writes about the plight of a civil-servant in Paris named Folantin who samples every type of middle-class restaurant Paris offers in his search for a modicum of material comfort and happiness in life. He yearns to enjoy the comforts of the upper classes, yet finds himself trapped within a socioeconomic status that prevents him from accessing the best of Parisian society. As Folantin moves from restaurant to restaurant, he is reminded of his lack of social cachet and money that restricts his access to the best dining establishments of the city and confines him, instead to the middle class restaurants. He eventually senses the futility of expending energy to find an escape from his banal life. He quotes Schopenhauer's premise that man's life swings like a pendulum between pain and boredom and resigns himself to stop swimming against the tide.

The "Restaurants à la carte," separated themselves from the middle-class restaurants that Folantin sampled by offering full table service and extensive menu choices. They were divided into those that catered to the upper middle class diners, 2<sup>nd</sup> order restaurants, and those for society's elites, which were known as "grands restaurants." The 1863 Joanne Guide further divides these establishments into four categories based on price. One would find these menu-restaurants throughout the city of Paris by the middle of the century. Prices varied in these establishments, but the food was generally good and portion sizes were plentiful.

Restaurateurs configured their menus to emphasize the abundance of food offered in their kitchens. Steward's guide to Paris from 1837 indicates that these à la carte

restaurants had between 200 and 300 different plates listed on their menus (30). Brillat-Savarin indicates that a first-class restaurant would offer 12 different varieties of soups, 24 hors d'oeuvres, 20 beef dishes, 20 lamb or mutton plates, 30 of fowl and game, 20 preparations of veal, 12 pastries, 20 kinds of fish, 15 roasts, 50 different side dishes, and 50 desserts (316-317)! Both the Véry Restaurant and Rocher de Cancale offered over 100 dishes on their menus (Muhlstein 50). Even by today's standards of food preservation and technologically advanced cooking techniques, a restaurant would have trouble executing so many different dishes. By looking more closely at these extensive menus from the period, it becomes clear that restaurateurs were compounding the plates offered by listing every conceivable preparation and type of food. Meat dishes alone were offered roasted, fried, stuffed, or sliced. A restaurateur often bought entire carcasses of animals at the market, so he was motivated to sell not only expensive cuts such as loin or rib, but also brains, ears, head, tongue, sweetbreads, and chops in order to maximize his profits. Muhlstein compares the vast amounts of information squeezed into four columns on the menus of these 'grands restaurants to a newspaper such as *Le Moniteur Universel*, the government's official newspaper (50). The terms used on the menus were often inherited from aristocratic houses where chefs had apprenticed and so the uninitiated public had difficulty deciphering the differences between sauces and preparations. Honoré Blanc's *Guide des dîneurs de Paris* from 1815 includes the translation into simple French of 21 menus from some of the most popular restaurants of his time. He writes in the preface of the dining guide; "Le client qui venait s'asseoir dans le salon d'un restaurant devait avoir à sa disposition comme éléments de son dîner l'éventail minimum suivant:

12 potages

24 hors-d'œuvre  
 15 ou 20 entrées de bœuf  
 20 entrées de mouton  
 30 entrées de volaille et de gibier  
 16 ou 20 de veau  
 12 de pâtisserie  
 24 de poisson  
 15 de rôts  
 50 entremets  
 50 desserts (vi)

At least 30 different wines, 20 or 30 types of liqueur, and other coffees and punches accompanied the extensive list of food offerings on the menu at one of these “first-order” restaurants. De Kock adds that the servers in these restaurants were polite, accommodating, knowledgeable, and prompt (79-80). The Joanne Guide describes these restaurants as those where one finds “les grands vins, les primeurs, le gibier et le poisson de premier choix, sans se préoccuper du montant de l’addition” (20). The prices were higher, the service was better, meal choices were more diverse, and the food was the best in the city at a grand restaurant.

The men and women who visited the “grands restaurants” did so to eat a good meal as much as to participate in the spectacle of dining as one of the city’s elites. Charles Monselet writes in the 1866 edition of the *Double Almanach Gourmand*; “Je ne sais pas de plus beau spectacle au monde qu’un homme qui va dîner en ville” (41). The

diner would leave home early to allow enough time to parade slowly through the Tuileries Gardens and to whet his appetite with thoughts about his impending meal. He would display his finest clothes “car la gastronomie veut être honorée, et il n’y a pas de fête plus importante qu’un festin” (41). He would stride through the streets with a distinct purpose that differed from the meandering of a flâneur. The diner would eventually arrive at his chosen restaurant, was ushered to his table, handed a menu, and entertained by a staff of waiters. The spectacle of dining out began as a diner left his home and ended at the table of a restaurant where he would be surrounded by other diners participating as audience and actors in the drama.

The environment of these “grands restaurants” further distinguished themselves from all of the other eateries in Paris. Émile Goudeau highlights the décor and the luxurious table settings of these restaurants as their defining characteristics (139-140). He writes that the “grands restaurants” could sell the same soup as one of Duval’s restaurants for a much higher price provided they did so with superior service and in an opulently-decorated dining room. The *Almanach des Gourmands* describes the glass, marble and bronze interior of the Café Véry, which by the early 1800s had become one of the most celebrated “grands-restaurants” in the Palais Royal neighborhood, and the envy of all of the debutant “restaurateurs” in the city (185). The price of dining at the Véry, however, was prohibitive; “Mais le nombre de ceux qui peuvent donner un louis pour leur diner, est encore trop petit pour que la foule se porte dans ces magnifiques salons” (185). Périgord’s *Nouvel Almanach des Gourmands* remarks that the food and wine were good at the Véry, the salons were garnished exquisitely, but one would rarely find regulars at

its tables. The high cost of dining at this “antique sanctuaire de la cuisine” preserved its exclusivity (211).

#### Dining in the *Cabinet Particulier*

In addition to providing private tables, some “grands restaurants” also offered diners access to what was known as a “cabinet particulier,” which was a private room or secluded booth in the dining room or often on the second floor. Businessmen hosted lunches to discuss their affairs and men entertained their mistresses at these private tables. Some of the larger private rooms hosted wedding receptions and other formal gatherings. These private rooms were introduced to restaurants during the nineteenth century. While the main dining rooms of a restaurant were decorated ornately, a cabinet normally only contained a table, some chairs, a mirror, and curtains for its windows. The cabinets were usually located far from the spectacle of the main dining room of a restaurant. Some restaurants even had two entrances- one for the main dining room, and one for its customers who wished to dine privately in a cabinet. Goudeau describes in *Paris qui Consomme* a typical scene in which three men meet to discuss business in a “cabinet particulier.” The men pass the hours eating good food, drinking fine wines, and discussing gossip. When the meal ends and coffee is served, the men realize that they have not yet discussed any of their important affairs. Their jovial encounter in the restaurant prompts them to schedule a meeting for the next morning in one of their offices to conduct business. Goudeau comments, “Le déjeuner d’affaires en cabinet particulier semblerait être le dernier mot de l’illogisme” (234). Instead of being the site at which business was discussed, the “cabinet particulier” of the nineteenth century

restaurant provided businessmen a neutral space to become acquainted with one another so that they would later conduct business together in an office or over a subsequent meal.

“Cabinets particuliers” also provided discrete locations for men to entertain their lovers or mistresses. De Kock writes of these private booths that the service was often better than in the main dining room because the restaurant proprietor personally supervised these spaces (85). Rebecca Spang writes that a restaurant cabinet “concealed as much as its main dining room made visible,” which made it an ideal location for secret seduction (210). Philandering men could entertain their mistresses outside of the home, and therefore escape prosecution from suspicious wives. The implicit eroticism of inviting a woman to dine in a cabinet was well-known in nineteenth century society. In his 1870 book of poems and songs titled *Gastronomiana*, Georges D’Heylli writes about the ulterior motives of diners at a cabinet:

Le cabinet particulier  
Où l’amant affamé conduit sa jeune amie,  
Sans doute a pour tous deux un attrait *singulier*,  
Mais c’est chose étrangère à la gastronomie.  
Remplir son estomac et de mets le charger  
N’est pas leur principale affaire.  
On ne va pas là pour manger,  
On a bien autre chose à faire (90).

Duvert’s and Xavier’s 1832 play “Les Cabinets Particuliers,” which was about deception in a newly-established restaurant, played daily at Paris’ Théâtre de Vaudeville for the winter season of 1832-1833 as a tribute to the ever-increasing popularity of dining in one of these private rooms. In the opening scene, a couple enters the restaurant and requests to dine in a “cabinet particulier.” Shortly after the couple enters, a man named M. Gavet presents himself as the husband of the woman who just entered the cabinet and

demands that the restaurant-owner, Morin, direct him to her cabinet. The woman eventually emerges and confesses that she is Madame Gavet and enters a second cabinet with her husband. Just as the couple enter the second cabinet, a third man seated in the audience cries out that he is the real-life husband of the actress playing Madame Gavet and assumes the role of M. Gavet. Eventually it is revealed that the man from the first scene who entered the first cabinet with Madame Gavet is a woman dressed as a man. With its twisting plot, cross-dressing actor, and a series of identity changes, this play highlights the cabinet's role in preserving anonymity and concealing private affairs.

At a number of instances in the play, actors address the audience directly to explain and comment on the scandalous scenario that is played out before them. By breaking down the so-called "third wall," Xavier and Duvert emphasize the realism of the scenario and the setting. The role that a restaurant and its restaurateur play in nineteenth century society is on display as much as their comedic plot. In the opening scene, the restaurateur, Morin, asks his servers whether fish is listed on the menu. They inform him, in unison, that it is, but that there is no fish in the kitchen. Gibelotte, one of the servers, assumes that should someone order fish, he will simply inform the diner that there is no fish available. Morin becomes enraged at the thought of one of his servers informing the diners that an item on the menu is not available. He calls Gibelotte an imbecile and instructs him that the only two acceptable responses are to inform lunch diners that the fresh fish has not arrived yet and to inform dinner guests that the lunch diners already ate all of the fish. The choir sings at this moment:

Le vrai talent est de le retenir  
Entre le poisson de l'espérance  
Et le poisson du souvenir (2)

Morin is satisfied with simply insuring that fish is displayed on the menu. The appearance of the restaurant is more important to Morin than providing the meals promised in his menu. Morin fusses over wording in the menu and whether the cabinets are ready for guests, but he pays little attention to the fact that there is no fish in the kitchen to serve despite it being listed on the extensive menu. He knows that his diners are visiting his restaurant for the atmosphere and privacy he will provide, not necessarily the food.



Figure 2- "*Le Cabinet Particulier*" drawing by Henri Monnier in 1883; reproduced digital image in Musée du Louvre. 23 Septmeber 2013  
<http://www.culture.gouv.fr>

### Dining at the *Rocher de Cancale*

Because of its exquisite décor and superior food offerings, Au Rocher de Cancale was one of the most well-known “grands restaurants” in Paris during the nineteenth century. M. Balaine opened the restaurant in 1804 on rue Montorgueil as an eatery specializing in oysters. The 1828 *Nouveau guide des dîneurs* describes the interior of this restaurant; “La beauté des pièces, toutes troussées et toutes parées, leur fraîcheur, leurs propreté forment un ravissant coup-d’œil, et les gourmands s’arrêtent avec volupté devant cet amphithéâtre nutritif” (8). Two statues of deer flanked the entranceway to the restaurant on rue Montorgueil. The walls of the large dining room were decorated with octagonal paintings by Paul Gavarni, which included scenes of people dining, baskets of fruits and vegetables, and images of various game that could be found on the extensive menu. Gavarni painted the scenes during the course of a few months in 1837 while pausing each day to lunch at one of the tables. The ceilings were covered in plaster and retained exposed wooden beams. In one corner on the second floor of the restaurant, Balaine installed an eponymous sculpture of oysters clinging to a rock.

According to a number of guides, this restaurant served some of the finest wine and best food in the city. It attracted gourmands, who according to *Paris à Table*, dined extravagantly by eating all of their meals in one day at Au Rocher de Cancale in order to sample all of its best offerings. Some even dined in reverse by starting with dessert and finishing with soup in case dining the customary way made them too full to taste the exquisite pastries on the menu (152). The *Nouvel Almanach des Gourmands* refers to the Rocher as a “sanctuaire de Comus” who was the Greek God of festivity (194). The *Nouvel Guide des Dîneurs* informs diners that this restaurant serves the best oysters from

Bretagne and Normandie at a good price because of Balaine's relationship to the fishermen in these two regions. By 1845, the original Au Rocher de Cancale restaurant at 59-61 rue Montorgueil, had closed as a result of the tumultuous political and economic climate in France. In 1846, the restaurant reopened at number 78 on the same street and today a number of Gavarni's paintings survive along with the statue of the oysters.

The Rocher's food and wine attracted many curious gourmands to its tables but it also nourished a creative group of poets and singers who belonged to the "Société du Caveau Moderne," which held its festive gatherings, called "Dîners du Vaudeville," on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month at the Rocher de Cancale beginning in 1806. The group selected the "vingt" of the month to honor their consumption of "vin" during their festive meals. Some of the more well-known members of this group included the poet and chef Armand Gouffé, the food writer Grimod de La Reynière, and the author of Parisian society caricatures Sébastien Mercier (DeKock 79). The group gathered monthly to sing, eat, and celebrate in a "goguette" at the restaurant. They published a monthly journal under the manifesto; "Rions, chantons, aimons, buvons; Voilà toute notre morale." Membership fees and the price of dining habitually at the Rocher kept the group small and elite. The group's bylaws prohibited discussion of political and religious matters and favored discussion of art, poetry, and society through bacchanalian song.

By the 1830s, the Rocher de Cancale and some of the other "grands restaurants" of the nineteenth century, such as Les Trois-Frères Provençaux and the Véry, became cultural institutions to which members of the *haute bourgeoisie* flocked to display their wealth and good taste. Balzac uses the Rocher de Cancale as a setting in a number of his novels from *La Comédie Humaine*, such as *Le Cabinet des Antiques*, *La Muse du*

*département, Illusions perdues, Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes, and Cousin Pons.* Balzac, like many other members of high society, frequented the Rocher de Cancale. He undoubtedly enjoyed the food and the exquisite décor of the restaurant, but by visiting this restaurant Balzac had the opportunity to study bourgeois society on display. The different restaurants in the capital by this time were stratified according to class with the most expensive ones attracting an emerging consumer class and the least expensive ones providing a public space for members of the working classes to intermingle with one another.

These unique eating establishments in Paris grew to be so popular by the end of the century that they would spread to other parts of France and eventually throughout the world. At the end of the *Nouvel Almanach des gourmands*, A. B. Périgord writes, “Bien que Paris soit le centre des jouissances gastronomiques et le véritable foyer de la gourmandise, le gourmand se permet parfois une petite excursion hors des barrières” (219). By the time the *Nouvel Almanach* was published in 1825 one would find distinctive dining establishments just outside the borders of the capital in Saint-Cloud, Versailles, Saint-Germain, Montmorency, and Sceaux. A. B. Périgord highlights Cornaille’s pastries at Tête Noire in Saint-Cloud. He also recommends visiting L’Hôtel des bains and the Restaurant du Prince de Galles in Saint-Germain. Recognizing that these establishments neighbored the capital of gastronomy, A. B. de Périgord presents what he refers to as “la carte gastronomique de la France,” in which he lists the French cities where one would find the best wine, asparagus, cheese, and all of the other foods that composed the menus in Paris’ finest restaurants (226).

In the final paragraph of Périgord's almanac, he recognizes the absence from his dining guide all of the other international food cities that were emerging, such as Brussels, Gruyère, and Geneva. He leaves those for a future edition, but it is important to note that by 1825, other cities in Europe had begun to mimic and adapt Paris' dining culture. British visitors to the French capital in the early 1800s wrote about the restaurants they visited to share with their countrymen back home. The April 24<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Pall Mall Gazette* announced the arrival of Duval's bouillon restaurants in London in 1886. The newspaper indicated that anyone who had crossed the channel to visit Paris would already be familiar with the "great advantages" of dining in a restaurant. The French restaurant even reached across the ocean when Delmonico's opened in New York in 1837 with its extensive French wine list, cabinets particuliers, and fine cuisine.

The restaurant, as one of France's cultural products, was on display for the world to see during the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. The centerpiece of the fair was Eiffel's tower with four restaurants installed on its first floor platform for visitors to sample France's finest cuisine and enjoy the spectacle of dining in a restaurant high above the fair's crowds where "l'addition est tout aussi élevée que le monument" (Goudeau 150). A Russian eatery, an Anglo-American bar, a Flemish restaurant, and a French restaurant named Café Brébant welcomed diners to the tower. It was in this French restaurant that Maupassant found himself lunching daily. At noon each day during the exposition, a cannon fired from the top of the Tour Eiffel to announce the closing of the salons and opening of the fair's restaurants. The wealthy visitors crowded into the expensive restaurants, such as the Brébant, while the families and couples of moderate or poor means picnicked on benches, chairs, or on the lawns (Jonnes 168).

It was not necessarily the food that attracted diners to the Café Brébant on Eiffel's tower, but rather the exclusivity it afforded to its diners. Dining at the top of the tower symbolized one's arrival at the pinnacle of French society. The restaurant attracted many celebrity visitors from the upper echelons of society, such as the actress Sarah Bernhardt, Britain's future King Edward VII, George I of Greece, the Shah of Persia, American entertainer Buffalo Bill, the President of the Republic, and Eiffel's personal guest Thomas Edison. Goudeau describes the arrival of a diner on the platform of the tower:

Et tandis que l'on déchiquette les crevettes et que l'on croque quelques radis, rien n'est comparable au spectacle que l'on peut contempler du haut de ce gigantesque Robinson. Paris étale ses lignes de rues et de boulevards, son échiquier immense de places et de monuments, échiquier au bas duquel évoluent, pions minuscules, une foule d'êtres s'agitant comme s'ils jouaient une interminable partie, dont les nombreux 'échec et mat' se voient d'ici, tout au loin, sous les arbres du Père-Lachaise (149).

Dining atop Eiffel's tower, one was economically and physically positioned above the majority of Parisian society. The image of dining at the Brébant in the world's tallest building in the 1890s was a significant cultural event as it came to symbolize a rampant consumer culture that some believed was plaguing French society as Maupassant cites as his reason for departing Paris in *La Vie Errante* in 1890.

Chapter 2- A view from the top: A confrontation between social classes in the Nineteenth Century Restaurant

Many of the “grands restaurants du boulevard,” such as the Grand Véfour, which combined with its neighbor the Véry in 1869, were located in the tree-lined Palais-Royal neighborhood of Paris. These restaurants showcased the finest cuisine of the city, employed the celebrity chefs of the era, and were quite costly. Frequenting regularly only by those who could afford to do so, these restaurants primarily hosted the upper class elites. Jérôme Grévy argues that by the early nineteenth century, these restaurants and cafés replaced the salons of the eighteenth century as the spaces in which political and cultural ideas were discussed amongst important members of society (61). It is for this reason that Maupassant found himself regularly dining at the top of the Eiffel Tower.

In the first chapter of *La Vie Errante*, entitled “Lassitude,” Maupassant explains his reasons for leaving Paris in 1890 to explore the countries along the Mediterranean. He writes, “Il n'y a plus chez nous que des gens riches et des gens pauvres. Aucun autre classement ne peut différencier les degrés de la société contemporaine... On dirait que le cours de l'esprit humain s'endigüe entre deux murailles qu'on ne franchira plus: l'industrie et la vente” (8). He yearns to escape a modernizing society that by the end of the nineteenth century was rapidly adopting a capitalist economy. The culture of consumption that rode in on the wave of modernity further stratified Parisians into separate social classes. Writing at the conclusion of the famous 1889 “Exposition

Universelle” in Paris, Maupassant turns his criticism of modern society to perhaps the most recognizable symbol of modern France- the Eiffel Tower.

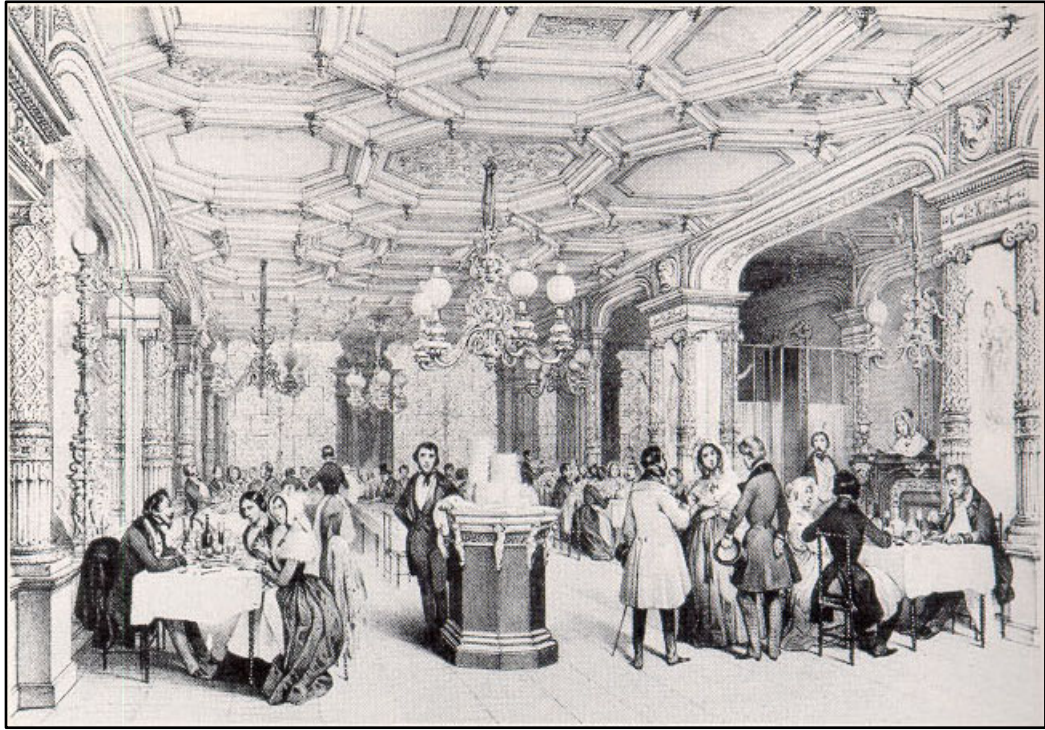


Figure 3- *Le Café-Restaurant des Frères provençaux* drawing by Chapuy in 1846; Reprinted lithograph by Fichot and V. Adam at Agence Photo Roger-Viollet. 23 September 2013 <http://www.roger-viollet.fr/accueil.aspx>

The tower had been constructed to serve as the entrance to France’s world exposition. Visitors to the capital walked on the *Champ de Mars* under the tower’s arch into the exhibition. Being the tallest structure in the world at the time, it stood as a strong visual representation of France’s ingenuity in technology and engineering. Even in his harsh critique of the tower, Maupassant acknowledges its significance in demonstrating to the world “la force, la vitalité, l’activité et la richesse inépuisable” of France (4). From

throughout the city of Paris, international visitors and proud French men and women could see the skeletal ironwork of Eiffel's tower and reflect on France's contributions to architecture, art, and scientific advancement.

Noteworthy for this study is the fact that enclosed within the skeleton of what is still the most recognizable symbol of the French republic, the planners of the 1889 exposition constructed four restaurants on the first platform of the tower. Dining at one of these restaurants was reserved for special occasions and for those who could afford to pay the higher menu prices in addition to the admission fee to ride an elevator up one of the tower's pillars. (6). Bistros and cafés sprung up around the tower's footprint and picnickers sprawled out underneath the tower to lunch. The Eiffel Tower and all that it symbolized to those that viewed it was inextricably tied to the city's vibrant fin-de-siècle restaurant culture. This symbol of progress and advancement had enmeshed within its iron girders restaurants in which the bourgeois and upper class visitors to the exposition dined and marveled at the capital sprawling out below them.

Maupassant describes members of *la bonne société* at the time only accepting dinner invitations on the condition that they would take place in one of these fashionable aerial restaurants. He describes the middle classes clamoring over one another for a seat at one of the tables in the sky:

Dans cette chaleur, dans cette foule de populaire en goguette et en transpiration, dans ces papiers gras traînant et voltigeant partout, dans cette odeur de charcuterie et de vin répandu sur les bancs, dans ces haleines de trois cent mille bouches soufflant le relent de leurs nourritures, dans le coudoisement, dans le frôlement, dans l'emmêlement de toute cette chair échauffée, dans cette sueur confondue de tous les peuples semant leurs puces sur les sièges et par les chemins, je trouvais bien légitime qu'on allât manger une fois ou deux, avec dégoût et curiosité, la cuisine de cantine des gargotiers aériens, mais jugeais stupéfiant qu'on pût dîner, tous les soirs, dans cette crasse et dans cette cohue, comme le faisait la bonne société, la société délicate, la société d'élite, la société fine et maniérée qui,

d'ordinaire a des nausées devant le peuple qui peine et sent la fatigue humaine (6-7)

Like their counterparts on Paris' boulevards, the restaurants on the tower brought members of the upper class together with members of the middle class who tried to improve their social standing by emulating the wealthy. They provided spaces for public spectacle and private moments in *cabinets*. Meanwhile the *petite bourgeoisie* were excluded due to the financial cost of riding up the tower to one of the restaurants. Reserved for only the most important visiting dignitaries, such as princes, a Russian czar, and Thomas Edison, Gustave Eiffel entertained the most elite guests in a small room at the highest platform of the tower. The triangular-shaped Eiffel Tower with the most elite members of society dining around tables at the top and the poorest members of society eating in their shadow was a visual representation of a rapidly modernizing stratified French society that had turned towards a culture of consumption by 1890.

Maupassant writes nostalgically about a time before the construction of the Eiffel Tower and the emergence of restaurants, department stores, and other sites of conspicuous consumption in the city when philosophy, art, and scientific advancement benefitted all humankind rather than served the practical needs of a select few:

Voilà, en effet, qu'aujourd'hui l'émotion séductrice et puissante des siècles artistes semble éteinte, tandis que des esprits d'un tout autre ordre s'éveillent qui inventent des machines de toute sorte, des appareils surprenants, des mécaniques aussi compliquées que les corps vivants, ou qui, combinant des substances, obtiennent des résultats stupéfiants et admirables. Tout cela pour servir aux besoins physiques de l'homme, ou pour le tuer. (9)

Maupassant sees the changes in French society during the nineteenth century as largely satisfying the desires of the wealthy members of the elite class. By the end of the nineteenth century, the restaurant had developed into a particular urban space that

inhabited both the private and public spheres. Satisfying its role as a public space, the restaurant turned dining into a spectacle. As a private space, the restaurant hosted illicit affairs, business transactions, and revolutionary plots. The emergence of a stratified restaurant culture during this period intensified the visual distinctions between different Parisian social classes.

The restaurants that sat at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of nineteenth-century dining establishments played a strategic role in the realist novel literary project. Authors used different types of restaurants in their novels to provide settings for a variety of different social situations. The restaurant drew members of different social classes together into small spaces for many hours at a time. Authors such as Balzac and Maupassant use the restaurant to introduce characters to a variety of social situations and as a backdrop to an “*étude des mœurs*” of the nineteenth century. Joëlle Bonnin-Ponnier explains that authors use this unique urban space to introduce intrigue, amorous escapades, erotic encounters, familial relations, and the period’s social hierarchy into their novels (50-60).

In Émile Goudeau’s tableau of the city of Paris in 1893 he notes that 90% of the businesses in Paris were food and drink establishments (v). He compares this proliferation of “*temples de la consommation*” in Paris to previous centuries when churches were the most prolific public spaces in the city. He equates restaurant dining with conspicuous consumption and also emphasizes the spectacular nature of fine dining amongst the bourgeoisie. For Goudeau, consuming the same foods one would find in a fancy restaurant around the family table at home is not an act of conspicuous consumption, but rather a celebration of one’s familial relationships. Consuming these

same foods, however, in an ornately decorated dining room in a public “temple de la consommation” where others will observe you is the essential mark of unnecessary consumption (iv). He writes; “On consomme, disons-nous, pour le plaisir de consommer. C’est que la consommation prouve le superflu, le loisir, le repos, le congé, le cœur à l’aise, l’oubli des soins fâcheux. C’est pourquoi la consommation par excellence est chose du dehors...” (vi-vii). The focus of dining “en ville” in the late nineteenth century was to participate in consumer society.

Goudeau’s text on the state of the Parisian culinary landscape in 1893 reads as a lamentation of a lost era when consuming a meal that highlighted culinary expertise was the main reason for dining out in a restaurant. He writes, “Nous admettons sans difficulté que nos pères ont dû manger fort bien chez Vèry, chez les Frères Provençaux, et au Rocher de Cancale. Cependant, ayons de la méfiance!” (143) He argues that the culinary genius of the First Empire when Antonin Carême was inventing recipes has been lost. “Les cuisiniers ne travaillent plus vingt ans, comme autrefois, avant oser se produire. Les consommateurs ne sont plus des gourmets” (143). Instead, the capital’s culinary landscape is dominated in the 1890s by what Goudeau refers to as “la guerre des tarifs” in which the price of a meal has become the most important factor that determines who eats where. He notes that the “grands restaurants” of the city serve the same food as the Duval restaurants, “mais dans d’autres conditions de décor, de mise en scène, de service, de luxe, de développement, de fraîcheur...et de prix. Et aussi de simplicité” (140). The setting of the meal during this time period has become more important than the actual meal that is consumed.

The second characteristic that Goudeau highlights in his treatise on nineteenth century dining is the importance of those dining in fancy restaurants to be *seen* doing so. Diners in a highly priced restaurant are demonstrating their wealth and communicating a message to their fellow diners, and perhaps more importantly, to those passing by in the street. These diners are telling others that they belong to the highest class of society because they can afford to dine in a restaurant. Goudeau recounts the story of “un qui dîne mal,” or those members of society who not only cannot afford to dine in one the “grands restaurants,” but also cannot even pay the fixed prices at the Duval soup restaurants or at the host tables and cook shops. The poorest members of society are defined in relation to those who eat well.

The stratification of restaurants in the nineteenth century and the restriction of access to the finest dining establishments help to define class and economic status. He writes about the poorest in society as beggars who push their noses up against the windows of the restaurants and other dining establishments into which they cannot afford to enter; “À la porte du pâtisserie, jetant un regard avide à travers les glaces de la devanture, se trouvaient tout à l’heure des miséreux” (207). He continues, “Enfin il s’en va ailleurs, celui qui dîne mal, flairant d’un nez surexcité, devant les hôtels et les restaurants, les exquis odeurs des cuisines mises en effervescence pour Paris qui va dîner (208). Charles Baudelaire writes about a beggar walking the streets of Paris eating scraps of food from the floor outside of one of Paris’ finest restaurants in “À une Mendiante rousse:”

Cependant tu vas gueusant  
 Quelque vieux débris gisant  
 Au seuil de quelque Véfour  
 De carrefour:

Tu vas lorgnant en dessous  
Des bijoux de vingt-neuf sous

In Baudelaire's poem, the beggar is cast as a spectacle to observe from afar, but even she cannot resist pressing her nose up against windows to stare inside. A spectacle requires spectators and the wealthiest members of society need the members of the middle and low socio-economic classes to play the role of an attentive audience.

Constant de Tours writes in his travel guide for visitors to the 1900 Paris universal exposition similarly about the culinary landscape of the city. Focusing, as Goudeau does, on the proliferation of dining establishments in the city at the time, he writes; "On mange à Paris dans un nombre incommensurable de restaurants, grands, moyens et petits, à la carte ou à prix fixe, toujours ouverts, très chers ou à très bon marché, très luxueux ou très simples...on n'a que l'embarras de choix" (301). By the time de Tours writes his guide to Paris, the restaurant had become an established institution, so much so that he writes with a bit of shame about the number of these dining establishments that occupy storefronts along the city's boulevards. He lists the number of kilos of beef, horse meat, poultry, fruits and vegetables that pass through the central "Halles" marketplace and wind their way through the streets to land on the restaurant table.

In the same manner as Goudeau does in his tableau, de Tours contrasts Paris' abundance of food and establishments in which to consume that abundance with the population of poor people who beg and scavenge for just enough food to sustain their lives. He writes, "Il y a cependant à Paris plus d'un malheureux pour qui 'deux sous de frites' seraient un régal auquel il ne peut prétendre; il y a des gens affamés au milieu de Paris gorgé" (305). He describes these "pauvres" roaming almost invisibly through the

marketplace begging for food and money to purchase a meal; “La pauvreté honteuse s’y dérobe dans la foule des gens heureux, car la grande ville est discrète, et, bien mieux que les petites cités, permet à ceux qu’un mauvais sort poursuit de s’isoler et de se taire, en attendant des jours meilleurs” (305). In calling attention to the invisible poor of Paris, de Tours appears to criticize the abundance of food in the city and the restaurants that support an ostentatious display of consumerism.

The nineteenth century restaurant, with its elaborately decorated interior, well-dressed diners, and expensive food highlights the socioeconomic distinctions between Paris’ residents. De Tours writes, “C’est que dans ce Paris immense le luxe se heurte aux haillons” (305). The urban environment of Paris and its stratified dining landscape forces those in the middle and lower socio-economic classes to confront the limitations placed on them by the emerging capitalist system. Authors of the realist novels of the nineteenth-century, such as Maupassant and Balzac, use the restaurant to highlight the confrontation between social classes and the demarcation of gender roles that intensified in Paris’ consumer society.

#### Maupassant’s Restaurants

The first line of Maupassant’s *Bel-Ami*, “Quand la cassière lui eut rendu la monnaie de sa pièce de cent sous, Georges Duroy sortit du restaurant,” confronts readers immediately with the economic aspect of fine dining at the top of the social ladder (5). In this story of Duroy’s scandalous rise to financial success and power, we find him dining in progressively more expensive and higher class restaurants as he advances his career. Up to the moment when Duroy publishes his first newspaper article, he dines in cook

shops, wine stores, and at the modest Bouillon Duval; “Il n’avait plus rien à faire jusqu’à trois heures; et il n’était pas encore midi. Il lui restait en poche six francs cinquante: il alla déjeuner au bouillon Duval” (65). After he trades his job as a railroad worker for a position as a journalist, he has “un déjeuner succulent dans un bon restaurant à prix modérés” and eventually visits Café Riche, one of the “grands restaurants du boulevard,” for two meals every day, thus signaling his eventual arrival at social and financial success. One can gauge Georges Duroy’s increasing success in this novel through an analysis of the dining establishments he visits.

As I demonstrated in chapter 1, a very rich “literature” of dining and restaurant guides existed during the time that Maupassant writes *Bel-Ami*. I argue that Maupassant would have been aware of the important role restaurants played to nineteenth-century society and that he draws from this rich corpus as he names specific dining establishments, locates them in and around Paris, and describes different types of diners in his novel. In the same way that the authors of the “social tableaux” sought to characterize and reveal the stereotypes of Parisians in the nineteenth century, Maupassant organizes his characters and assigns them to different dining establishments according to their social classes.

Duroy begins his life dining in the least expensive and most common type of dining establishment, a tavern owned by his parents near Rouen called La Belle-Vue. Maupassant writes, “Son père et sa mère tenaient un petit cabaret, une guinguette où les bourgeois des faubourgs venaient déjeuner le dimanche: A la Belle-Vue” (51). By assigning Duroy’s parents the role of running a working-class dining establishment, Maupassant draws a stark contrast between Duroy’s eventual success as a grown man and

his childhood. That Duroy is able to leave the grease-stained rural dining table of his boyhood home and emerge a millionaire who dines at the finest restaurants in Paris is extraordinary. Duroy's ability to climb up the social ladder is based on his increasing access to enough money to dress the part of a successful Parisian and to dine in the appropriate restaurants.

In the first few pages of the novel, we see Duroy counting what little money remains in his pocket in terms of the number of restaurant meals he can afford:

On était au 28 juin, et il lui restait juste en poche trois francs quarante pour finir le mois. Cela représentait deux dîners sans déjeuners, ou deux déjeuners sans dîners, au choix. Il réfléchit que les repas du matin étant de vingt-deux sous, au lieu de trente que coûtaient ceux du soir, il lui resterait, en se contentant de déjeuners, un franc vingt centimes de boni, ce qui représentait encore deux collations au pain et au saucisson, plus deux bocks sur le boulevard. C'était là sa grande dépense et son grand plaisir des nuits; et il se mit à descendre la rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. (6)

The restaurant meal is treated as an unattainable luxury good that is restricted to wealthy Parisians who can afford to pay for it. Throughout the novel, we see wealthy members of society exchanging meals with one another as one would exchange gifts. The Forrestiers invite Mme de Marelle to dine at their house weekly in exchange for a Saturday evening visit to a restaurant's *cabinet particulier*. Duroy exchanges a visit to his parent's rural inn for Madeleine's invitation to dine at a Parisian restaurant called Chatou. Duroy offers Clotilde a visit to a wine shop in exchange for multiple meals at a well-known restaurant Père Lathuille. That Duroy can only ever offer an invitation to a middle-class or lower class dining establishment is a product of his financial situation, which slowly improves to the point of him becoming a millionaire.

We see Duroy return to this theme of counting his money according to the cost of a restaurant meal again when he begins to run out of money while trying to impress his

mistresses. He buys better clothes, moves to a different apartment, dines in more expensive restaurants and generally lives a superficially rich life. By exchanging his modestly priced meals at a cookshop or bouillon Duval for a meal or two at a café along one of the boulevards, Duroy begins to run out of money; “Il se demandait parfois comment il avait fait pour dépenser une moyenne de mille livres par mois, sans aucun excès ni aucune fantaisie; et il constatait qu’en additionnant un déjeuner de huit francs avec un dîner de douze pris dans un grand café quelconque du boulevard, il arrivait tout de suite un louis, qui, joint à une dizaine de francs d’argent de poche, de cet argent qui coule sans qu’on sache comment, formait un total de trente francs. Or, trente francs par jour donnent neuf cents francs à la fin du mois” (129). His ultimate solution to this problem is to dine at a brasserie for 2 francs or skip lunch altogether. He will, however, continue to dress the part of a wealthy Parisian who dines in expensive restaurants in the evening.

#### Atypical Dining Situations in *Bel-Ami*

Bonnin-Ponnier writes about the “absence of imagination” in the nineteenth century author’s use of the restaurant as the factor that enables one to study the restaurant in these novels as one would read a dining guide or tableau (61). While I agree that there certainly does exist a strong adherence to the “real” in Maupassant’s presentation of the restaurant in *Bel-Ami*, he does introduce a series of “imaginary” situations in which a wealthy character will dine in a cookshop or a middle class worker will dine in a “grand restaurant du boulevard.” This placement of characters in atypical dining situations highlights social class distinctions between the characters in the novel. Following the

hierarchy of restaurants outlined in the first chapter, one would expect to see Duroy dining in middle class restaurants and his wealthy friends dining along Paris' boulevards.

In one scene, however, Duroy's wife Madeleine asks him to take her to his home to see his parents and experience a quaint peasant's way of life in the country. She does not necessarily want to meet her new in-laws, but rather encounter a different way of life in the countryside. The newly married couple travel to Rouen and dine at Duroy's parents' tavern:

Il fallut se mettre à table. Ce fut un long déjeuner de paysans avec une suite de plats mal assortis, une andouille après un gigot, une omelette après l'andouille. Le père Duroy mis en joie par le cidre et quelques verres de vin, lâchait le robinet de ses plaisanteries de choix, celles qu'il réservait pour les grandes fêtes, histoires grivoises et malpropres arrivées à ses amis, affirmait-il. Georges, qui les connaissait toutes, riait cependant, grisé par l'air natal, ressaisi par l'amour inné du pays, des lieux familiers dans l'enfance, par toutes les choses d'autrefois revues, des riens, une marquée de couteau dans une porte, une chaise boiteuse rappelant un petit fait, des odeurs du sol, le grand soufflé de résine et d'arbres venu de la forêt voisine, les senteurs du logis, du ruisseau, du fumier." (256)

For Duroy, dining around the familial table is a nostalgic comforting event that reminds him of the simple life he left behind when he moved to Paris to seek his fortune.

Madeleine, however, is very out of place in La Belle-Vue. During their family lunch, clients of Duroy's parents begin to enter and stare at Madeleine. They remark that she is very beautiful and begin drinking and playing dominoes around her. Madeleine grows uncomfortable and excuses herself from the table (257). Maupassant's description of the later evening meal is starkly contrasted to the nostalgic lunch in the tavern. Using Madeleine's point of view instead of Duroy's, Maupassant writes:

La pauvre lumière jetait sur les murs gris les ombres des têtes avec des nez énormes et des gestes démesurés. On voyait parfois une main géante lever une fourchette pareille à une fourche vers une bouche qui s'ouvrait comme une gueule de monstre, quand quelqu'un, se tournant un peu, présentait son profil à la flamme jaune et tremblotante. Dès que le dîner fut achevé, Madeleine entraîna son mari

dehors pour ne point demeurer dans cette salle sombre où flottait toujours une odeur acre de vieilles pipes et de boissons répandues (258).

We get a glimpse here at Madeleine's perception of the Duroy's and their peasant lifestyle. Joëlle Bonnin-Ponnier writes about the importance of visual description in a narrative; "Le regard, sur le plan de l'organisation du récit, est *inséparable de la description*, grâce à laquelle affleurent les perceptions et le jugements des personnages et/ou du narrateur" (251-252). Madeleine's quaint view of rural life is quickly destroyed as she grows uncomfortable and sees all of the imperfections of her new family while seated around the dining table. She convinces Duroy to leave the next day to return home to Paris where they will presumably dine at the restaurant Chatou as Duroy had promised to her while on the train to Rouen (241).

Clotilde de Marelle, Duroy's first mistress, also expresses a desire to dine in a working-class restaurant in order to experience a life that is unlike her own. One evening, Duroy asks Clotilde if she would like to dine "chez le père Lathuille," which was one of the more elegant restaurants in Paris in the late 1800s. Edouard Manet immortalized this fine dining establishment in his 1879 painting "Chez Le Père Lathuille" in which two well-dressed lovers stare at one another at a garden table while a waiter looks at them in the distance. Fittingly, this restaurant was on the same street as the famous Café Guerbois where Manet and other artist members of the Batignolles Group regularly met with one another (Saquin 75).

Hoping to experience a different type of lifestyle, which may be why she becomes Duroy's lover in the first place, Clotilde responds to Duroy's request to dine at the celebrated Père Lathuille's; "Oh! Non c'est trop chic, je voudrais quelque chose de drôle, de commun, comme un restaurant, où vont les employés et les ouvrières; j'adore les

parties dans les guinguettes! Oh! Si nous avions pu aller à la campagne” (117). In an effort to please his lover with a taste of his working-class life, Duroy escorts Clotilde to a “marchand de vin.” Upon entering through the storefront door, the diners inside grow quiet and stare at this well-dressed woman who is completely out of place in the wine shop. Maupassant describes the scene inside the wine shop that the odd couple interrupts:

Elle avait vu, à travers la vitre, deux fillettes en cheveux atablées en face de deux militaires. Trois cochers de fiacre dînaient dans le fond de la pièce étroite et longue, et un personnage, impossible à ne classer dans aucune profession, fumait sa pipe, les jambes allongées, les mains dans la ceinture de sa culotte, étendu sur sa chaise et la tête renversée en arrière par-dessus la barre. Sa jaquette semblait un musée de taches, et dans les poches gonflées comme des ventres on apercevait le goulot d’une bouteille, un morceau du pain, un paquet enveloppé dans un journal, et un bout de ficelle qui pendait. Il avait des cheveux épais, crépus, mêlés, gris de saleté; et sa casquette était par terre, sous sa chaise (118).

Dining amongst soldiers, carriage drivers, and a sleeping drunk man embarrasses Duroy. He is terribly ashamed to have allowed Clotilde a glimpse into his world. They sit at a wooden table “vernée par la graisse des nourritures, lavée par les boissons répandues et torchée d’un coup de serviette par le garçon” and Duroy is ashamed to have brought his lover to such a dirty place (118).

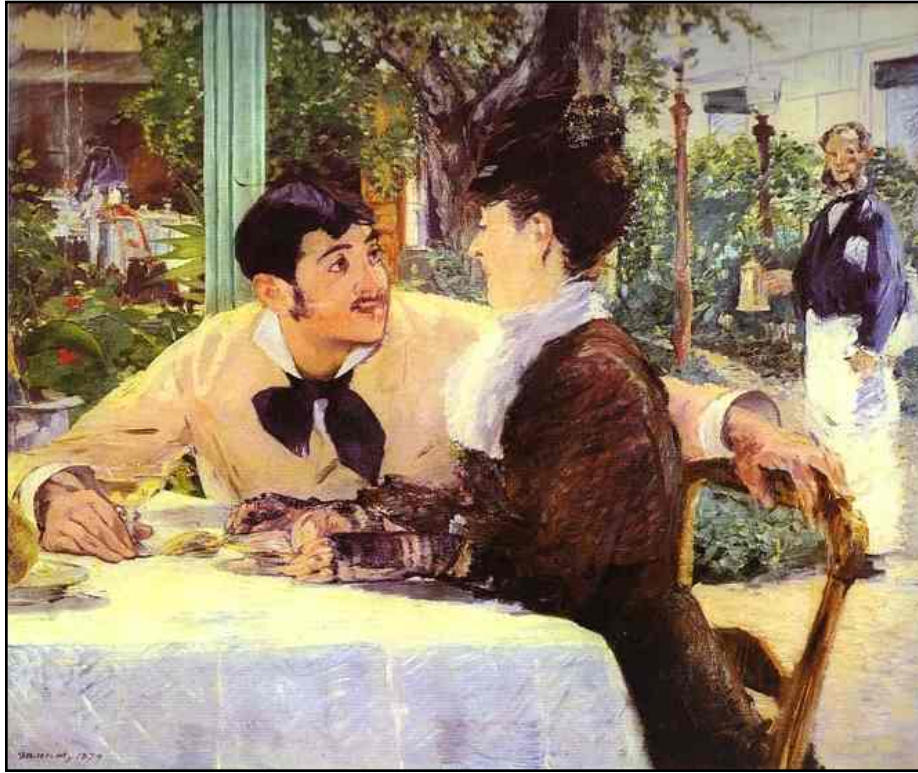


Figure 4- “*Chez le Père Lathuille*” painting by Edouard Manet in 1879 at Musée des beaux-arts de Tournai in [Bridgeman Art](http://www.bridgemanart.com). 2013 Musée des beaux-arts de Tournai digital collection. 8 August 2013 <http://www.bridgemanart.com>

Clotilde, on the other hand, is pleased with his choice of dining establishment and thoroughly enjoys her mutton stew. She tells Duroy that she prefers eating here over the Café Anglais- a reference to a café that had developed into one of the most well-known fine dining restaurants in Paris by the 1820s. Périgord writes in his 1825 dining guide about the owners of the Café Anglais; “Le choix des denrées, l’ordre admirable avec lequel le service se fait, la bonté des vins et des liqueurs, l’affluence des consommateurs surtout, attestent que MM. Englibert et Guerraz sont à la fois au nombre des meilleurs restaurateurs et des premiers limonadiers de la capitale” (202). Paul DeKock lists the

Café Anglais amongst the “restaurants [*sic*] de la haute propriété” in his tableau of the Parisian dining scene in the nineteenth century (78).

This café had hosted Tsar Alexander II, Kaiser Wilhelm I, and Otto von Bismarck while they visited the Universal Exposition in 1867. Their extravagant 8-hour, 16-course dinner became known as the “Dîner des trois empereurs” and the menu and table are still on display in Paris at the Tour d’Argent restaurant for contemporary diners to admire. The fact that Clotilde says she would prefer to eat at a wine merchant’s shop over Café Anglais and that Duroy yearns to escape this life of dining in cook shops highlights the importance of the restaurant to identifying nineteenth century social status. It is quaint for Clotilde to “dine down,” but dire for someone with Duroy’s rising social status to be seen doing so.

#### Duroy “dines up”

In the beginning of the novel, Duroy expresses his desire to escape this working-class life that contrasts so starkly with Clotilde’s fashionable life in high society. He describes his home on Rue Boursault as a place he wants to escape and begins to think about his boyhood home. His thoughts about his childhood lead him to think about the dining room in his parent’s inn; “Il revit brusquement la cuisine noire de là-bas, derrière la salle de café vide, les casseroles jetant des lueurs jaunes le long des murs, le chat dans la cheminée, le nez au feu, avec sa pose de Chimère accroupie, la table de bois graissée par le temps et par les liquides répandus, une soupière fumant au milieu, et une chandelle allumée entre deux assiettes” (154). His memories of his home are no longer nostalgic, but rather more in line with a prison he yearns to escape.

After spending an evening with his friend Forrestier dining in his well-appointed home on Rue Fontaine, he yearns to trade climbing up the steps of his apartment building for those on the elusive social ladder:

Sa maison, haute de six étages, était peuplée par vingt petits ménages ouvriers et bourgeois, et il éprouva en montant l'escalier, dont il éclairait avec des allumettes-bougies les marches sales où traînaient des bouts de papiers, des bouts de cigarettes, des épluchures de cuisine, une écœurante sensation de dégoût et une hâte de sortir de là, de loger comme les hommes riches, en des demeures propres, avec des tapis. Une odeur lourde de nourriture, de fosse d'aisances et d'humanité, une odeur stagnante de crasse et de vieille muraille, qu'aucun courant d'air n'eut pu chasser de ce logis, l'emplissait du haut en bas. (48)

Similar to Rastignac's situation in the first few pages of Balzac's *Père Goriot*, Duroy is a young man living on the upper floor of a crowded dirty apartment building with the dream of earning a fortune large enough to allow him to move out.

Duroy represents a member of the working class who is trying to improve his social status. Afraid of not fitting in with members of society's elites, Duroy approaches his first meal with Georges Forrestier and his friends with apprehension. Unlike the bona fide members of society he is dining with, Duroy does not know proper dining etiquette and it is this fact that most troubles him as he enters the dining room. His upbringing in La Belle-Vue hardly prepares him for fine dining and he is quickly reminded of this as he enters Forrestier's dining room; "Il se sentait de nouveau gêné, ayant peur de commettre quelque erreur dans le maniement conventionnel de la fourchette, de la cuiller ou des verres. Il y en avait quatre, dont un légèrement teinté de bleu" (34). Unlike members of Parisian society's elite class, Duroy does not yet know how to navigate the complex culinary landscape of the city. Paul DeKock writes in his *Nouveau Tableau de Paris au XIXe siècle* that a successful Parisian had to know how to order his dinner in a restaurant

(80). He recounts comedic stories of “paysans” who after dining their entire lives on simple cuts of beef, bowls of soup, and plates of vegetables at home finally visit a restaurant and are overwhelmed by the complex “mise-en-scène” (80-81). Duroy enters the dining room as one of these naïve paysans, but despite his lack of finesse at the table, Duroy makes his first important advance up the social ladder at this meal by meeting his future lover Clotilde de Marelle.

#### Weak Men Dining at the tables of Strong Women

The restaurant as a unique urban social space serves as an ideal setting in which Maupassant challenges traditional gender roles. He paints a picture in this novel of strong powerful women and weak men who are manipulated. Mary Donaldson Evans writes about the problem of sexual “indifferentiation” that courses through *Bel-Ami*. That Duroy must rely on more powerful women to advance his status in society throughout the novel, as he does in the beginning by asking Mme Forrestier to write his newspaper article for him, and even allows women to rename him (Laurine dubs him Bel-Ami and Madame Forrestier grants him the title Georges du Roy de Cantel) places Duroy into the role of what Maupassant refers to in an 1883 article as “*l’homme-fille*” (Evans 620). Maupassant’s hybridized girl-man is sexually irresistible, disloyal, unscrupulous, full of contradictions, and weak. Evans suggests that there are “abundant textual clues to suggest that Duroy was intended, not only in character, but above all by the venality of his activity, as a representation of ‘l’homme-fille’ in this novel (620). I argue that Maupassant uses the restaurant in this novel to further advance his portrayal of these

weak men amongst a circle of strong women effectively calling nineteenth century gender roles into question

Mme de Marelle makes a claim early in the novel that she never entertains at home, which was considered in this period as a woman's principle domain. The restaurant at this time was predominantly a male-dominated space. Rachel Rich writes in *Bourgeois Consumption*; "In restaurants, masculinity was articulated through knowledge of food and drink, as it would have been in aristocratic homes of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and as it also was in 19<sup>th</sup> century clubs" (Rich 165). A man had to be able to construct a meal with its accompanying wines for his guests in order to display his knowledge of the culinary landscape and social norms. Here, Mme de Marelle trades the subservient role of domestic host for the more powerful role of that of a consumer in a masculine-dominated space of the restaurant. She explains to Duroy; "Comme je dîne toutes les semaines chez les Forestier, je leur rends ça, de temps en temps, dans un restaurant. Moi je n'aime pas à avoir du monde chez moi, je ne suis pas organisée pour ça, et, d'ailleurs je n'entends rien aux choses de la maison, rien à la cuisine, rien à rien. J'aime vivre à la diable. Donc je les reçois de temps en temps au restaurant..." (96). By replacing the home with the restaurant as the site at which she receives her guests, Clotilde de Marelle, and by extension other women who dine out, challenges society's view of domesticity. Clotilde assumes the role of consumer. As a public space that is accessible to all with enough money in his or her pocket, the restaurant allows men and women to be treated equally. The restaurant neutralizes gender distinctions while proliferating economic stratification of society.

It is Clotilde who introduces Duroy to dining out in a restaurant by inviting him along to Café Riche one evening. When Clotilde takes Duroy as her lover, she then takes him to dine in a cabinet particulier, which was traditionally a male-dominated space that hosted business lunches and philandering men who entertained their mistresses. By taking Duroy to dine as her lover in a private room at a restaurant, Clotilde assumes the role of the dominant member of the couple.

At Café Riche, Duroy is very much out of place and one is left to wonder if Clotilde has invited him along to intentionally fluster him and assert her authority. Duroy does not even own the proper clothing one would need to dine out at one of the *grands restaurants*. Maupassant writes, “Ayant loué pour la seconde fois un habit noir, ses moyens ne lui permettant point encore d’acheter un costume de soirée, il arriva le premier au rendez-vous, quelques minutes avant l’heure” (98). Upon being seated at the table, a server approaches Forrestier and Duroy with menus. Duroy fumbles with his menu for a few seconds before Clotilde tells the server to take the menus away and bring the gentlemen whatever they desire. In saving Duroy from the embarrassment of not knowing how to navigate a restaurant menu, Clotilde has at the same time asserted her dominant role at the table and in their future relationship. She effectively emasculates Duroy.

Duroy’s first restaurant meal ends with the same embarrassment with which it starts. In a reference to her older age (another dominant characteristic), Clotilde is unable to read the 130 franc check that the server hands to her, so she passes it to Duroy along with her purse and tells him to pay. This act of Clotilde handing money to her lover will be repeated throughout their affair. Not knowing how much to tip the server because of

his lack of experience in dining in such establishments, Duroy fumbles again and Clotilde tells him what to do (104). After leaving the restaurant, Duroy rides in the carriage with Clotilde and decides to kiss her. When she does not resist, Duroy is overcome with the sensation that he has vanquished a woman of a higher class; “Il en tenait une, enfin, une femme mariée! Une femme du monde! du vrai monde! du monde Parisien! Comme ça avait été facile et inattendu” (106)! Yet we know that it is really Clotilde who has allowed Duroy access into her world, not Duroy who has gained access to Clotilde.

#### Duroy’s Arrival on the Boulevard

Despite his initial fumbles, Duroy does find financial and social success at the end of the novel. Upon becoming a millionaire, Duroy thinks about the first thing he will do as a millionaire and ultimately decides to visit a restaurant; “Il était heureux comme un souverain, et cherchait ce qu’ils pourraient bien faire encore” (368). That he can now afford to enter into one of the restaurants on the boulevard without counting his change or skipping a meal, is a mark of Duroy’s arrival in Parisian society. Earlier in the novel, his mouth salivates and his stomach growls as he passes the restaurants in which he cannot afford to dine; “Il ne lui en vint pas, mais en passant devant chaque restaurant, un désir ardent de manger lui mouillait la bouche de salive” (129). His hunger for wealth and social status is ultimately satisfied in a cabinet particulier.

Because of the important role that these dining spaces play in the narrative, Maupassant privileges description of the spaces in which his characters dine over the painterly descriptions of food that one finds in other nineteenth century novels, such as

Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*. In describing the cabinet particulier in which Clotilde entertains Duroy, he writes:

On le fit monter au second étage, et on l'introduisit dans un petit salon de restaurant, tendu de rouge et ouvrant sur le boulevard son unique fenêtre. Une table carrée, de quatre couverts, étalait sa nappe blanche, si luisante qu'elle semblait vernie; et les verres, l'argenterie, le réchaud brillaient gaiement sous la flamme de douze bougies portées par deux hauts candélabres. Au dehors on apercevait une grande tache d'un vert clair que faisaient les feuilles d'un arbre, éclairées par la lumière vive des cabinets particuliers. (97)

Maupassant gives his readers a sense of what the restaurant looks like. He then provides a vivid description of the sounds Duroy hears in the restaurant:

Il entendait dans toute cette vaste maison une rumeur confuse, ce bruissement des grands restaurants fait du bruit des vaisselles et des argenteries heurtées, du bruit de pas rapides des garçons adouci par le tapis des corridors, du bruit des portes un moment ouvertes et qui laissent échapper le son des voix de tous ces étroits salons où sont enfermés des gens qui dînent. (98)

One can imagine that the cacophony of sounds in this busy restaurant overwhelms a novice diner like Duroy who was accustomed to dining at communal tables in small cook shops, wine shops, and the Duval restaurants. In providing a sense of what it is like to dine in this restaurant, Maupassant omits any mention of the taste of the food Duroy eats. He contrasts these long vivid descriptions of the candlelit private room with its lavishly decorated interior and ornate table-top with a simple one-line list of the foods they consume there- "huîtres d'Ostende, potage, truite rose" (99). It is the space in which Duroy consumes this simple list of foods that is important to him as it *visually* represents his first step towards a higher social status. Simply by being seen, even while wearing his rented suit in the restaurant, Duroy participates in the spectacle of restaurant dining.

Many of the integral discussions in this novel take place around the table, yet the foods consumed are rarely mentioned. The spaces in which these discussions take place

are, however, described, identified, and localized with names and street addresses. Throughout the novel, Maupassant identifies a number of dining establishments by name. Duroy's first visit to a dining establishment is with Forrestier when he invites him along for a drink at Café Napolitain. Forrestier quickly drinks two glasses of beer while Duroy sits and savors his. He wants the experience to endure (16). At this time in his life, Duroy was working for very little money at the railroad. He rarely had the opportunity to enjoy a beer at a café. Forrestier also introduces Duroy to the famous music hall Folies Bergères. He visits Café Riche with Clotilde and it is she who compares her humble meal at the wine merchant to dining at Café Anglais. Towards the end of the novel, Duroy dines frequently at Père Lathuille, which contrasts to his humble beginnings dining with his parents at La Belle-Vue in Rouen. Nineteenth century readers would have been able to identify these spaces and the neighborhoods in which they were found through their knowledge of the city's culinary landscape and its dining guides.

#### Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*

Balzac, like Maupassant, ties restaurant dining to economic consumption in his 1835 novel *Le Père Goriot*. Like Duroy, it is only when Rastignac has access to enough money that he is able to enter into the world of the fine restaurant. Prior to his arrival in high society, he dines at the boardinghouses and student restaurants of the capital. Patrice Bousset likens Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine* to the restaurant guides of nineteenth century Paris. She writes; "Le touriste y trouve les renseignements utiles sur les quartiers, les mœurs, les noms des fournisseurs à choisir, avec leur adresse, les prix qui sont pratiqués par chacun. Le voyageur sait quel restaurant correspondra aux possibilités de

son portefeuille et quelle sorte de gens il a chance de rencontrer aux tables voisines. Quelques types de menus lui sont même communiqués à l'avance” (88). With his acute attention to detail and interest in the lower rung of the social ladder, Balzac devotes many pages in *Père Goriot* to describing the city's boarding houses, like Madame Vauquer, and student restaurants like Chez Flicoteaux of the city, but only briefly mentions the names of the finer dining establishments like Café Anglais and Le Cadran-Bleu. The food at the Cadran-Bleu was renowned in this period and it had a traditional host's table in the center along with twenty or so private tables and 18 *cabinets particuliers* in which members of high society entertained one another (Muhlstein 62).

In the novel, Balzac illuminates the socioeconomic distinctions between Paris' nineteenth century residents and the effects that a disparity in wealth can have on a society. Balzac uses dining spaces in the narrative to highlight the social status of characters in the novel. The novel opens with a lengthy description of the boardinghouse that will serve as the central location from which much of the novel's plot will advance. It is in Madame Vauquer's boarding house where we witness Père Goriot lose his fortune and Eugène de Rastignac climb up the social ladder. It is in this boarding house that the infamous criminal Jacques Collin is betrayed and eventually captured by the police. It is through gossip and conversation around the grease-stained dining table of the boardinghouse that we find out Vautrin's plan to dupe his fellow resident Victorine Taillefer. Balzac tells his readers within the first few lines of the novel that the story he will recount about the boardinghouse and its residents “n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman. *All is true*. Il est si véritable que chacun peut en reconnaître les éléments chez soi, dans

son cœur peut-être” (22). The “vraisemblance” of the story is meant to faithfully render the world within the walls of a decrepit boardinghouse in nineteenth century Paris.

Balzac commits a number of pages early in the novel to painstakingly describing the boarding house and the rue Neuve-Sainte Geneviève quarter where one would find similar dining establishments such as the student restaurant Flicoteaux’s. He describes the boarding house with increasingly more detail as he narrows his focus on the very spot that will be most important to his story- the dining room table. The omniscient narrator begins with a description of the neighborhood; “Un Parisien égaré ne verrait là que des pensions bourgeoises ou des institutions, de la misère ou de l’ennui, de la vieillesse qui meurt, de la joyeuse jeunesse contrainte à travailler. Nul quartier de Paris n’est plus horrible, ni, disons-le, plus inconnu” (23). He then takes us through the garden of the boardinghouse and onto its front porch. When we finally enter the boardinghouse, we travel through the salon where a strong odor emanating from the kitchen permeates the walls:

Cette première pièce exhale une odeur sans nom dans la langue, et qu’il faudrait appeler l’odeur de pension. Elle sent le renfermé, le moisi, le rance; elle donne froid, elle est humide au nez, elle pénètre les vêtements. Elle a le goût d’une salle où on a dîné; elle pue le service, l’office, l’hospice. (26-27)

Throughout the description of the pension, Balzac continually reminds us that the central function of the boardinghouse is that of a dining establishment. Even this entry hall that is separate from the kitchen smells of the cabbage soup that is routinely served in the dining room.

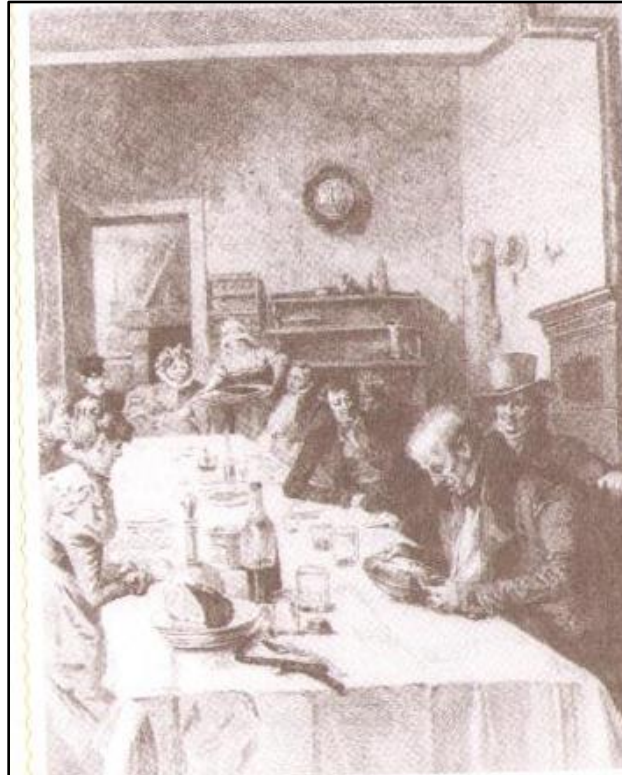


Figure 5- “Vauquer Boarding House,” engraving from 1900 edition of *Le Père Goriot* by Albert Lynch reprinted p 73 in Anka Muhlstein and Adriana Hunter, Tr. *Balzac’s Omelette: A Delicious tour of French food and culture with Honoré de Balzac*. Other Press; New York, 2010.

This long expository description culminates in the central dining room, “entièrement boisée, fut jadis peinte en une couleur indistincte aujourd’hui, qui forme un fond sur lequel la crasse a imprimé ses couches de manière à y dessiner des figures bizarres” (27). The narrator then narrows his focus closer to the slightest of details in order to give the reader the sense of what sitting at the very table that will host the main characters of the novel would be like:

Elle est plaquée de buffets gluants sur lesquels sont des carafes échanrées, ternies, des ronds de moiré métallique, des piles d'assiettes en porcelaine épaisse, à bords bleus, fabriquées à Tournai. Dans un angle est placée une boîte à cases numérotées qui sert à garder les serviettes, ou tachées ou vineuses, de chaque pensionnaire. (27)

Like an archaeologist rediscovering a lost civilization, the narrator describes the artifacts one would find in the room- a barometer, etchings on the wall framed in black and gold, tortoiseshell decoration, a green stove, dusty Argand lamps, straw rugs, broken chairs, and firewood. All of the objects surround the central dining table that is covered with so much grease one could write his name with his finger on the surface.

After taking us through a series of lengthy detailed descriptions of an unpleasant and deteriorating interior, the narrator stops himself and speaks directly to the reader:

Pour expliquer combien ce mobilier est vieux, crevassé, pourri, tremblant, rongé, manchot, borgne, invalide, expirant, il faudrait en faire une description qui retarderait trop l'intérêt de cette histoire, et que les gens pressés ne pardonneraient pas. Le carreau rouge est plein de vallées produites par le frottement ou par les mises en couleur. Enfin, là règne la misère sans poésie; une misère économe, concentrée, râpée. Si elle n'a pas de fange encore, elle a des taches; si elle n'a ni trous ni haillons, elle va tomber en pourriture. (28)

Emphasizing his claim that the story that ensues is true, the narrator essentially asks us to use the evidence he has provided and trust that the long complicated story of how the boardinghouse fell into disrepute is too long to tell. Turning instead to the residents of and the diners who frequent the boardinghouse, one can draw the conclusion that they contributed to placing the boardinghouse into its current state. I would argue that Balzac commits so many pages to the description of the dining room because of its importance to the formation of his characters. Within the context of this realist novel, one can infer that Balzac's choice of words in describing this neighborhood and its dining

establishments is a commentary on the hopeless state of the middle class that lived and dined in the boarding houses of Paris at this time.

Characters in Balzac's novels are defined as much by the restaurants they frequent as by their appearance and manner of speaking (Muhlstein 2). The adjectives that Balzac applies to the space in this opening chapter can equally be applied to Goriot by the end of the novel when he dies as a pauper and the latest victim of this consumer society. The only funeral oration that is spoken for Goriot fittingly takes place around the boardinghouse dining table. The narrator describes; "Ce fut la seule oraison funèbre d'un être qui, pour Eugène représentait la Paternité. Les quinze pensionnaires se mirent à causer comme à l'ordinaire. Lorsque Eugène et Bianchon eurent mangé, le bruit des fourchettes et des cuillers, les rires de la conversation, les diverses expressions de ces figures gloutonnes et indifférentes, leur insouciance, tout les glaça d'horreur" (363). This dining space is tied to Goriot as a reflection of his success when he first moves in and his demise at the end of the novel.

#### Goriot's Fall as he climbs to the upper floors of the Pension

Upon arrival at Madame Vauquer's pension, Goriot dressed exquisitely and rented one of the more expensive rooms on the first floor. As a wealthy vermicelli-dealer who had amassed a fortune by speculating on the price of flour during the revolution, he had developed fine dining habits. In his first year in residence at Maison Vauquer, he ate cornichons and anchovies with his meals and dined out at restaurants frequently. The narrator explains; "Pendant la plus grande partie de cette première année, Goriot avait souvent dîné dehors une ou deux fois par semaine" (49). In order to capitalize on the

apparent high social status of her boarder, Madame Vauquer published a brochure that described the boardinghouse as “une des plus anciennes et des plus estimées pensions bourgeoises du pays latin” (44). She writes in the pamphlet about the view from the top floor of the Gobelins valley and the “joli” tulip garden out front. The boardinghouse at this stage in Goriot’s life reflects his financial and social success.

But as Goriot spends his fortune on his daughters and falls into financial trouble, he rents cheaper rooms on successively higher floors in the boardinghouse. The boardinghouse is a physical representation of Goriot’s decline in stature. As he climbs down the steps of the social ladder, he must climb up increasingly more stairs in the decrepit boardinghouse. He reduces his restaurant dining to two times per month and then eventually stops dining out altogether (49). In order to save money, Goriot even stops eating bread with his meals and only sniffs it instead, which lends a certain irony to this story of the demise of a wealthy flour salesman. The narrator describes Goriot’s change in physical appearance as he stops powdering his gray hair, dressing like a wealthy tradesman, and eating at fine restaurants; “Il devint progressivement maigre; ses mollets tombèrent; sa figure, bouffie par le contentement d’un bonheur bourgeois, se vida démesurément; son front se plissa, sa mâchoire se dessina. Durant la quatrième année de son établissement rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève, il ne se ressemblait plus” (53-54). In four short years, this wealthy bourgeois vermicelli dealer who made Madame Vauquer think her fortune was changing now fits in with his surroundings. Not only does Goriot now fit in with the decaying interior of the boardinghouse, he is one of its poorest and most downtrodden residents.

The crumbling Vauquer boardinghouse symbolizes Goriot's eventual social and economic demise. The novel opens with an image of this decrepit boardinghouse and terminates with the death of Goriot. Balzac draws this parallel between the boardinghouse and its diners in the first pages of the novel; "Aussi le spectacle désolant que présentait l'intérieur de cette maison se répétait-il dans le costume de ses habitués, également délabrés" (32). Like Goriot and the deteriorating boardinghouse residents, the pensions of Paris began to disappear in the 1830s. They fell out of favor with the middle class as other dining establishments, such as the Duval bouillon restaurants, took away their customers. The Joanne Guide to Paris and Henri Martin's *Nouveau tableau de Paris, au XIXème siècle* note that the boarding houses located in the Latin Quarter could no longer sustain themselves financially by the middle of the century. In the first few pages of the novel, the narrator describes the boarding house and its residents and then comments, "Le beau Paris ignore ces figures blêmes de souffrances morales ou physiques" (34). The statement could be applied to both the boarding house and its seven residents.

The restaurants and boarding houses of Paris were public spaces in which people gathered to discuss important events or gossip and socialize with one another. Private salons in individual homes were replaced by these "informal" gatherings in public restaurants and cafés during the nineteenth century. Boarding house hosts not only fed their residents, but also invited the general public to dine at their communal tables. This intermingling of permanent residents with itinerant travelers and tourists led to lively conversation, drinking, and post-dinner game playing. The narrator recounts the evening sequence of events at the boarding house; "Comme presque tous les soirs, chacun s'en

allait à sa fantaisie suivant le degré d'intérêt qu'il prenait à la conversation, ou selon le plus ou le moins de pesanteur que lui causait sa digestion. En hiver, il était rare que la salle à manger fût entièrement évacuée avant huit heures..." (210). The meal served at the Vauquer dining table was far from the focus of the diners' attention, unless it caused indigestion. The focus, instead, was on the socializing that took place amongst the diners.

The Vauquer boarding house society even has its own language and unique customs that differentiated it from the external Parisian society. The narrator of the novel explains the peculiar slang that the boarding house diners use at the table; "Les pensionnaires, internes et externes, arrivèrent les uns après les autres, en se souhaitant mutuellement le bonjour, et se disant de ces riens qui constituent, chez certaines classes parisiennes, un esprit drolatique dans lequel la bêtise entre comme élément principal, et dont le mérite consiste particulièrement dans le geste ou la prononciation" (79). The preservation of this unique society is important to the students, peculiar old men, widows, and other downtrodden people that find themselves around the Vauquer dining table. When Madame Michonneau betrays Vautrin and turns him over to the police, Madame Vauquer sends her away even though it will cost her. She tells Michonneau to go to Buneaud's boarding house, "Allez où vous voudrez, mademoiselle, dit madame Vauquer, qui vit une cruelle injure dans le choix qu'elle faisait d'une maison avec laquelle elle rivalisait, et qui lui était conséquemment odieuse" (272). Madame Michonneau violates her fellow residents' trust and exposes the boarding house society to scrutiny from outsiders by turning Vautrin over to the police and the only fitting punishment is banishment to a rival boarding house.

Balzac capitalizes on this unique aspect of the boarding house to present an alternative society to the emerging consumer society developing in Paris during the period. As a space that brings together different people living at the fringes of society, the boarding house and its diners functioned as an alternative to Parisian society-at-large. Vautrin describes to Rastignac his view of the three factions that come together to create Parisian society- l'obéissance, la lutte, and la révolte. Rastignac eventually equates these three factions of supposed Parisian society to his own life at the boarding house. He sees his family as representative of obedience, the world as an uncertain battle, and Vautrin as the representative of an impossible revolution (327). While fighting to enter Parisian high society, Rastignac realizes in these final pages of the novel that he is already a member of Parisian society, just at the wrong end of it.

#### Classifying Balzac's Diners

As Maupassant does in *Bel-Ami*, Balzac uses the different types of dining establishments that were prevalent in Paris during the nineteenth century to convey the class distinctions between his characters and signal changes in their social status. In contrast to Madame Vauquer's other boarders, who stood on one the lowest rungs of the social ladder, Rastignac gains access to Parisian high society through a family member. The narrator describes Rastignac's feeling of arrival in high society when Madame Beuséant extends to him an invitation to her ball; "Une soudaine lumière lui fit voir clair dans l'atmosphère de la haute société parisienne, encore ténébreuse pour lui. La Maison Vauquer, le père Goriot étaient alors bien loin de sa pensée" (91). Because the boarding house and Père Goriot symbolize a stratum of society from which Rastignac wishes to

escape, his thoughts lead him there when invited to take his first step up the social ladder. After attending this ball and being introduced to society, he returns to the boarding house and can no longer tolerate its smell, its appearance, and his fellow residents:

Arrivé rue Neuve Sainte-Geneviève...et vint dans cette salle à manger nauséabonde où il aperçut, comme des animaux à un râtelier, les dix-huit convives en train de se repaître. Le spectacle de ces misères et l'aspect de cette salle lui furent horribles. La transition était trop brusque, le contraste trop complet, pour ne pas développer outre mesure chez lui le sentiment de l'ambition. D'un côté, les fraîches et charmantes images de la nature sociale la plus élégante, des figures jeunes, vives, encadrées par les merveilles de l'art et du luxe, des têtes passionnés pleines de poésie; de l'autre, de sinistres tableaux bordés de fange, et des faces où les passions n'avaient laissé que leurs cordes et leur mécanisme" (118).

It is this contrast between the opulently decorated banquet room of his cousin's home and the dirty foul-smelling boarding house dining room that convinces Rastignac that he absolutely must escape his station in society. It is at this point that he actually considers participating in Vautrin's plot against Mademoiselle Taillefer.

Throughout the novel, Balzac reminds his readers of this dichotomy between the lower classes, as represented by the boarding house, and the wealthier social classes, as represented by the city's "grands restaurants." Vautrin educates Rastignac on social class distinctions by referring to the stratification of the dining landscape. He incredulously asks Rastignac whether or not he really believes that a "jeune homme à la mode" could live at Madame Vauquer's boarding house and still be accepted by society (206). When he offers advice to Rastignac about climbing the social ladder, he describes how ambition does not always equate with reality; "Quant à nous, nous avons de l'ambition, nous avons les Beauséant pour alliés et nous allons à pied, nous voulons la fortune et nous n'avons pas le sou, nous mangeons les ratatouilles de maman Vauquer et nous aimons les beaux dîners du faubourg Saint-Germain...(148). Vautrin offers advice to Rastignac about how

to impress a woman. He does so by explaining the importance of making sacrifices; “Ce que j’entends par des sacrifices, c’est vendre un vieil habit afin d’aller au Cadran-Bleu manger ensemble des croûtes aux champignons; de là, le soir à l’Ambigu-Comique” (156). Because of the important role that the restaurant plays in constructing and reinforcing social class identity at this point in history, Vautrin uses the “grands restaurants du boulevard,” such as the Cadran-Bleu, and the boarding house to convince his naïve student Rastignac of the difficulties he will face in trying to escape his social class. Goriot, after all, finishes his life in ruins while trying to help his daughters achieve the same goal.

By the time the novel ends, the restaurant has replaced the private salons of his cousin’s home as the symbol of financial and social success for Rastignac. While access to the private homes on the Faubourg Saint-Germain requires personal family connections and a perceived social status, Rastignac can dine at a fine restaurant with money alone. Even his very well-connected cousin, Madame de Beauséant, falls out of favor with high society by the end of the novel, but with enough money she can still dine out “en ville.” The first meal Goriot arranges with Rastignac and his daughter at their newly rented apartment is described as “un bon petit dîner qu’elle a commandé devant moi au chef du café des Anglais” (275). Like Maupassant, Balzac references this café because of its status as one of the most celebrated and sought-after restaurants in the city by the 1830s. Madame de Nucingen has access to this fine restaurant because of her wealth and status in society (Muhlstein 57) Upon hearing that Madame de Nucingen has procured a custom-made meal from this “grand restaurant du boulevard,” Rastignac exclaims, “aujourd’hui le monde est donc renversé!” (275). That he will be dining on food

prepared by one of the most celebrated chefs in the city is truly a change in fortune for this ambitious young student.

In the final scene of the novel, a more mature and wiser Rastignac looks out over the city of Paris and issues his battle cry to society, “A nous deux maintenant!” (367). His first act of defiance to this “infâme et méchant” society is to dine with Madame de Nucingen. After a long and painful education, Rastignac finds the key to accessing the exclusive and elusive Parisian society- the restaurant. Even Madame Vauquer appears to understand the importance of the restaurant in her nineteenth century consumer society. When she sees her business on the verge of ruin, Madame Vauquer says with the same hope and defiance as Rastignac; “On peut se passer de roi, mais il faut toujours qu’on mange” (286). On both ends of the social ladder, the restaurant becomes the site at which one joins and participates in nineteenth century society.

### Chapter 3- Private Appetites in Public Spaces

The restaurant played a unique role in urban French society because of its hybrid status as a public space in which individuals conducted private business. Chapter two showed that the restaurant simultaneously provided a stage on which individuals displayed their wealth and participated in a developing consumer society. Jurgen Habermas writes about the emergence in the nineteenth century of a culture characterized by *Öffentlichkeit*, or the public sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Habermas argues that the culture of the public sphere replaced France's pre-revolutionary representational culture in which the state controlled most discourse. Along with the fall of the monarchy came the active participation of citizens in governance through discussion and debate mostly outside of state control. Habermas defines this space in which the debate and discussion took place as "the sphere of private people coming together as a public" (27). The restaurant provided private individuals with access to this space in which they could gather together to participate in nineteenth century society. The restaurant as a space in which important dialogue and debate took place in post-revolutionary France was an institution that provided a place for those who wanted to participate in the social spectacle of dining out, and for those who sought a space that would conceal their affairs and private discussions.

Habermas describes the historical development of the bourgeois public sphere in France from the seventeenth century when the public was mostly composed of "lecteurs,

spectateurs, and auditeurs” in the Royal court to the emergence of institutions outside of state control such as the restaurant in the mid-eighteenth century (31). King Louis XIV’s grand palace in Versailles was the symbolic representation of the state’s authority over the public in the seventeenth century. With the emergence of the institutions of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century, however, the state would lose some of its control over discourse and society. Habermas identifies coffee houses, salons, and *Tischgesellschaften*, which were dinner parties or other table societies like the Caveau Moderne at the Rocher de Cancale, as initial institutions that supported the public exchange of ideas and dialogue. I would argue that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the restaurant was also an integral institution that gave individuals access to the public sphere. The restaurant was not only innovative by providing menus to and separate tables for its diners, but it also distinguished itself from other dining spaces by conforming to a middle-class domestic pattern of design and architecture. The kitchen workspace was separated from what we would refer to today as the “front of the house” in the same way that many homes in the period were designed.

Habermas explains that these institutions, while different in structure and size, all provided physical space in which private people came together to discuss similar topics on a continual basis and had three characteristics in common. Access to these spaces all but disregarded social status. In discussions amongst “the public,” the merit of an argument could outweigh social rank. In the restaurants of the nineteenth century, social class alone did not provide one access to a fine dining room. Access to a dining room was based on access to enough money to pay for one’s meal. A member of the upper middle class would be afforded the same rights and access to a nineteenth century restaurant as a

wealthy member of the aristocracy, provided he could pay for his meal and was knowledgeable about how and what to order. Conversation amongst these “equals” focused on topics that until this period had never been discussed openly. Restaurant diners discussed topics as varied as religion, art, philosophy, literature, and politics, which prior to this period were restricted to orators at a church pulpit or to the royal court. The restaurant enabled a collective grouping of individuals to share and debate opinions on these topics.

The Caveau Moderne of the Rocher de Cancale restaurant even published poetry and other texts on art and literature for those outside of the membership to read. These spaces converted culture into a commodity that was shared. These spaces that made culture a commodity also encouraged the growth of the idea of an inclusive public. “The issues discussed became ‘general’ not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility; everyone had to be able to participate” (37). A single group of discussants in a nineteenth century restaurant could not consider itself *the* public, but rather as a contributor to the public sphere.

The city, or “town” in Habermas’ text, was the center of civil society in a cultural-political context, as well as economically (30). Because of the larger population and access to capital in the cities and towns, the institutions of the public sphere, such as restaurants, emerged first in the urban centers of France. The development of the Bourgeois Public Sphere was an urban phenomenon that placed the city at the center of modern society. In order to consume the culture of the nineteenth century and actively participate in society, access to the city was vital. “In both countries [Britain and France] they were centers of criticism- literary at first, then also political- in which began to

emerge, between aristocratic society and bourgeois intellectuals, a certain parity of the educated” (32).

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*

Physical spaces and geographic setting play a significant role in the development of Emma Bovary as a character in Gustave Flaubert's 1856 novel *Madame Bovary*. Early in the novel, the narrator informs us that Emma draws much of her attitude towards life from her physical location at a given moment; “Il lui semblait que certains lieux sur la terre devaient produire du bonheur, comme une plante particulière au sol et qui pousse mal tout autre part” (91). Later in the novel, as Emma moves to Yonville-l'Abbaye, the narrator reaffirms for us that Emma is convinced that the root of her unhappiness was her physical location in Tostes; “Elle ne croyait pas que les choses pussent se représenter les mêmes à des places différentes, et, puisque la portion vécue avait été mauvaise, sans doute ce qui restait à consommer serait meilleur” (143). We witness Emma continually change location in this novel as she moves from her childhood home to a convent school, Charles' home, and then finally to Yonville-l'Abbaye. While living in Yonville, she takes weekly trips to the city of Rouen and never really settles into her new surroundings.

By constantly moving and changing her physical location, Emma hopes to escape the banality of provincial life in order to find happiness. The city, as the starkest contrast to her rural life and the center of nineteenth century society, represents happiness, success, and excitement. Her domestic life in the countryside induces stagnation and illness. She compares her provincial life to those of women living in Paris and other cities; “À la ville, avec le bruit des rues, le bourdonnement des théâtres et les clarets du

bal, elles avaient des existences où le cœur se dilate, où les sens s'épanouissent. Mais elle, sa vie était froide comme un grenier dont la lucarne est au nord, et l'ennui, araignée silencieuse, filait sa toile dans l'ombre à tous les coins de son cœur" (96).

Paris becomes for Emma the ultimate destination in which she thinks she will find happiness. It is a fantastical locale that she never actually reaches before her death. All that she knows about Paris she has learned from her books and from stories told by her lovers Léon and Rodolphe. She purchases a map of the city and traces her finger along the lines dreaming about what it would be like to be a Parisian; "Elle remontait les boulevards, s'arrêtant à chaque angle, entre les lignes des rues, devant les carrés blancs qui figurent les maisons. Les yeux fatigués à la fin, elle fermait ses paupières, et elle voyait dans les ténèbres se tordre au vent des becs de gaz, avec des marche-pieds de calèches, qui se déployaient à grand fracas devant le péristyle des théâtres" (111). She pictures the physical structures of the urban environment as she traces her finger along the drawn lines of the map.

Emma fantasizes about the vast number of people walking up and down the boulevards, stopping in shops, and dining in restaurants:

Paris, plus vague que l'Océan, miroitait donc aux yeux d'Emma dans une atmosphère vermeille. La vie nombreuse qui s'agitait en ce tumulte y était cependant divisée par parties, classée en tableaux distincts... Dans les cabinets de restaurant où l'on soupe après minuit riait, à la clarté des bougies, la foule bigarrée des gens de lettres et des actrices. Ils étaient, ceux-là, prodiges comme des rois, pleins des ambitions idéales et de délires fantastiques. C'était une existence au-dessus des autres, entre le ciel et terre, dans les orages, quelque chose de sublime. Quant au reste du monde, il était perdu, sans place précise, et comme n'existant pas. (112)

She places the Parisians of her dreams and this fantasy on a pedestal high above all others, most notably above any of the villagers she has met in Yonville. Emma believes

that the city of Paris, like the settings in the novels she reads, has a transformative power. This city “situated between heaven and Earth” takes on a spiritual quality for her and she begins to orient her life towards the city as a pilgrim does towards a holy city (112). She expresses the desire to “à la fois mourir et habiter à Paris” (114). Access to Paris would provide Emma with a way to participate in civil society in a way that she is unable to in Yonville.

Emma’s lived experience in the countryside cannot stand up to her exalted view of urban life. She grows disinterested in Charles and her daughter Berthe and withdraws from domestic life. It is most often at mealtimes at home when Emma is reminded of this fact; “Mais c’était surtout aux heures des repas qu’elle n’en pouvait plus, dans cette petite salle au rez-de-chaussée, avec le poêle qui fumait, la porte qui criait, les murs qui suintaient, les pavés humides; toute l’amertume de l’existence lui semblait servie sur son assiette, et, à la fumée du bouilli, il montait du fond de son âme comme d’autres bouffées d’affadissement” (120). Emma’s dining room table with Charles seated across from her becomes a constant reminder that the urban life of her dreams is unattainable.

Emma’s marriage to Charles begins with a wedding feast that foreshadows the unhappiness Emma will experience throughout their life together. Far from the restaurants and cafés of the city, Emma and Charles’ wedding feast follows provincial tradition and is held “sous le hangar de la charetterie” of her father’s home in Bertaux (77). Much to Emma’s dismay, the wedding guests displayed their “provincialness” by playing games with corks, singing songs, showing feats of strength by lifting horse carts and weights, and drinking until they passed out or stumbled around the streets. Emma had

expressed to her father that she wanted a wedding fit for a bourgeoisie woman, not one that would display her peasant background of which she was growing ashamed (74).

#### The Restaurant vs. the Bovary Household

The restaurant, as a public space, challenges domestic life and represents for Emma an attainable slice of urban life. Emma believes that by relocating to the city and obtaining enough money to spend in a fine restaurant, she will finally achieve her goal of living the seemingly glamorous life of a Parisian. Emma's introduction to restaurant dining began when she was thirteen years old. She dined with her father at a restaurant in Rouen before taking up residence at the convent school (85). Her time at the convent, where she read books voraciously, was the happiest moment in her life and it all began with a meal at a restaurant where she dined on plates that illustrated the adventures of one of Louis XIV's mistresses, Louise de la Vallière; "Les explications légendaires, coupées çà et là par l'égratignure des couteaux, glorifiaient toutes la religion, les délicatesses du cœur et les pompes de la Cour" (85). This meal introduced Emma to a way of life that differed from her childhood on the farm in Bertaux. Afterwards, she even remarks that had she lived in the city as a child, she would have been more open to enjoying nature and the countryside as characters in her novels seem to be (86).

Emma's attraction to her lovers Léon and Rodolphe stems partly from their access to the city and the world outside of rural France. She views both men as a means through which she will obtain the urban life of her fantasies. Rodolphe never delivers on his promise to take Emma to Paris, but Léon does afford Emma access to urban life. Emma meets Léon at the Lion d'Or inn shortly after moving to Yonville. The inn plays a central

role in the lives of the villagers because it provided access to the world outside of Yonville. Inns such as the Lion d'Or provided meals at communal tables where local and visiting diners would interact with one another. In an urban setting, inns would be classified as a dining establishment on the lower rung of the hierarchy. Flaubert, however, places the inn in a rural context where it faces little competition from the only other dining establishment in the village, Café Français, and thus attracts visitors as well as reputable villagers alike. It is the only public gathering space in which the villagers appear to socialize with one another. Léon dines at the Lion d'Or to meet travelers in hopes of curing his boredom from provincial life; "Comme il s'ennuyait beaucoup à Yonville, où il était clerc chez maître Guillaumin, souvent M. Léon Dupuis (c'était lui, le second habitué du Lion d'or) reculait l'instant de son repas, espérant qu'il viendrait quelque voyageur à l'auberge avec qui causer dans la soirée" (136). Upon meeting Léon on her first night in Yonville, she recognizes his dissatisfaction with rural life as similar to her own.

The inn, when viewed as a restaurant in the rural context, provides for Emma and Léon a space for them to carry out the initial stages of their affair. As one of the only places to socialize in Yonville, it is acceptable for Léon to eat there daily and then stay after his meal to play cards or talk to other diners. Emma is also able to convince Charles to take her to the Lion d'Or frequently to socialize with other villagers. Emma uses this very public space to carry out her private affair right under the nose of her naive provincial husband. While Charles and Homais play dominoes or cards, Emma flirts with Léon; "Lorsque la partie de cartes était finie, l'apothicaire et le médecin jouaient aux dominos, et Emma changeant de place, s'accoudait sur la table, à feuilleter

*l'Illustration*...Léon se mettait près d'elle; ils regardaient ensemble les gravures et s'attendaient au bas des pages...Ainsi s'établit entre eux une sorte d'association, un commerce continu de livres et de romances; M. Bovary, peu jaloux, ne s'en étonnait pas (158-159). In the same way that Balzac uses the boarding house in *Père Goriot*, as the central space in which the plot advances, Flaubert uses the inn in this novel as a central meeting space where Emma begins her affair and other important matters are discussed amongst the characters.

Flaubert also uses the restaurant to cast Charles as the opposite of and conflicting partner to Emma's yearning for a different lifestyle. Shortly after marrying, Emma becomes ill and blames the physical manifestation of her unhappiness and stagnation on domestic life with Charles. She remarks to her maid "c'est après le mariage que ça m'est venu" (171). Unlike Emma, Charles enjoys his meals at home around the dining table in the countryside. After visiting the elaborate Andervillier estate where Emma relishes the opulent decoration and exotic foods at the ball, Flaubert describes Charles and Emma's first meal at home; "Il y avait pour dîner de la soupe à l'oignon, avec un morceau de veau à l'oseille. Charles, assis devant Emma, dit en se frottant les mains d'un air heureux: 'Cela fait plaisir de se retrouver chez soi!'" (108-109). Emma refuses to eat while Charles devours his meal and is complacent at home.

Later in the novel, Charles and Homais discuss Léon's imminent move to Paris in front of Emma. Charles expresses discomfort with the idea of living in the city while Emma silently disagrees with the men:

-Ce pauvre Léon! disait Charles, comment va-t-il vivre à Paris? S'y accoutumera-t-il?  
Madame Bovary soupira.

-Allons donc! dit le pharmacien en claquant de la langue, les parties fines chez le traiteur! Les bals masqués! Le champagne! Tout cela va rouler, je vous assure. (184)

The two men eventually discuss the health risks of dining in restaurants as one of the primary factors for which living in the city would be ill-advised:

À cause du changement de régime...les mets de restaurateurs, toutes ces nourritures épicées finissent par vous échauffer le sang et ne valent pas, quoi qu'on en dise, un bon pot-au-feu. J'ai toujours, quant à moi, préféré la cuisine bourgeoise: c'est plus sain! Aussi, lorsque j'étudiais à Rouen la pharmacie, je m'étais mis en pension dans une pension; je mangeais avec les professeurs! (185)

Upon hearing that Charles would never live in the city and finds restaurant dining to be a dangerous and unhealthy behavior, Emma's fear and suspicion that Charles will never deliver to her the life of her dreams is confirmed. She shudders at the thought of spending the rest of her life with this man in Yonville and focuses more of her attention on her affairs.

#### Emma Dines out on the Town

On two separate occasions, Emma has the opportunity to dine “en ville” – once with Charles and then again with Léon. Neither of these visits to a restaurant, however, live up to Emma's expectations. Once again, Emma's lived reality does not match her fantasy. Rather than being a panacea, her experiences dining out in Rouen prove to her that she will never live the life of a Parisian boulevardier. She first visits a restaurant in Rouen with Charles when he accompanies her to the city in hopes of curing her deteriorating health. The couple stays and dines at the Croix Rouge inn:

C'était une de ces auberges comme il y en a dans tous les faubourgs de province, avec de grandes écuries et de petites chambres à coucher, où l'on voit au milieu de la cour des poules picorant l'avoine sous les cabriolets crottés des commis

voyageurs; bons vieux gîtes à balcon de bois vermoulu qui craquent au vent dans les nuits d'hiver, continuellement pleins de monde, de vacarme et de mangeaille, dont les tables noires sont poissées par les glorias, les vitres épaisses jaunies par les mouches, les serviettes humides tachées par le vin bleu; et qui, sentant toujours le village, comme des valets de ferme habillés en bourgeois, ont un café sur la rue, et du côté de la campagne un jardin à légumes. (300)

Stained napkins, fly-splattered windows, and greasy tabletops do not fit Emma's perception of how a city restaurant should appear. The reality of Emma and Charles' status in society becomes evident. Emma's first adult visit to a city dining establishment is to an inn on the outskirts of Rouen that caters to provincial visitors who cannot afford to dine in the restaurants of the city center. In the same way that Emma's visit to the Andervillier estate ball ultimately reminds her of her lower status in society when she sees the peasants gazing in through the windows, so too does this visit to Rouen.

Emma had imagined visiting an opulently-decorated restaurant with members of society's elites seated at its tables such as the Café de Normandie to which Léon takes Homais:

Ils étaient encore à deux heures attablés l'un devant l'autre. La grande salle se vidait; le tuyau du poêle, en forme de palmier, arrondissait au plafond blanc sa gerbe dorée; et près d'eux, derrière le vitrage, en plein soleil, un petit jet d'eau gargouillait dans un bassin de marbre où, parmi du cresson et des asperges, trois homards engourdis s'allongeaient jusqu'à des cailles, toutes couchées en pile, sur le flanc. (366)

With its gilded fixtures and bubbling water fountain in an exquisite dining room, the luxurious surroundings of the Café de Normandie are far superior to those found at the Croix-Rouge. Calling attention to the effect space and location have on Emma's disposition, she falls into a jealous rage while thinking about Léon entertaining his friend Homais rather than his lover at this fine restaurant.

Léon does eventually escort Emma to dine in a restaurant in Rouen during one of her weekly visits. Finding all of the cafés, such as the Café de Normandie, already full with diners, “Ils avisèrent sur le port un restaurant des plus médiocre, dont le maître leur ouvrit, au quatrième étage, une petite chambre” (380). A sophisticated diner who was aware of the nineteenth century restaurant hierarchy and had read the various dining guides prevalent during this time would have known from the restaurant’s location and décor that dining there would not be equivalent to dining at one of the Parisian “grands restaurants du boulevard.” Emma, however learns all she knows about urban society from novels and anecdotes told by her lovers. Upon walking into this restaurant and seeing some of the other diners, she believes that she has truly arrived at the pinnacle of society; “Les hommes chuchotèrent dans un coin, sans doute se consultant sur la dépense. Il y avait un clerc, deux carabins et un commis: quelle société pour elle!” (380). Shortly after, Emma becomes disappointed as her initial reaction is proven to be incorrect. While listening to some of the women seated in the dining room, Emma realizes that she has just wandered into another mediocre restaurant; “Quant aux femmes, Emma s’aperçut vite au timbre de leurs voix, qu’elles devaient être, presque toutes, du dernier rang. Elle eut peur alors, recula sa chaise et baissa les yeux” (380). Emma’s hope of finally taking her place amongst society’s elites is proven to be irrational and unattainable. She withdraws from the conversation at her table, refuses to eat anything, and eventually faints.

When these passages are read in comparison to the earlier scene when Emma experiences disappointment during her visit to the ball at Vaubyessard, we see just how important this visit to the restaurant is to Emma. Emma is full of hope and happiness as

she prepares to enter the grand banquet room at the Andervillier estate; “Emma fit sa toilette avec la conscience méticuleuse d'une actrice à son début. Elle disposa ses cheveux d'après les recommandations du coiffeur, et elle entra dans sa robe de barège, étalée sur le lit” (100). Emma views her visit to the ball as her introduction to society, but soon realizes that she does not belong dancing amongst these wealthy aristocrats:

L'air du bal était lourd; les lampes pâlissaient. On refluit dans la salle de billard. Un domestique monta sur une chaise et cassa deux vitres; au bruit des éclats de verre, Mme Bovary tourna la tête et aperçut dans le jardin, contre les carreaux, des faces de paysans qui regardaient. Alors le souvenir des Bertaux lui arriva. Elle revit la ferme, la mare bourbeuse, son père en blouse sous les pommiers, et elle se revit elle-même, comme autrefois, écrémant avec son doigt les terrines de lait dans la laiterie. Mais, aux fulgurations de l'heure présente, sa vie passée, si nette jusqu'alors, s'évanouissait tout entière, et elle doutait presque de l'avoir vécue. Elle était là; puis autour du bal, il n'y avait plus que de l'ombre, étalée sur tout le reste. Elle mangeait alors une glace au marasquin, qu'elle tenait de la main gauche dans une coquille de vermeil, et fermait à demi les yeux, la cuiller entre les dents. (104)

Upon seeing the uninvited peasants pressing their noses up against the window, Emma imagines her life in the countryside, but is able to set it aside and simply enjoy the moment of eating her exotic cherry sorbet. She anticipates receiving an invitation to the ball the next year, and when it never arrives is thoroughly disappointed. She is, however, able to set this disappointment aside.

Dining in a restaurant does not require an invitation as attending an aristocratic ball does, so finding her place at the table of a restaurant appears to be much more attainable. The restaurant, which once seemed to be Emma's entryway to urban high society, however, proves to be an indicator of the permanence of her station in society. Emma is and always will be a provincial woman. Her social class and lack of wealth, coupled with the inaccessibility of the city restrict Emma from the finer dining establishments, and therefore from high society. When Emma makes this realization that

she will never escape her life in the countryside, she returns home and commits suicide. It is at this moment while seated in a middle-class restaurant near the port in Rouen that Emma decides to end it all; “Elle aurait voulu, s’échappant comme un oiseau, aller se rajeunir quelque part, bien loin, dans les espaces immaculés” (381).

Emma’s hopes and dreams of one day sitting at the center of society at a grand restaurant on a Parisian boulevard are wiped away as she finally realizes that she will always be Madame Bovary, the wife of a country doctor. The hope for another life that Emma experiences at the Andervillier Ball as she dances ends in ruin at this restaurant in Rouen.

#### Céard’s *Une Belle Journée*

Henry Céard also tells the story of a discontented housewife in his 1885 novel *Une Belle Journée*, but he paints the restaurant with its “cabinet particulier” as a disreputable place to conduct business deals and entertain mistresses instead of the place Emma Bovary idolizes. The principal character in Céard’s novel, Madame Duhamain, is a model willing participant in her domestic duties. Women are jealous of how she mends and cleans clothes and men in the neighborhood envy her good taste and ability to economize when shopping for household items. She is content with a simple life of caring for her house and husband; “Mme Duhamain avait des goûts simples, ne se plaignait jamais de la monotonie de son existence, la trouvait naturelle” (8-9). She sees her position at home as a responsibility which she fulfills dutifully.

Like Flaubert, Céard uses the restaurant in this novel to challenge this simple domestic life to which Madame Duhamain has grown accustomed. The restaurant serves

as a catalyst for Madame Duhamain to question the way she lives, and it will ironically also push her back to the respectability of her life as a homemaker. The Duhamains live a repetitive banal existence in which Monsieur Duhamain goes to work while Madame Duhamain cares for their home. They seldom leave Paris and live in a modest apartment. To entertain themselves, the couple dines out every two weeks at an *établissement de bouillon*; “Ils s’attablaient alors dans un bouillon, de preference chez Duval. Les restaurants du Palais-Royal les dégoûtaient depuis que, par l’entre-bâillement d’un vasistas, un soir, en se promenant, ils avaient vu les chefs, en sasaque sale, mettre sur les plats, avec un pinceau, une sauce, toujours la même” (6). Shunning the opulent more expensive restaurants for a Bouillon Duval, they trade luxury for simplicity and economy, which carries over to every facet of their lives. Monsieur Duhamain even comments that he prefers dining at home over dining out in one of the city’s best restaurants; “Du reste, répliquait son mari, avec du jambon, du beurre et des petites raves, on vit mieux que chez Véfour à vingt-cinq francs par tête” (11). The Véfour restaurant was one of the most expensive and classy restaurants in Paris during this period to which most people would not compare their home-cooked meals.

Madame Duhamain remains content with her biweekly trips to a bouillon restaurant and humble role as Monsieur Duhamain’s housewife until she goes to a dance at a local restaurant named chez Maurice:

L’événement avait commencé dans un bal où son mari avait consenti à la conduire: chez Maurice, avenue de Saint-Mandé, au *Salon des Familles*, un restaurant pour noces et repas de corps, où les jeunes gens de Bercy, des commis en vins, pour la plupart, donnaient des fêtes, par souscription, périodiquement, l’hiver. (5)

Here, she is introduced to fun, good food, and ultimately another man's sexual advances. Madame Duhamain dances, enjoys the food, the music, and being seen in her dress by the other women in her neighborhood. She has as much fun at this event as she had at her wedding reception; "Elle, s'amusait prodigieusement. Depuis le soir lointain de sa noce, jamais elle ne s'était tourvée à pareille fête" (40). As the evening progresses, Madame Duhamain is made aware of how this one evening of fun and extravagance is a rare occasion in her simple life. While she twirls around the dancefloor, Monsieur Duhamain sits in a corner and eventually tries to get her to leave because he is tired. The narrator explains Madame Duhamain's reaction to her husband; "Une rage violente la saisit. En un instant les écoeulements de sa vie d'honnêteté lui apparurent. Elle eut la vision furieuse et démesurée de la nullité crasse de son mari, de la continuelle platitude de son existence" (59). Her dance partner, Trudon, who is a bachelor musician and showers Madame Duhamain with compliments, represents an access to this world to which her husband does not belong.

It is in the restaurant that Madame Duhamain steps outside of her life of domesticity and reexamines it. The restaurant is coded here as a public space in which Madame Duhamain is able to participate in society by interacting with her neighbors and by being placed on display. Here she has no domestic responsibility and a very different role to play. Here she is an attractive woman who is treated as a desirable sexual partner rather than a housewife. She enjoys the music, atmosphere, and attention she receives from Trudon. Enjoying this escape, she agrees to return to a restaurant with Trudon the next day. In dining out with Trudon, she hopes to recreate this evening at Chez Maurice and escape once more from the banality of her domestic middle-class existence.

Madame Duhamain Visits a Cabinet Particulier

Trudon escorts Madame Duhamain to the Maronniers Restaurant in Bercy, where they will dine privately in a *cabinet particulier*. The narrator signals to us that this restaurant will play a very different role in Madame Duhamain's life than Chez Maurice does:

Au bas de la rampe en pente douce que bordaient des garde-fous de charpente, le restaurant des Marronniers alignait les grosses lettres d'or fané de son enseigne, étalait la banale mélancolie de sa façade, car c'est le propre du plaisir d'attrister les lieux où on le prend, les gens qui le procurent et les endroits où l'on s'amuse gardent, des gaîtés qu'ils subissent, quelque chose de cet air de maussaderie et d'ennui que la continuité du rire donne aux visages des vieux comiques. (108)

This restaurant's faded sign and worn exterior contrasts with its function as an enjoyable place for businessmen to discuss their money-making deals and for men to entertain their mistresses out of view from public scrutiny and their wives. Unlike at Chez Maurice, Madame Duhamain will not dance in the Maronnier's central dining room with her peers' eyes focused upon her, but rather she will be hidden away upstairs in a private room.

Trudon takes Madame Duhamain to a *cabinet particulier* instead of to a table in the central dining room because he wants to seduce her. While they wait for the waiter to serve the first-course, Trudon imagines Madame Duhamain lying on the couch in the room in her undergarments ready to sleep with him; "Il n'osa lui avouer qu'il venait de se la figurer, prête à se mettre au lit, n'ayant plus guère que sa chemise, et au-dessous ses bas passaient, avec des bottines très hautes" (127). All of the rituals involved with dining out in a restaurant frustrate Trudon as they interfere with his true goal of sleeping with Madame Duhamain:

Les huîtres servies, Trudon s'était assis, réfléchissant. Tout cela ne menait à rien. Les "bagatelles de la porte" lui semblaient traîner en longueur. Maintenant que Mme Duhamain était là, devant lui, qu'il sentait sa robe frôlant ses jambes, son pied tout près de sa bottine, maintenant que leurs couteaux s'entrechoquaient parfois en prenant du poivre à la même salière, que leurs mains se touchaient sur le goulot de la même carafe, il se demandait de quelle manière décisive il allait commencer l'attaque..." (129)

Trudon rushes through reading the menu and ordering, is exasperated each time the waiter interrupts to serve food, and is annoyed that the plates on the table physically separate him from Madame Duhamain. He touches her leg underneath the table as a sign of this desire that is hidden from view by the trays of food, candelabra, and farce of sharing this meal together.

Madame Duhamain, however, does not intend to have a sexual relationship with Trudon. She has accepted his invitation to dine at a restaurant out of naïve curiosity and a yearning for the same attention Trudon and the others at Chez Maurice showered upon her at the ball. She accepts Trudon's invitation to dine out in hopes of forging a platonic relationship; "Aux jours des grandes niaiseries méthodiques de son mari, au milieu de l'ambiante banalité de son ménage, elle avait souhaité de trouver quelque amitié sans sexe à qui elle pût s'ouvrir dans le laisser-aller des bavardes confidences, et qui fût devenu le vivant vide-poche de son cœur" (151). Having been hidden from society and sheltered by her husband, Madame Duhamain is not aware of the complexity involved in dining out at a restaurant. Not all restaurant meals will be alike. Her evening at Chez Maurice with Trudon was a public event in view of her husband and neighbors who tempered his advances and made him act respectably. In the privacy of a *cabinet particulier*, however, Trudon shares his true motivations and acts upon them. She will realize after this "one lovely day" with Trudon in this *cabinet particulier* that the restaurant occupies both the

public and private spheres, and so can be used alike for respectable or clandestine entertainment.

Madame Duhamain accepts this invitation because she is curious about the culture of the restaurant. She had dined out with her husband numerous times in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges and had read about the *cabinet particulier* in novels, but had never before this day with Trudon visited one or experienced this clandestine aspect of dining out (98). As she steps into the Maronniers Restaurant, she is fearful of being seen dining with another man, but is also nervous about visiting this unfamiliar place:

Et, tandis que Mme Duhamain rougissait devant ces regards qui se fixaient sur elle, tremblait dans ses bas devant ces curiosités qui la dévisageaient, sur un familier coup d'œil de Trudon, M. Chamblé, propriétaire du restaurant des *Marronniers*, priant madame et monsieur de vouloir bien prendre la peine de monter derrière lui, en haut d'un escalier en colimaçon, au premier étage, ouvrit devant eux la porte numérotée d'un cabinet particulier. (114)

She is visiting this unfamiliar place about which she has developed many opinions only from reading novels and from stories her husband recounts. She is surprised by the lack of ostentatious decoration in the *cabinet*. The novels she had read always depicted them with ornate furniture, beautiful tapestries and with gold paint on the walls. This *cabinet* is modestly decorated with worn curtains and simple flowered wallpaper, which is consistent with what one would expect after reading the period's dining guides (137-138).

Once seated at the table, Madame Duhamain compares the room and the experience of dining out with Trudon to her life at home with her husband; “Et ce simple repas lui apparaissait comme une excessive débauche; ses plus grandes fantaisies de bouche n'allant jamais sans économie, et ses rêves, dans son ménage, restant toujours sur

leur faim...c'est gentil ici" (136). While Trudon views the food, waiter, table decorations, and pleasant conversations as obstacles that stand in his way of sleeping with Madame Duhamain, she views the dining aspect of their meal together as a pleasant escape from her middle-class domestic life. She need not be concerned with the price of the food, cleaning the dishes, washing the linens, or any other practical housekeeping matters while they dine out.

We see these conflicting views about the role that dining out in a restaurant plays in society when the waiter serves fruit to Trudon and Madame Duhamain. Trudon compares his dining partner to the various fruits displayed on the platter in hopes of seducing her, but Madame Duhamain looks at the fruit and thinks about the costs involved in serving up such an abundant bowl. She remembers purchasing similar fruits at the market earlier in the week; "Il comparait sa peau à la fraîcheur veloutée des pêches, trouvait des ressemblances entre les cerises et sa bouche, ses yeux et les amandes. Intimement, Mme Duhamain avec son instinct de bourgeoise économe, songeait que c'étaient là des fruits chers" (168). Trudon views the restaurant as a place fit for seducing women and conducting other private affairs. Madame Duhamain sees the restaurant as a pleasant brief escape from her respectable life at home with her husband. She enjoys being the center of Trudon's attention and having a nice meal served to her, but this single "lovely day" in which she escapes from her domestic life is sufficient to make her appreciate her life, despite the banality, as better than a life full of infidelity in the private rooms of restaurants. The narrator explains this moment when Madame Duhamain makes this realization; "Ainsi, rien d'extraordinaire n'arrivait. La vie était plate à perte de vue! Et la banalité qu'elle croyait fuir dans cette escapade, elle la retrouvait aggravée par la

crainte d'une surprise, le secret remords d'avoir commis une mauvaise action" (133-134). Madame Duhamain is angered when it becomes apparent that the waiter and kitchen staff think that she is Trudon's mistress. When leaving, she tries to split the cost of the meal with him to alter their opinion of her and gain some respect.

Henry Céard uses the evening at Chez Maurice to drive Madame Duhamain to reflect on the banality of domestic life and take action to correct its course. He uses the Maronniers Restaurant to send her back to her respectable life beside her husband. By using experiences in restaurants to change Madame Duhamain's behavior, he highlights the dichotomy between a restaurant's role as a public and private space. Duhamain prefers to live in view of the public who admire her ability to run a household efficiently and economically and so is driven towards the public dances in a restaurant's main dining room and the communal tables of the bouillon Duval. Trudon, on the other hand, enjoys illicit affairs hidden behind the doors of a restaurant's *cabinet particulier*. Their two divergent views about how to live in society, which are represented by two different restaurants, predetermines the failure of their relationship at the end of the novel when Madame Duhamain returns to her bed beside her husband and Trudon entertains another woman in his apartment upstairs.

### Flaubert's *L'Éducation Sentimentale*

In his last published novel *L'Éducation Sentimentale* (1869), Flaubert tells Frédéric's "coming-of-age" story in the city of Paris against the backdrop of the 1848 revolution. In this novel, Flaubert presents the restaurant as a contrast to the home as the predominant social space during the nineteenth century. Unlike in *Madame Bovary* where the

restaurant is sanctified by Emma as the public space through which she hopes to enter high society, the restaurant in *L'Éducation Sentimentale* is presented as a distinctly private space and the dinner parties held at private homes are the “public” spectacles at which one displays his or her wealth and power. In his analysis of this novel in *Les Règles de l'Art*, Pierre Bourdieu organizes Frédéric's existence and the entire novel around two opposing poles- the arts, represented by the Arnoux Family, and political and economic power, represented by the Dambreuses. Bourdieu situates all of the characters in the novel in one of these opposing poles and places Frédéric firmly between the two. According to this analysis, the plot of the novel advances as Frédéric moves between these two competing sides (5-6).

I would argue that one could extend Bourdieu's analysis of the novel to the physical spaces between which the characters move. Most of the important events in the novel take place at dinner parties in private homes or at several of the restaurants and dining establishments located throughout the city of Paris. Certain activities are reserved exclusively for the public dinner party and others are reserved for the privacy of the *cabinet particulier*. The restaurant is M. Arnoux's domain where mistresses are entertained, disreputable business deals are agreed upon, and republicans seeking to overthrow the government gather. The dinner party is the Dambreuses' realm where they display their wealth and exert their political influence while maintaining at all times a decorum suited to their status in society. Throughout the novel, Frédéric moves between these two spaces.

As a space that is distinctly private and separate from the home, Flaubert casts the restaurant in this novel as a place of morale disrepute where men and women carry out

illicit affairs. It is in the restaurant that Rosanette, La Maréchale, meets with her lover M. Arnoux, and later Frédéric. In one of the most vivid restaurant scenes in the novel, we witness Frédéric and Rosanette flirting with one another in a *cabinet particulier* at Café Anglais as though they are sitting in a private bedroom; “Puis elle posa un pétale de fleur entre ses lèvres et la lui tendit à becqueter. Ce mouvement, d’une grâce et presque d’une mansuétude lascive, attendrit Frédéric...Il lui entourait la taille à deux bras; le pétilllement de sa robe de soie l’enflammait” (285-286). The couple act as though they are in a private room, but the narrator reminds us that the couple is seated in one of the most popular and busy restaurants in the city at this time; “Cependant, la porte s’ouvrait à chaque minute, les garçons glapissaient, et, sur un infernal piano, dans le cabinet à côté, quelqu’un tapait une valse” (288). In describing Frédéric’s arrival to the restaurant, the narrator locates the restaurant along a public street. “Et il entra seul dans le cabinet. Par les deux fenêtres ouvertes, on apercevait du monde aux croisées des autres maisons, vis-à-vis. De larges moires frissonnaient sur l’asphalte qui séchait, et un magnolia posé au bord du balcon embaumait l’appartement. Ce parfum et cette fraîcheur détendirent ses nerfs; il s’affaissa sur le divan rouge, au dessous de la glace” (285). The windows are open towards a busy street with passersby that can peer inside the restaurant’s windows to witness Frédéric’s and Rosanette’s affection.

#### Privacy in the Restaurant

The perception of privacy that a *cabinet particulier* offers a couple makes the restaurant a good place for one to carry out immoral and perhaps illicit activities. It is in a restaurant that Rosanette’s mother sells her child to a man who rapes her; “Comme il était

marié (il aurait craint de se compromettre dans sa maison), on m'emmena dans un cabinet de restaurateur, et on m'avait dit que je serais heureuse, que je recevrais un beau cadeau (444). In describing this traumatic event from her childhood to Frédéric, Rosanette pays particular attention to details about the interior space of the cabinet:

Dès la porte, la première chose qui m'a frappée, c'était un candélabre de vermeil, sur une table où il y avait deux couverts. Une glace au plafond les reflétait, et les tentures des murailles en soie bleue faisaient ressembler tout l'appartement à une alcôve. Une surprise m'a saisie. Tu comprends, un pauvre être qui n'a jamais rien vu ! Malgré mon éblouissement, j'avais peur. Je désirais m'en aller. Je suis restée pourtant. Le seul siège qu'il y eût était un divan contre la table. Il a cédé sous moi avec mollesse; la bouche du calorifère dans le tapis m'envoyait une haleine chaude, et je restai là sans rien prendre. Le garçon qui se tenait debout m'a engagée à manger. (444)

Rosanette remembers vivid details about the candles on the table, the color of the silk curtains, and how the bench felt when she sat upon it. Her first experience in a restaurant from many years ago and its indelible image informs her understanding of the role of the restaurant in society. The restaurant is a place of scandal, intrigue, indulgence, and sex.

She continues:

Il m'a versé tout de suite un grand verre de vin; la tête me tournait, j'ai voulu ouvrir la fenêtre, il m'a dit: — "Non, mademoiselle, c'est défendu." Et il m'a quittée. La table était couverte d'un tas de choses que je ne connaissais pas. Rien ne m'a semblé bon. Alors je me suis rabattue sur un pot de confitures, et j'attendais toujours. Je ne sais quoi l'empêchait de venir. Il était très tard, minuit au moins, je n'en pouvais plus de fatigue; en repoussant un des oreillers pour mieux m'étendre, je rencontre sous ma main une sorte d'album, un cahier —, c'étaient des images obscènes... Je dormais dessus, quand il est entré. Elle baissa la tête, et demeura pensive. (444-445)

The only activity that is forbidden in the restaurant is the revelation of its goings on to the outside world. This young girl Rosanette is permitted to drink wine, eat exotic foods, look at pornographic images, and presumably sleep with this older man, but she is forbidden to open the cabinet's windows and all of its secrets to the outside world.

That Rosanette continues to live as a *lorette* and views the restaurant as a private space throughout her adult life should not be a surprise to us after learning about her initial experience dining out. During one of her meals with Frédéric at Café Anglais, he notices how poorly Rosanette behaves in “public” at the restaurant; “La Maréchale se mit à parcourir la carte, en s’arrêtant aux noms bizarres...Et elle appelait le garçon ‘jeune homme,’ frappait son verre avec son couteau, jetait au plafond la mie de son pain. Elle voulut boire tout de suite du vin Bourgogne” (288). Uncivilized and uncultured behavior that is more fitting for the street seems to be the norm in the fine restaurants in this novel. The characters in the novel seem to behave best at home and at their worst while seated around the restaurant table.

#### How to Behave in Restaurants of Disrepute

Women are maligned and disrespected around the restaurant table. Arnoux and Regimbart discuss their taste in women and mistresses while seated around the table at Restaurant de Madrid; “Alors, ces deux messieurs exposèrent leurs goûts: Arnoux préférait maintenant la jeunesse, les ouvrières; Regimbart détestait ‘les mijaurées’ et tenait avant tout au positif. La conclusion, fournie par le marchand de faïence, fut qu’on ne devait pas traiter les femmes sérieusement” (314-315). Later in the novel. Arnoux shares his secret fantasies with Frédéric at Parly Restaurant; “Puis il l’emmena déjeuner rue de Chartres, chez Parly; et, comme il avait besoin de se refaire, il se commanda deux plats de viande, un homard, une omelette au rhum, une salade, etc. le tout arrosé d’un sauterne 1819, avec un romanée 42, sans compter le champagne au dessert, et les liqueurs...Les deux coudes au bord de la table, et penché très bas, Arnoux, en le fatiguant

de son regard, lui confiait ses imaginations” (428). The men speak freely as though they are alone in a private room with little fear of being overheard or having their secret thoughts shared in public. Frédéric oscillates between being shocked when witnessing such poor “public” behavior and actively engaging in it himself.

Perhaps the worst display of a lack of etiquette in public in this novel occurs at the Maison d’Or, another of the finest restaurants in Paris in the mid nineteenth century. Cisy invites Frédéric and other distinguished gentlemen to dine there. The narrator describes the scene:

Un surtout de vermeil, chargé de fleurs et de fruits, occupait le milieu de la table, couverte de plats d'argent, suivant la vieille mode française; des rapiers, pleins de salaisons et d'épices, formaient bordure tout autour; des cruches de vin rosat frappé de glace se dressaient de distance en distance; cinq verres de hauteur différente étaient alignés devant chaque assiette avec des choses dont on ne savait pas l'usage, mille ustensiles de bouche ingénieux; et il y avait, rien que pour le premier service: une hure d'esturgeon mouillée de champagne, un jambon d'York au tokay, des grives au gratin, des cailles rôties, un vol-au-vent Béchamel, un sauté de perdrix rouges, et, aux deux bouts de tout cela, des effilés de pommes de terre qui étaient mêlés à des truffes. Un lustre et des girandoles illuminaient l'appartement, tendu de damas rouge. Quatre domestiques en habit noir se tenaient derrière les fauteuils de maroquin. (297-298)

Amid these exquisite surroundings, exotic foods, and expensive wines the diners tell dirty jokes, poke fun at Arnoux, and disgrace Rosanette and *all* of the men with whom she has been involved. The men speak as though they are lunching at a cook’s table or bouillon restaurant. The discussion about Rosanette and Arnoux produces such laughter around the table that Frédéric throws his plate at Cisy in embarrassment and anger (301-302). His lack of decorum fits in well with this group of men engaging in bawdy conversation, but is out of place in this “public” dining room that commands polite behavior.

### The Restaurant Cabinet as Boardroom

The “private” spaces of the restaurant also prove useful in hosting secretive business transactions and discussing louche financial deals throughout the novel. Monsieur Arnoux takes Frédéric and Regimbart to lunch at Trois-Frères Provençaux where he discusses a speculative real estate deal with Regimbart; “Ensuite, il fut question de la valeur des terrains dans la banlieue, une spéculation d’Arnoux, infaillible. En attendant, il perdait ses intérêts. Puisqu’il ne voulait vendre à aucun prix, Regimbart lui découvrirait quelqu’un; et ces deux messieurs firent, avec un crayon, des calculs jusqu’à la fin du dessert.” (94) After dessert, the men then go to an *estaminet* on Passage du Saumon for coffee where Frédéric endures “indeterminables parties de billard” and innombrables chopes” while the men continue their discussion of real estate (94). Frédéric stays for so many hours with these men who were engaged in an important discussion of private business matters because of his hope of the possibility of being close to Mme Arnoux. At this point in the novel, he does not realize that a respectable woman like Mme Arnoux would never step foot in a restaurant or estaminet.

The three men find themselves together again after Frédéric’s attempt at dueling with Cisy. They go to the Restaurant de Madrid to celebrate the fact that Frédéric survived the fight. During the meal, Arnoux’s and Regimbart’s conversation turns again towards his business deals; “Et ils se mirent à causer traites, échéances. Afin d’être plus commodément, ils allèrent même chuchoter, à l’écart sur une autre table...Bref, il était clair qu’Arnoux tripotait avec le citoyen beaucoup de choses. ” (314). Frédéric wants to join in the conversation and perhaps offer a loan or investment to Arnoux, but hesitates because “L’endroit n’était pas convenable” (314). As he oscillates between the world of

Arnoux's business dealings in restaurants and the Dambreuses' dinner parties, Frédéric recognizes the inappropriateness of discussing certain matters in "public" around the restaurant table.

It is at the *grand restaurant Véfour* that Deslauriers proposes that Frédéric buy Arnoux's old newspaper *L'Art Industriel*, which had been transformed into a journal titled *L'Art* by Hussonet. He had turned it into a literary foundation that published only its investors' articles (157). Deslauriers proposes that they purchase the paper and turn it into a political journal. The conversation troubles Frédéric, but the effects of the wine and good food he has consumed keeps him in good spirits (158). The fate of the newspaper is discussed again at *Café Anglais* when Hussonet interrupts Frédéric's and Rosanette's "private" dinner; "Il avait eu un but en s'invitant à dîner" (291). He asks Frédéric to help him change the journal, which was now named *Le Flambarde* and not making any profit, into a weekly newspaper. Frédéric is again troubled by the proposal and responds vaguely until Hussonet leaves him with the bill for the dinner. The discussion of the newspaper and the fact that Cisy, Hussonet, and Rosanette all depart the restaurant without paying for their meals makes Frédéric feel so uncomfortable that he decides to never see Rosanette again; "Quant à la Maréchale, il se jura de ne plus la revoir..." (291). Frédéric decides at this moment to seduce Mme Dambreuse who presides over a weekly salon at home rather than frequent the city's restaurants. It is at this moment that we see Frédéric decide to move away from what Bourdieu designates the art and business pole dominated by Arnoux and Rosanette in the restaurant towards the side of political power on display at the Dambreuses' dinner parties.

### Entertaining at Home

The private home in this novel plays a very different role than the restaurant. Dinner-party revelers maintain their decorum while at a private home, whereas they seem to lose their inhibitions while sitting around the restaurant table. Conversation at dinner parties in the Parisian salons is polite and mundane. The partygoers restrict their topics of conversation to current events, travel, and politics and reserve gossip and scandalous discussions for the restaurant table. The narrator describes Frédéric's first dinner party at the Arnoux house; "Mais la causerie surtout amusait Frédéric. Son gout pour les voyages fut caressé par Dittmer, qui parla de l'Orient; il assouvit sa curiosité des choses du théâtre en écoutant Rosenwald causer de l'Opéra; et l'existence atroce de la bohème lui parut drôle, à travers la gaieté d'Hussonet, lequel narra, d'une manière pittoresque, comment il avait passé tout un hiver, n'ayant pour nourriture que du fromage de Hollande. Puis une discussion entre Lovarais et Burieu, sur l'école Florentine, lui révéla des chefs-d'œuvre, lui ouvrit des horizons..." (67-68). Some of these same men, such as Hussonet, will later in the novel appear at a restaurant table with Frédéric where they will conduct themselves very differently.

At the Dambreuse dinner party even the entertainers are bored by the formulaic polite conversation and lack of excitement; "Les quadrilles n'étaient pas nombreux; et les danseurs, à la manière nonchalante dont ils traînaient leurs escarpins, semblaient s'acquitter d'un devoir" (217). Conversation here revolves around politics, theater, and the arts, but the revelers dare not debate or disagree with one another; "Tous déclarèrent que la République était impossible en France" (218). The true seat of political rebellion is the café and restaurant where Regimbart holds court. One does not state opinions

explicitly in the salon, but rather implies and suggests. Frédéric learns that Mme Dambreuse knows that he is sleeping with Rosanette based on a veiled reference to her home; “Cela signifiait: ‘c’est votre maîtresse”” (323). Whereas restaurant diners will openly accuse one another and poke fun at sexual conquests, one would not dare do so in a private home where it is important to remain polite at all times. Mme Dambreuse eventually acknowledges to Frédéric that even she finds her party dull; “D’ailleurs, tout cela n’est pas drôle! Pour certaines natures du moins!” (222). At a subsequent party, Frédéric seeks out the company of the women to find a conversation partner more interesting than one of the men gossiping about politics (320).

The maintenance of polite conversation and respectful behavior at a dinner party was enforced as a strict code of ethics. On one occasion at the prison release party at Dussardier’s home, the partygoers’ conversation gets too loud, so Sénécal steps in to silence them; “Sénécal lui mit la main sur la bouche, il n’aimait pas le désordre; et les locataires apparaissaient à leurs carreaux, surpris du tapage insolite qui se faisait dans le logement de Dussardier“ (359). The noise from the party is silenced out of respect for Dussardier’s neighbors, but no similar consideration is given to fellow restaurant diners at any point in the novel signaling that each space requires different behavior. The home is a sacred place worthy of respect, whereas the restaurant, as a public space in this city is used for revelry and debauchery.

### Polarizing Spaces

Following Bourdieu’s situating of the characters in the novel around two opposing poles, one can also assign them to different spaces. Madame Arnoux and

Madame Dambreuse preside over the domestic sphere at home, while M. Arnoux and Regimbart are relegated to the city's public restaurants. Madame Arnoux and Madame Dambreuse entertain guests regularly at home with elegance and grace and would never set foot in a restaurant. In fact when M. Arnoux invites his wife, who has begun to suspect that he is having an affair with Rosanette, out to dine with him at a restaurant, she refuses to go; "Le soir, il voulut dîner seul, avec elle, dans un cabinet particulier, à la Maison d'or. Mme Arnoux ne comprit rien à ce mouvement de cœur, s'offensant même d'être traitée en lorette; - ce qui, de la part d'Arnoux, au contraire, était une preuve d'affection" (238). The restaurant is the place one goes to entertain a mistress and to behave badly, so Madame Arnoux will not be seen there. Mme Dambreuse is also never seen at a restaurant in this novel. She hosts dinner parties and dines with Frédéric at her home instead. The narrator describes her unparalleled grace while reigning over her home salon; "La plus exquise, peut-être, était de contempler Mme Dambreuse, entre plusieurs personnes, dans son salon. La convenance de ses manières le faisait rêver d'autres attitudes; pendant qu'elle causait d'un ton froid, il se rappelait ses mots d'amour balbutiés; tous les respects pour sa vertu le délectaient comme un hommage retournant vers lui" (501). The restaurant challenges the home as the dominant place for entertaining guests, conducting business, discussing revolutionary politics, and carrying out other activities that at one time would have been reserved solely for the privacy of one's home.

Frédéric's coming-of-age story takes place against the backdrop of the 1848 revolution and the restaurant proves to be central to Flaubert's presentation of the republican activities of the period. The political discussions that take place around the restaurant table inspire and promote the revolutionary ideals of the republicans, whereas

the Dambreuse salon parties reinforce the maintenance of the established political order of the period. Regimbart “le citoyen” reigns over the revolutionary political discussions and symbolizes the relationship between restaurants and the revolution. Regimbart visits many different cafés and restaurants throughout the city in this novel. Flaubert introduces Regimbart amid a lengthy list of estaminets, cafés, restaurants, and other dining establishments; “Et ce n’était pas l’amour des boissons qui attirait dans ces endroits le citoyen Regimbart, mais l’habitude ancienne d’y causer politique, avec l’âge, sa verve était tombée; il n’avait plus qu’une morosité silencieuse. On aurait dit, à voir le sérieux de son visage, qu’il roulait le monde dans sa tête” (57). Regimbart and his compatriots discussed the political climate of their nation in various dining establishments around the city. Flaubert describes Regimbart’s daily routine of stopping for a drink and breakfast along the rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, spending the afternoon on the Passage des Panoramas, eating at l’estaminet Bordelais, having dinner at a café on Place Gaillon, and then spending the rest of the evening until 1 in the morning at another café where he played billiards (57).

#### The Restaurant as War Room

Flaubert associates Regimbart with the maze of restaurants and cafés in the city that serve the revolutionaries. When Frédéric returns to Paris from the provinces and searches for Regimbart in order to find out the Arnoux's location, he races around the city and visits all of the dining establishments he has heard Regimbart mention; “Sa voiture l’agaçait, il la renvoyait; ses idées se brouillaient; puis tous les noms des cafés qu’il avait entendu prononcer par cet imbécile jaillirent de sa mémoire, à la fois, comme les mille

pièces d'un feu d'artifice: café Gascard, café Grimbert, café Halbout, estaminet Bordelais, Havanais, Havrais, Boeuf à la mode, brasserie Allemande, Mère Morel; et il se transporta dans tous successivement" (150). The restaurants located throughout the city host the revolutionaries as they debate, elect leaders, and hide from the authorities.

Being involved in the republican movement, Regimbart must be able to navigate the culinary landscape of the city. He knows the workers in the restaurants that support the revolutionary efforts and the spaces that are friendly to republican gatherings, such as the Café Dagneaux (192). On a visit to Trois-Frères Provençaux with Arnoux and Frédéric, Regimbart reveals his expertise and demonstrates his superior knowledge of the city's restaurant culture as he orders food for his friends, complains about changes to the menu and asks about servers who are no longer working at the restaurant:

Le citoyen commença par retirer sa redingote, et sûre de la déférence des deux autres, écrivit la carte. Mais il eut beau se transporter dans la cuisine pour parler lui-même au chef, descendre à la cave dont il connaissait tous les coins, et faire monter le maître de l'établissement, auquel il "donna un savon," il ne fut content ni des mets, ni des vins, ni du service ! A chaque plat nouveau, à chaque bouteille différente, dès la première bouchée, la première gorgée, il laissait tomber sa fourchette, ou repoussait au loin son verre; puis s'accoudant sur la nappe de toute la longueur de son bras, il s'écriait qu'on ne pouvait plus dîner à Paris ! Enfin, ne sachant qu'imaginer pour sa bouche, Regimbart se commanda des haricots à l'huile, « tout bonnement », lesquels, bien qu'à moitié réussis, l'apaisèrent un peu. Puis il eut, avec le garçon, un dialogue, roulant sur les anciens garçons des Provençaux: « Qu'était devenu Antoine ? Et un nommé Eugène ? Et Théodore, le petit, qui servait toujours en bas ? Il y avait dans ce temps-là une chère autrement distinguée, et des têtes de Bourgogne comme on n'en reverra plus. (93-94)

Regimbart displays his knowledge of the culinary landscape of Paris that enables him to navigate through the maze of dining establishments. He is equally comfortable in one of the "grands restaurants" like Trois-Frères Provençaux as he is in the taverns and wine shops in the city.

After Cisy challenges Frédéric to a duel, Frédéric turns to Regimbart for assistance and finds him sharing a family meal in a closed tavern with the owners and a waiter; “Une chandelle, au bord du comptoir, éclairait la salle déserte. Tous les tabourets, les pieds en l’air, étaient posés sur les tables. Le maître et la maîtresse avec leur garçon soupaient dans l’angle près de la cuisine; — et Regimbart, le chapeau sur la tête, partageait leur repas, et même gênait le garçon, qui était contraint à chaque bouchée de se tourner de côté, quelque peu” (303-304). The fluidity with which Regimbart moves between the various dining establishments in the city that cater to different socio-economic classes enables him to spread news about the revolutionary activities and gather information from the many different factions in the city.

In the third part of the novel, we witness the revolution spill out from around the restaurant tables into the streets of Paris. The revolutionaries take over the arcades of the Palais-Royal and the restaurants and wine shops within. In seizing control of the city’s central restaurant quarter, the revolutionaries symbolically democratize society. While inciting the revolutionaries, Pellerin announces; “Honte et infamie ! On devrait happer les bourgeois au sortir de la Maison d’or et leur cracher à la figure ! Au moins, si le gouvernement ne favorisait pas la débauche ! ” (415). As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the restaurants that Frédéric and Arnoux frequent throughout this novel are inaccessible to many Parisians and Flaubert highlights the restaurant as a site of conflict between those who can afford to dine out and those who cannot. Frédéric’s education in this novel ends without his acknowledgment of this fact. He continues his life as usual as the mob seizes control of the city; “Ils passèrent l’après-midi à regarder, de leur fenêtre, le peuple dans la rue. Puis il l’emmena dîner aux Trois-Frères Provençaux. Le repas fut

long, délicat” (382). This juxtaposition between the violence of the revolution and Frédéric living a privileged life of entertaining mistresses at restaurants highlights a missed opportunity for Frédéric to engage in this important political movement, but he remains, as in the beginning, immobilized between two poles, unwilling to act.

#### Chapter 4- The Spectacle of Dining Out and Invention of the Middle-Class Restaurant

In 1854, Duval opened the first of what would become a chain of restaurants known as “Bouillons Duval.” Diners at these predecessors to lunch counters and fast-food restaurants ate a simple meal of soup at a very reasonable price. Waitresses wearing black and white uniforms, such as those immortalized in Renoir’s 1875 painting, “Une Serveuse au Restaurant Duval”, served them quickly at unadorned tables. Diners were presented with a ticket, which they handed to a cashier along with payment upon exiting. The practicality and affordability of dining at a Duval restaurant enticed middle class workers, students, and others with little financial means to its tables.

Duval’s restaurant system was designed to provide him and his company with the highest profits by simplifying menu choices, maintaining a high table turnover, and overcharging for mediocre food. He turned the luxury and spectacle of dining out into a commercial venture that was made possible by a turn towards capitalist economics, an emergent middle class, and a consumer society during this period of history. David Harvey describes this economic, cultural, and political shift towards modernity that occurred in fin-de-siècle Paris at the same time that J. K. Huysmans publishes *À l’eau* and Édouard Dujardin publishes *Les Lauriers sont coupés* as a type of “creative destruction” that sought to eliminate pieces of the past and improve the left over fragments (1). Duval certainly appropriated elements of the eighteenth century restaurant, but modified others to cater to a new capitalist reality in late nineteenth century Paris. I argue in this chapter that the restaurant, those designed specifically to cater to middle-class practicality such as the Bouillon Duval as well as others, played a critical role in

forging middle-class identities in nineteenth century Paris. In Balzac's *Le Cousin Pons*, the title character develops an obsession with emulating the dress and eating habits of the upper class in the city's restaurants. In Eduard Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, we experience the spectacle of middle-class restaurant dining through Daniel Prince's interior thoughts as he sits at his table enjoying a meal. In *À Vau-l'eau*, Folantin struggles against this shift towards modernity and Huysmans uses the "restaurant" in its myriad forms- the bouillon Duval, the table d'hôte, the traiteur, wine shop, and the fine dining restaurants along Paris' new boulevards- as symbolic of this shift.

The nineteenth century restaurant was a space in which the middle class could observe and interact with upper class French society. In her book, *Bourgeois Consumption*, Rachel Rich writes about the role the restaurant played in forging nineteenth century middle-class identities, particularly through the use of emulation. Dining in one of Paris' finest restaurants during this period resembled dining in an upper class salon or at an aristocratic dinner party. The restaurant's staff served food just as *domestiques* would cook and serve food in an upper-class home. Aside from inviting guests, a restaurant dinner party host had little to do. The restaurant became an extension of the middle class home that was used for entertaining guests and displaying oneself to society. By displaying oneself in the proper dress at a dining establishment and making proper choices from the menu, a member of the middle class could build a respectable reputation that garnered him financial and social success. Rich writes, "Restaurants allowed those who aspired to higher, or simply different, levels of distinction to place themselves side by side with those whom they sought to join. In offering this opportunity for display, restaurants played a part in the creation of bourgeois identities that could be

adapted and negotiated according to the individual desires of the diners who frequented them” (145). In the three novels I have selected to discuss in this chapter, the restaurant plays a critical role in forging the identity of each of the protagonists.

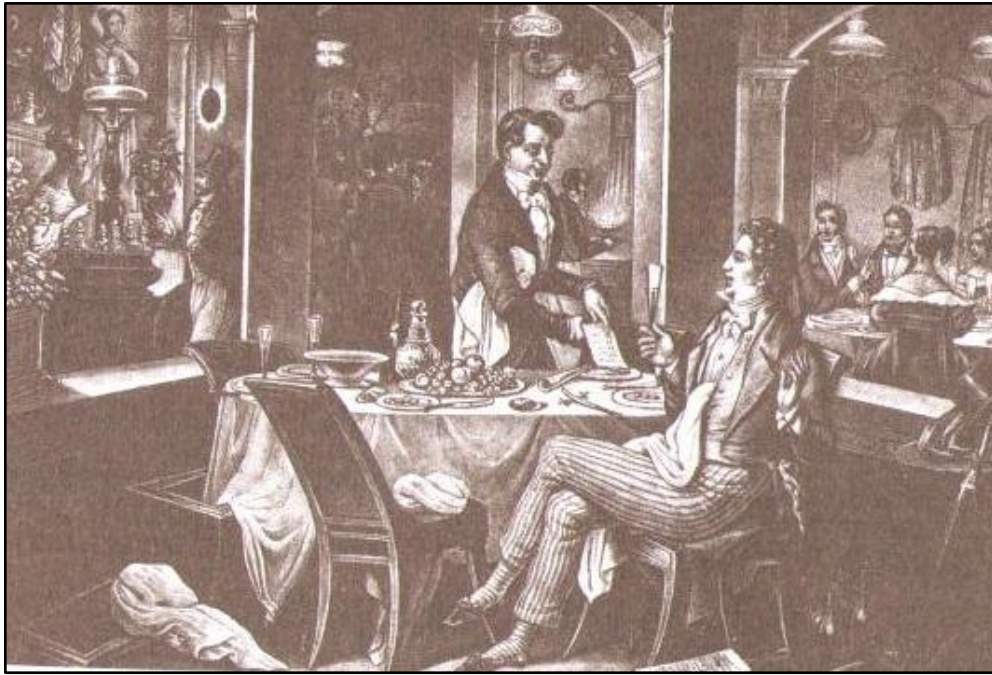


Figure 6- “A Dandy dining at the Véry” from *Le Mangeur du XIXe siècle* by Jean-Paul Aron reprinted p 44 in Anka Muhlstein and Adriana Hunter, Tr. *Balzac’s Omelette: A Delicious tour of French food and culture with Honoré de Balzac*. Other Press; New York, 2010.

#### Middle Class Emulation around the table in Balzac’s *Le Cousin Pons*

In *Le Cousin Pons*, Balzac tells the story of a middle class gourmand who spends his life dining in restaurants and in bourgeois dining rooms emulating upper class tastes in food, fashion, and art. Balzac’s title character, Pons, lives a superficial life that contrasts with that of his dear friend Schmucke. We meet Pons walking down a Parisian

boulevard in the first few pages of the novel wearing outdated clothing that he perceives as fashionable to the wealthy social classes; “Cet homme si disgracié par la nature était mis comme le sont les pauvres de la bonne compagnie, à qui les assez riches essaient souvent de ressembler” (24). Pons wore gaiters over his shoes and trousers to hide his dirty old socks that were disintegrating from overuse. His outdated trousers were popular a few years earlier and his coat was even older than his trousers, but the ring he wore on his finger was the most revealing sign of his outmoded fashion; “Pons, qui portait toujours, au petit doigt de la main droite, une bague à diamant tolérée sous l’Empire, et devenue ridicule aujourd’hui, Pons, beaucoup trop troubadour et trop Français, n’offrait pas dans sa physionomie la sérénité divine qui tempérait l’effroyable laideur de Schmucke” (46). In trying to emulate the wealthy members of Parisian society, Pons is mocked for looking ridiculous. Pons obsesses over his physical appearance because it is through fashion and other visual cues that one displays his or her social status in nineteenth century Paris. In fact, Balzac notes in this novel that one’s profession could be discerned by passers-by along a Parisian boulevard through clothing, shoes, and mannerisms (147).

Pons mimics the dress, attitudes, and tastes of the wealthier classes in order to portray to others that he, himself, is also a member of the upper class. He lives his life emulating upper class members of society; “Voilà jusqu’où Pons avait ravalé son esprit chez les amphitryons; il y répétait leurs idées, et il les leur commentait platement, à la manière des chœurs antiques. Il n’osait pas se livrer à l’originalité qui distingue les artistes et qui dans sa jeunesse abondait en traits fins chez lui, mais que l’habitude de s’effacer avait alors presque abolie, et qu’on rembarrait, comme tout à l’heure, quand elle

reparaissait” (61). Pons identifies himself as an art collector and gourmand, which are two identities that he appropriates from his wealthier peers. He spends all of his extra income on collecting antiques and dining out, which leaves him with only enough money to rent a small apartment and buy used clothing; “Pons était gourmand, son peu de fortune et sa passion pour le Bric-à-Brac lui commandaient un régime diététique tellement en horreur avec sa gueule fine, que le célibataire avait tout d’abord tranché la question en allant dîner tous les jours en ville” (31). He dines in the city’s restaurants and seeks invitations to dine at wealthy friends’ homes where he enjoys out-of-season delicacies, the finest wines, finely-crafted desserts, exotic coffees, and liqueurs to satisfy his appetite for the finest things in life.

These dinner parties Pons attended in Paris imitated the abundance and opulence of the aristocracy; “beaucoup de maisons imitaient les splendeurs des rois, des reines, des princes, dont regorgeait Paris” (32). Conversation around these dinner tables was superficial and revolved around how fortunes and social statuses were made and lost. He was a perpetual guest around these tables, but due to his lack of wealth, Pons never returned any of the invitations and thus developed an unfortunate reputation for being a parasite and social ladder climber. Pons tries to recreate these wealthy socialite dinner parties by dining out in Paris’ finest restaurants, which are according to him “l’émule de la courtisane” (33).

Because of his lack of financial wealth, dining out is a sacrifice for Pons. He sacrifices the ability to live in a nicer apartment, wear nicer clothing, and go to the theater. Pons decides, however, that the good food and wine one consumes at the restaurant table along with the value of being seen doing so is worth his denial of other

pleasures. The act of dining out transmits social capital and was a display of monetary wealth to the other diners participating in what could be considered “the spectacle of restaurant dining” in the nineteenth century. Rich writes, “Like a dinner party, a restaurant meal afforded an opportunity to display cultural capital. Further it also allowed diners to be seen in public, and some sources explicitly cast diners at neighboring tables as forming an audience in front of whom to perform” (136). By dining in a restaurant and identifying himself as a gourmand, Pons is communicating to society that he belongs to a wealthy social class.

Dining in fine restaurants becomes an obsession for Pons as he strives for decades to create the illusion of being a member of the elite social class. He ultimately devotes more to his love of this superficial life of a gourmand art and antique collector than to his musical profession:

La gourmandise, le péché des moines vertueux, lui tendit les bras; il s’y précipita comme il s’était précipité dans l’adoration des œuvres d’art et dans son culte pour la musique. La bonne chère et le Bric-à-Brac furent pour lui la monnaie d’une femme; car la musique était son état, et trouvez un homme qui aime l’état dont il vit ? A la longue, il en est d’une profession comme du mariage, on n’en sent plus que les inconvénients (36).

Instead of embracing his life as a middle-class musician, as Schmucke does, Pons continually tries to live a different life, which is beyond his reach. Pons’ obsession with being a gourmand is like a religion that sustains him until it is taken away at the end of his life:

Brillat-Savarin a justifié par parti pris les goûts des gastronomes; mais peut-être n’a-t-il pas assez insisté sur le plaisir réel que l’homme trouve à table. La digestion, en employant les forces humaines, constitue un combat intérieur qui, chez les gastrolâtres, équivaut aux plus hautes jouissances de l’amour. On sent un si vaste déploiement de la capacité vitale, que le cerveau s’annule au profit du second cerveau, placé dans le diaphragme, et l’ivresse arrive par l’inertie même de toutes les facultés. Les boas gorgés d’un taureau sont si bien ivres qu’ils se

laissent tuer. Passé quarante ans, quel homme ose travailler après son dîner ? ... Aussi tous les grands hommes ont-ils été sobres. Les malades en convalescence d'une maladie grave, à qui l'on mesure si chichement une nourriture choisie, ont pu souvent observer l'espèce de griserie gastrique causée par une seule aile de poulet. Le sage Pons, dont toutes les jouissances étaient concentrées dans le jeu de son estomac, se trouvait toujours dans la situation de ces convalescents: il demandait à la bonne chère toutes les sensations qu'elle peut donner, et il les avait jusqu'alors obtenues tous les jours. Personne n'ose dire adieu à une habitude. Beaucoup de suicides se sont arrêtés sur le seuil de la Mort par le souvenir du café où ils vont jouer tous les soirs leur partie de dominos. (36)

Dining out satiates Pons and he seeks this pleasure daily and at every mealtime. His gastronomic passion sustains his life in a physical sense, but more importantly, spiritually as well. Like a devoted member of a religious order, Pons forgoes all other pleasures in the world in order to concentrate on this single infatuation of being a gastronome in the city's restaurants.

Pons lives this extravagant life for nearly forty years before his cousin casts him out of society for making a poor recommendation for the marriage of one of her friends. This rejection sickens Pons physically and he remains in bed for the remainder of the novel. As he lays in his deathbed, Pons reexamines his life of superficiality with Schmucke at his side. Schmucke pleads with Pons to return to a simpler life by abandoning the city's restaurants and eating bread and cheese at home with him instead. Like an alcoholic trying to stop drinking, Pons finds his habit of dining out on the town nearly impossible to break because it is his connection to high society; "Pons n'osa pas avouer à Schmucke que, chez lui, le cœur et l'estomac étaient ennemis, que l'estomac s'accommodait de ce que faisait souffrir le cœur, et qu'il lui fallait à tout prix un bon dîner à déguster, comme à un homme galant une maîtresse à...lutiner" (40). Pons is caught in the drama and spectacle of eating expensive food in the city's restaurants, drinking fashionable wines, and collecting art, while his only true friend Schmucke is not.

When dining at home, Pons misses the surprise of eating well-prepared plates of food, the exotic liqueurs, and good coffees that are served at the upper-class table, but above all, he yearns for the small-talk, insincere civilities, and the scandals he participated in while dining out. As Pons withdraws from society, he forgets the pain of being cast out and only remembers the joy of being on display to high society at the restaurant table. The narrator explains; “Donc, au bout de trois mois, les atroces douleurs qui avaient failli briser le cœur délicat de Pons étaient amorties, il ne pensait plus qu’aux agréments de la société; de même qu’un vieux homme à femmes regrette une maîtresse quittée coupable de trop d’infidélités” (79).

#### Schmucke offers a different way of life to Pons

Schmucke serves as an example of the life Pons should have lived in order to save himself the embarrassment of being rejected from high society. It may be that Schmucke’s status as a foreigner living in Paris aids him in avoiding the temptation to climb the social ladder. Society will always consider Schmucke as an outsider, so he lives his life away from the influence of this emerging capitalist society with which Pons is so enamored. Balzac highlights Schmucke’s German accent whenever he speaks in the novel to underscore his role as society’s outsider. For example, he refers to the good Madame Cibot as “*ponne montame Zipod.*” (73). Schmucke and Pons, while good friends, live their lives in opposite ways that do eventually converge on Pons’ deathbed as he reexamines his life. It is at this moment of convergence while he is dying in bed that Pons recognizes the value in Schmucke’s simpler life outside of the “spectacles continuels du drame parisien” (41). He says to Schmucke; “Ah! le monde! le

monde !...J'aurais bien mieux fait, mon bon Schmucke, de suivre tes conseils ! de dîner ici tous les jours depuis notre réunion ! de renoncer à cette société qui roule sur moi, comme un tombereau sur un œuf, et pourquoi” (139) ? Pons has lived his life keeping up appearances for wealthy relatives and strangers who reject him because of his lack of wealth and social status. Balzac writes, “En effet, le peu de cas que les Camusot faisaient de leur cousin Pons, sa démonétisation au sein de la famille, agissait sur les domestiques qui, sans manquer d’égards envers lui, le considéraient comme une variété du Pauvre” (50). Even the maids in Pons’ cousin’s home refuse to treat him with respect because they perceive him to be a poor relative emulating the ways of his wealthy family to climb up the social ladder.

Balzac seems to question in this novel the value that Parisian consumer society places on appearances. Pons enjoys dining out in fine restaurants and at extravagant dinner parties because of the spectacle of doing so. Pons is regarded as a poor parasitic social climber because of the way he dresses. We learn at the end of the novel, however, that after his death, Pons’ collection is one of the most valued and respected in Paris. Pons does not attain the same notoriety or respect in his lifetime because of his dress, mannerisms, small apartment, and occupation. He is perceived by his cousin and other members of the upper class as a poor relative who lacks the social capital and financial wealth to join their ranks. Madame Cibot and his cousin only take an interest in Pons as he is dying when they discover the value of his art and antique collection.

Madame Cibot the “Oyster Girl?”

Pons’ concierge, Madame Cibot, can be viewed as an example of how appearance plays an important role in how one is able to participate in Paris’ consumer society. Before marrying Monsieur Cibot and becoming a concierge, Madame Cibot was an *écaillère* at the Cadran-Bleu Restaurant, one of the finest restaurants in the city during this time:

La beauté des femmes du peuple dure peu, surtout quand elles restent en espalier à la porte d’un restaurant. Les chauds rayons de la cuisine se projettent sur les traits qui durcissent, les restes de bouteilles bus en compagnie des garçons s’infiltraient dans le teint, et nulle fleur ne mûrit plus vite que celle d’une belle écaillère. (67)

It is implied that Madame Cibot is hired at Cadran-Bleu as a young woman because of her appearance, which helps to attract customers. She is stationed outside in front of the door to draw men into the restaurant. As a result of this hard work outside in the elements, Madame Cibot’s appearance suffers as she gains weight and eventually grows facial hair, which serve her well as a concierge, but would certainly not as an *écaillère*:

Heureusement pour madame Cibot, le mariage légitime et la vie de concierge arrivèrent à temps pour la conserver; elle demeura comme un modèle de Rubens, en gardant une beauté virile que ses rivales de la rue de Normandie calomniaient, en la qualifiant de *grosse dondon*. Ses tons de chair pouvaient se comparer aux appétissants glacis des mottes de beurre d’Isigny; et nonobstant son embonpoint, elle déployait une incomparable agilité dans ses fonctions. Madame Cibot atteignait à l’âge où ces sortes de femmes sont obligées de se faire la barbe. N’est-ce pas dire qu’elle avait quarante-huit ans ? Une portière à moustaches est une des plus grandes garanties d’ordre et de sécurité pour un propriétaire. Si Delacroix avait pu voir madame Cibot posée fièrement sur son balai, certes il en eût fait une Bellone ! (68)

As she grows older, Cibot plays the role of an apartment building concierge rather than a welcoming hostess at a restaurant. Her appearance helps to deflect unwanted visitors

from the apartment building instead of drawing people in as she did at the Cadran-Bleu. As an *écaillière*, Cibot is central to the drama and spectacle of life on a Parisian boulevard, but as a concierge, she gossips and enjoys the minor scandals of the middle class on the rue de Normandie. She is left with little from her former life except knowledge of how to cook leftovers from the restaurant that she serves to her husband and boarders in the apartment building.

The Spectacle of Dining out in *Les Lauriers sont coupés*

In *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, Dujardin introduces the *monologue intérieur* to the modern novel to provide us with a deeply personal look into the life of a young man strolling through the city of Paris. With Paris and its grand boulevards as the backdrop, Dujardin tells Daniel Prince's story of anxiously awaiting the evening so that he can be with his lover Léa. Fin-de-siècle Paris provides Daniel with myriad leisure activities to pass the time before the critical moment when he will be with Léa. Like Pons, Daniel places himself on display to Parisian society along the city's boulevards, in the theatres, and, most importantly for this study, in the city's cafés and restaurants. These spaces help Daniel forge his identity in Parisian society. We see him questioning his identity in the first pages of the novel when he wonders about his relationship to the bustling crowds of modern Paris; "un avec les autres, un comme avec les autres, distinct des autres, semblable aux autres, apparaissant un le même et un de plus, un de tous donc surgissant, et entrant à ce qui est, et de l'infini des possibles existences, je surgis..." (1). Daniel is entering society, but what is his identity? Will Daniel emerge as someone distinct from all of the other Parisians or will he try to blend in the way Pons does? Daniel ultimately

participates in Parisian society as both an observer of and an actor in the spectacle of Parisian life.

As a participant in the spectacle of Parisian society, Daniel is often “acting” in a manner that is at odds with his thoughts. Dujardin’s use of the *monologue intérieur* enables us to witness not only Daniel’s actions, but his thoughts as well in this novel. When his friend questions him about his unrequited love for Léa and for not wearing a hat as they go out to the theater, Daniel responds, “j’ai plus de plaisir à agir autrement que d’autres agiraient” (3). Daniel wants to appear confident and uncommon in front of his friend, but we learn through Daniel’s thoughts that he is actually very indecisive and extremely concerned with his appearance and the perceptions that others have of him. By observing others around him, Daniel copies their dress, manners, and attitudes in order to impress Léa and portray confidence and *savoir-faire* of navigating Parisian society. For example, after passing an elegantly-dressed man in the street wearing a boutonnière, Daniel thinks to himself that he will wear the same outfit later in the evening when he meets Léa (5).

#### The Reciprocal Gaze Across the Restaurant Table

Parisians participated in this type of reciprocal gazing at and observation of one another on the city’s streets as well as in its cafés and restaurants. Dujardin uses the restaurant in this novel to highlight Daniel’s insecurity and anxiety about impressing Léa and society-at-large. In choosing where to eat dinner before meeting Léa, Daniel considers dining at an à la carte restaurant, Café Oriental, or dining at a Bouillon Duval. In chapter 1, I laid out a description of the different types of restaurants that were

prevalent in the city during this time. Following this stratification of the city's restaurants, Dining at a Bouillon Duval would have been less expensive and would provide less social capital than dining in an "à la carte" restaurant or café. Dining in the bouillon restaurant was primarily reserved for workers to eat lunch or for middle-class social gatherings. Daniel must decide at which of these establishments he will take his dinner:

Le coin de la rue des Petits-champs; le café, éclairé déjà; mais les boutiques toutes sont éclairées dans l'avenue; comme vite le soir arrive! «Café Oriental... restaurant». De l'autre côté, le bouillon Duval; pour économiser, si j'allais là? Économiser me serait utile; le café est vraiment mieux, et la différence des prix n'est guère; on est aussi bien au bouillon, moins à l'aise, mais aussi bien; tant pis, je m'offre le luxe du café. À l'intérieur, les lumières, le reflet des rouges et des dorés; la rue plus sombre; sur les glaces une buée. «Dîners à trois francs... bock, trente centimes»...Entrons. Un peu il faut relever les pointes de mes moustaches, ainsi. (7)

Daniel considers the different prices of the two dining establishments, but he ultimately decides that dining at Café Oriental will be more comfortable and luxurious than dining in a Bouillon Duval. Daniel does not consider the menu or the food quality in either establishment when making his decision. I argue that Daniel ignores the question of food quality because he is most concerned with his comfort and how others will perceive him while dining at either establishment. Being concerned with how Léa and society will view him, Daniel chooses the more upscale café at which to eat his dinner.

Upon entering the restaurant, Daniel observes the décor and layout of the space; "Illuminé, rouge, doré, le café; les glaces étincelantes; un garçon au tablier blanc; les colonnes chargées de chapeaux et de par-dessus" (8). He looks around to confirm that dining here will communicate to others that he is elegant, wealthy, and knowledgeable about how to navigate the city's complex culinary landscape. He searches the room to see

if he knows any of the other diners in hopes that someone will see that he has made the right choice for dinner. After sizing up the situation, Daniel is pleased with his choice and thinks to himself; “Léa n'aurait pas de quoi se moquer” (8). At this point in the novel, Dujardin repeats his initial description of the gilded sparkling mirrors in the restaurant to emphasize that Daniel has confirmed for himself that society and Léa would approve of his decision to dine in such an opulently-decorated restaurant.

### Daniel Takes the Stage

Daniel is aware that upon stepping into this restaurant, he will now become an actor in the spectacle of dining out. He thinks to himself as he looks around, “Ces gens me regardent entrer; un monsieur maigre, aux favoris longs, quelle gravité! Les tables sont pleines” (8). Daniel knows that from this point forward, his fellow diners will observe all of his actions. His clothes, speech, and food choices will be scrutinized. Even the seemingly simple act of removing his gloves and overcoat in the vestibule turns into a theatrical event. Daniel is concerned about whether he should place his gloves on the table or in the pocket of his coat. He hangs his hat and coat on a hook and then considers where the most acceptable place to deposit his gloves would be; “Il faut les jeter négligemment sur la table, à côté de l'assiette; plutôt dans la poche du par-dessus; non, sur la table; ces petites choses sont de la tenue générale” (8). Daniel is indecisive about where to place his gloves because he is concerned about the perception his fellow diners will have of him. He ultimately decides to stuff his gloves into the pocket of his coat because this appears to be the acceptable place to store one’s gloves while dining out.

In a more ridiculous display of this type of uncertainty about how he should act in

the public dining room of a restaurant and his awareness of the spectacle in which he is participating, Daniel actually consumes a piece of paper on which he has written a note to a woman seated on the other side of the room. Finding the woman attractive, he writes a note to her asking to meet her the next day. He then questions whether it would be considered proper to ask a woman who is seated with another man out to join him on a date. He struggles over the wording of the note, whether or not he will bring a book to read while he waits for her, and the exact place he will wait for her, but then decides against even sharing the note with the woman; “Je le déchire; en deux, la carte; encore en deux, cela fait quatre morceaux; encore en deux, cela fait huit; encore en deux; là, encore; plus moyen. Eh bien, je ne puis pas jeter ces morceaux à terre; on les retrouverait; il faut un peu les mâcher. Pouah, c'est dégoûtant. À terre; ainsi, certes, on ne lira pas” (9). Daniel becomes so concerned over the possibility that someone in the restaurant will discover his note that he tries to eat it in order to destroy the evidence of his disreputable public behavior. After tossing the pieces of paper on the floor, he carefully scans the room to insure that no one has observed this bizarre sequence of events. Daniel has decided that society considers littering a less reprehensible action than being exposed as someone who tries to steal women from other men.

#### Daniel joins the audience

Daniel is most likely so aware of how his actions are scrutinized in the restaurant because he spends much of his meal gazing at the other diners. Dining out at a restaurant requires Daniel to be both an actor and an audience member in the drama. The ability to observe others and participate in Parisian society is what draws Daniel to dining

out instead of preparing his own meals and eating at home; “si je pouvais m'arranger à dîner chez moi; peut-être que mon concierge me ferait faire quelque cuisine à peu de frais chaque jour. Ce serait mauvais. Je suis ridicule; ce serait ennuyeux; les jours où je ne puis rentrer, qu'advierait-il? au moins dans un restaurant on ne s'ennuie pas” (8). Despite the slow service and higher expense, dining out is more interesting than cooking at home. In drawing this conclusion, Daniel focuses on the atmosphere in the restaurant and the opportunity it provides to participate in a spectacle rather than the quality of the food served. The diners in a restaurant have signed a tacit agreement to play this game of reciprocal observation. Unlike along the boulevards, where Daniel finds the people passing by indifferent and ignorant of his actions, dress, and attitudes, his fellow diners are just as engaged and actively aware of their surroundings as he is (6).

Upon sitting down, Daniel watches a group of men enter the dining room. He comments to himself that one of them is wearing an unfashionable coat; “depuis beaucoup de saisons on n'en porte plus de tel” (8). He stares at the beautiful woman and her male dining partner:

Voilà une assez jolie femme; ni brune, ni blonde; ma foi, air choisi, elle doit être grande; c'est la femme de cet homme chauve qui me tourne le dos; sa maîtresse plutôt; elle n'a pas trop les façons d'une femme légitime; assez jolie, certes. Si elle pouvait regarder par ici; elle est presque en face de moi; comment faire? À quoi bon? Elle m'a vu. Elle est jolie; et ce monsieur paraît stupide; malheureusement je ne vois de lui que le dos; je voudrais connaître sa figure; il est un avoué, un notaire de province; suis-je bête! (8)

As Daniel sizes up the couple, he comments on their appearances and mannerisms. From these superficial details, he concludes that the woman is most likely the man's mistress. He draws conclusions about the man's profession and where he lives without ever speaking a word to either person. Daniel is aware that while he makes these types of

judgments about his fellow diners, they do the same to him in return. The placement of his gloves on the table and the note he writes to the woman communicate a particular message to his fellow diners. He ponders over the restaurant menu to make sure he is ordering correctly and thinks about the pronunciation of the word “*tabac*” to insure that society will draw proper conclusions about his education, social status, and manners.

### The Restaurant as the Symbol of a Modernizing, Changing Society

In *À Vau-l'Eau*, Huysmans paints a picture of this same modernizing society that cultivates a middle-class interested in appearances and social status. Folantin, however, resists conforming to society and focuses his rejection of modernity on the city's restaurants. He stands in stark contrast to the great nineteenth century literary figure of the “dandy flâneur” like Daniel Prince who strolled the newly paved streets of the modern French capital. Charles Baudelaire describes the nineteenth century flâneur in *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne* as an observer who thrives on and participates in the spectacle created by the crowds of the modern city:

La foule est son domaine, comme l'air est celui de l'oiseau, comme l'eau celui du poisson. Sa passion et sa profession, c'est d'*épouser la foule*. Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini. Etre hors de chez soi, et pourtant se sentir partout chez soi; voir le monde, être au centre du monde et rester caché au monde, tels sont quelques-uns des moindres plaisirs de ces esprits indépendants, passionnés, impartiaux, que la langue ne peut que maladroitement définir. (9)

Unlike the flâneur who participates in reciprocal observation, Folantin rejects modern urban life, yearns to live his life in the privacy of his own home, and tries to avoid the crowds in the various dining establishments and on the grand boulevards throughout the

city. Fin-de-siècle Paris, however, required its citizens to participate in the spectacle of urban life, and so Folantin yearns for a bygone era.

Folantin laments the modernization of the neighborhood where he was born and where he has lived and worked in for his entire life; “tous ses souvenirs tenaient dans cet ancien coin tranquille, déjà défiguré par des percées de nouvelles rues, par de funèbres boulevards, rissolés l’été et glacés l’hiver, par de mornes avenues qui avaient américanisé l’aspect du quartier et détruit pour jamais son allure intime, sans lui avoir apporté en échange des avantages de confortable, de gaîté et de vie” (186). Folantin remembers a time when his neighborhood was quiet with few shops and commercial activity, but the invasion of theaters, department stores, cafés, restaurants, and boutiques concerns him; “Dans dix ans d’ici, les brasseries et les cafés auront envahi tous les rez-de-chaussée du quai! Ah! Décidément Paris devient un Chicago sinistre! Et tout mélancolisé, M. Folantin se répétait: profitons du temps qui nous reste avant la définitive invasion de la grande muflerie du Nouveau-Monde!” (199). This “Americanization” of Folantin’s neighborhood introduces centers of commercial activity for members of the middle class to spend money and participate in public life. Folantin tries to resist visiting these establishments, but as more modern shops and restaurants replace the older ones, Folantin is forced to visit them. When he wants to dine out, he must visit Duval’s “établissements de bouillon” and other new restaurants that throughout the city are replacing the *traiteurs* and cafés from a bygone era.

The commodification of and participation in the spectacle of modern urban life prevailed in fin-de-siècle Paris. David Harvey writes in *Paris Capital of Modernity*, “The new boulevards created their own forms of spectacle, through the hustle and bustle of

carts and public conveyances over newly macadamized surfaces. The arrival of the new department stores and cafés, both of which spilled out onto the sidewalks of the new boulevards, made the boundary between public and private spaces porous” (212). Restaurants joined cabarets, circuses, concert halls, theaters, cafés, and department stores along the new boulevards where the public displayed their wealth. Capitalist economics coupled with the government’s desire to transform Paris into a model urban metropolis encouraged the creation of these places of entertainment. The boulevards and its places of entertainment became important public spaces in which the bourgeoisie displayed their affluence through conspicuous consumption. Harvey writes, “The boulevards, in short, became public spaces where the fetish of the commodity reigned supreme” (216).

Mechanization and more efficient means of production, along with the falling cost of raw materials enabled even members of the lower middle class to participate in this emergent consumer society. While many of the dining establishments remained stratified along social class distinctions, members of different social classes mixed in the city’s new public parks and along the streets of Paris, which David Harvey argues created a “sense of insecurity and vulnerability, of bourgeois anxiety, even of anomie, behind the turbulent mask of spectacle and commodification in the public spaces” (220). It is this anxiety caused by a perceived lack of safety and security and inferiority in public that pushes Folantin to retreat to his apartment and yearn for a domesticated home life. In his essay on urban life in 1903, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” Georg Simmel writes; “The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and

technique of life” (11). The anxiety of modern urban living in fin-de-siècle Paris was caused by an increased awareness of one’s class based on appearance and public consumption. Folantin laments these changes to Parisian society that made him feel inferior and lost in a city where he passed his entire life:

Tout avait disparu; plus de feuillages de massifs, plus d’arbres, mais d’interminables casernes s’étendant à perte de vue; et M. Folantin subissait dans ce Paris nouveau une impression de malaise et d’angoisse. Il était l’homme qui détestait les magasins de luxe, qui, pour rien au monde, n’eût mis les pieds chez un coiffeur élégant ou chez un de ces modernes épiciers dont les montres ruissellent de gaz; il n’aimait que les anciennes et simples boutiques où l’on était reçu à la bonne franquette, où le marchand n’essayait pas de vous jeter de la poudre aux yeux et de vous humilier par sa fortune. Aussi avait-il renoncé à se promener, le dimanche, dans tout ce luxe de mauvais goût qui envahissait jusqu’aux banlieues. D’ailleurs, les flânes dans Paris ne le tonifiaient plus comme autrefois; il se trouvait encore plus chétif, plus petit, plus perdu, plus seul, au milieu de ces hautes maisons dont les vestibules sont vêtus de marbre et dont les insolentes loges de concierge arborent des allures de salons bourgeois. (217-218)

According to Harvey, these feelings of loneliness, inferiority, and confusion over the rapidly modernizing city were common amongst the middle class in Paris during the late nineteenth century. Anxious members of the bourgeoisie withdrew from society to find intimacy, trust, and authenticity that seemed only possible at home with family (Harvey 221).

#### Folantin as Anti-Flâneur

Huysmans’ novella can be read as a critique of life in a modern city. Huysmans fittingly chooses the restaurant to tell this story because of its commodification of a basic human need, its reliance on a capitalist economic system, its challenge to domestic life, and its reinforcement of social class stratification that were made possible by political, economic, and social changes in nineteenth century Paris. Folantin, as the anti-flâneur

figure, struggles to not be swept up in the current of modernity along with the rest of Parisian society. He laments the emergence of a capitalist society that created a middle class. It seems that Folantin would prefer to be poor rather than being caught in the middle where his identity is less defined. He asks himself if life would be better should he be poor with a family, rather than alone in a middle class life; “Qu’est-ce que toutes ces privations à côté de l’existence organisée, de la soirée passée entre son enfant et sa femme, de la nourriture peu abondante mais vraiment saine, du linge raccommodé, du linge blanchi et rapporté à des heures fixes?” (184). Folantin regrets never finding a wife with whom to share his evening meals at home and reluctantly dines out at various restaurants in search of the idealized version of domestic life that would provide him with security, comfort, and intimacy.

He describes leaving his building in the evenings in search of dinner. As he passes his neighbors’ closed doors in the hallway, he hears families sharing meals, smells their food cooking, and sees their lights on as he climbs down the stairs to eat alone; “Et il continua à rôder par les cabarets, par les crèmeries; seulement, au lieu de se débilitier, sa lassitude s’accrut, surtout quand, descendant de chez lui, il aspirait, dans les escaliers, l’odeur des potages, il voyait des raies de lumière sous les portes, il rencontrait des gens venant de la cave, avec des bouteilles, il entendait des pas affairés courir dans les pièces...tout...avivait ses regrets” (189). Folantin is foolishly searching for the comfort of a home life in public dining spaces. He continually changes the restaurant at which he takes his evening meal in hopes that one will offer him the comfort of a home life. Folantin is a literary representation of the anxiety and hopelessness felt amongst members of the middle class in Paris at this time. After dining out at a table d’hôte and then

visiting a theater with his friend Martinet, Folantin says with a sigh, “Tout fiche le camp.” (212). He complains about the price of a poor quality cigar at the tobacconist and says, “Encore un plaisir qui s’en va...on ne peut plus se procurer maintenant un cigare propre” (210).

While Folantin certainly does complain about the food that is served in the various dining establishments he visits, it is the setting in which he takes his meals that is the root of his discontent. Folantin lives in the sixth arrondissement where he feels uncomfortable dining at the local *table d’hôte* because most of the diners are priests. Not being a member of the clergy, he feels ill-at-ease sharing a table with a priest. He frequents the local *traiteurs* and *gargotes* in the neighborhood, but when he grows tired of dining there, he decides to try one of the new Bouillon Duval restaurants:

Et tout aussitôt il déserta le gargot où il mangeait d’habitude; il hanta d’abord les bouillons, eut recours aux filles dont les costumes de sœur évoquent l’idée d’un réfectoire d’hôpital...”Quelle tristesse dégageaient ces marbres froids, ces tables de poupées, cette immuable carte, ces parts infinitésimales, ces bouchées de pain! Serrés en deux rangs placés en vis-à-vis, les clients paraissaient jouer aux échecs, disposant leurs ustensiles, leurs bouteilles, leurs verres, les uns au travers des autres, faute de place; et, le nez dans un journal, M. Folantin enviait les solides mâchures de ses partenaires qui broyaient les filaments des aloyaux dont les chairs fuyaient sous la fourchette. (187)

He dislikes the sterility of these chain restaurants with their waitresses uniformed in crisply pressed white aprons, but he finds the way in which diners share tables and sit close to one another the most unnerving. Likening the atmosphere and table setting to a game of chess where players concentrate on their next strategic move, one can sense the anxiety Folantin feels dining here. His overall assessment based entirely on the restaurant layout and setting is “C’était mauvais, c’était cher et surtout c’était attristant” (188).

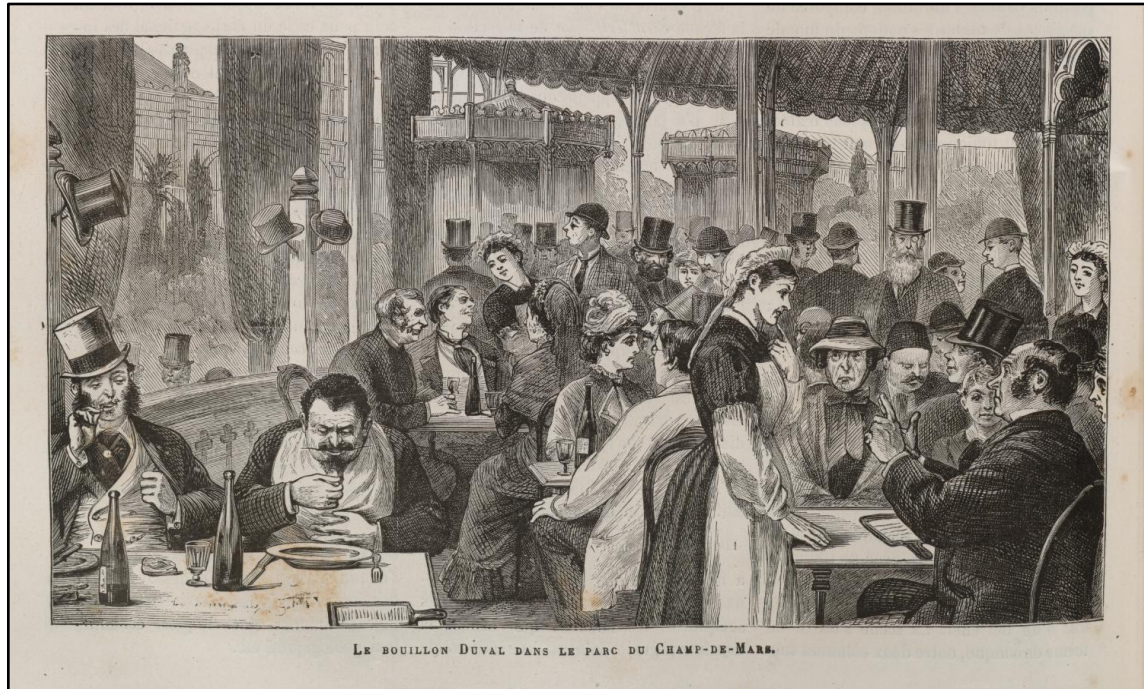


Figure 7- “Bouillon Duval Dans le Parc du Champ de Mars,” Engraving in Bitard, A., Ed. *L’Exposition de Paris (1878)*. Librairie M. Dreyfous; Paris 1878.

Later in the novel, Folantin begins frequenting another bouillon restaurant near the Croix-Rouge with mostly older women as its clientele similar to the one depicted in Figure 6. In the bottom left corner of this image, two men dine together, but share little more than the same table. Huysmans writes, “On eût dit des gens sans famille, sans amitiés, cherchant des coins un peu sombres pour expédier, en silence, une corvée; et M. Folantin se trouvait plus à l’aise dans ce monde de déshérités, de gens discrets et polis, ayant sans doute connu des jours meilleurs et des soirs plus remplis” (214). In a state of depression, Folantin finds being in the company of other hopeless people more comforting than passing time with the rowdy hopeful bourgeois diners in the nicer restaurants in the city. Folantin highlights elements of the restaurant’s setting, such as the monotony of ordering the same simple meal each night and the tranquility of the space in

early evening hours when the older women dine alone. He mentions the taste and quality of the food only tangentially as if it is understood that the food will be bad wherever he dines.

Folantin visits the entire range of restaurants throughout this novel from the lowest order dining establishments like the wine shops and *traiteurs* up to the *bouillon Duval* chain restaurants and finally higher-priced restaurants with an *à la carte* menu. He finds the food at the high-end restaurants better, but it is not enough to satisfy his hunger for a more authentic experience:

Mais partout il en était de même; les inconvénients variaient en même temps que les *râteliers*; chez les marchands de vins distingués, la nourriture était meilleure, le vin moins âpre, les parts plus copieuses, mais en thèse générale, le repas durait deux heures, le garçon étant occupé à servir les ivrognes postés en bas devant le comptoir; d'ailleurs, dans ce déplorable quartier, la *boustifaille* se composait d'un ordinaire, de *côtelettes* et de *beefstecks* qu'on payait bon prix parce que, pour ne pas vous mettre avec les ouvriers, le patron vous enfermait dans une salle à part et allumait deux branches de gaz. 188

Despite the better food quality, Folantin finds fault with the service, his neighboring diners sitting at the bar, and the overall decor and setting of the restaurant. Predictably, Folantin finds the lowest-order dining establishments to be the worst places to dine, but the food quality is only one of the items on his list of complaints; “Enfin, en descendant plus bas, en fréquentant les purs *mannezingues* ou les *bibines* de dernier ordre, la compagnie était répulsive et la saleté stupéfiante; la carne fétidait, les verres avaient des ronds de bouches encore marqués, les couteaux étaient dépolis et gras et les couverts conservaient dans leurs filets la jaune des œufs mangés” (188).

Folantin steps out to dine with a friend

One of the most detailed accounts of visiting a Parisian dining establishment stems from Folantin accompanying his friend Martinet to dinner at a table d'hôte. Folantin initially hesitates to join his friend because he does not want to converse with fellow diners or socialize in public; "Je n'aime guère la table d'hôte, disait M. Folantin; je suis un peu ours, vous le savez; je ne puis me décider à converser avec les gens que je ne connais point" (204). His reluctance stems not from the cost of the 100 franc monthly subscription or the poor quality of the food, but rather from the atmosphere of the dining establishment and its clientele. Martinet eventually convinces Folantin by telling him that he will not be forced to speak to strangers and that the diners do not sit around a large communal table as in the traditional configuration of the table d'hôte. He pleads with Folantin, "Mais vous n'êtes pas forcé de parler. Vous êtes chez vous. L'on n'est pas tous autour d'une table, c'est la même chose que dans un grand restaurant. Tenez, essayez-en, venez ce soir !" Martinet equates dining at the table d'hôte with dining at home or in a higher-end restaurant and convinces Folantin to join him that evening.

Marinet and Folantin arrive in front of the large green revolving door through which they hear the banging of plates amid the continuous hum of people talking to one another. Each time the revolving door opens, the men congregating on the stairwell, who are all wearing hats as an indication that they are dressed for the occasion of dining *en ville*, become audible and the tap of their canes on the floor pierces through the night air. When Folantin and Martinet have the chance, they push through the revolving door and enter a billiard room filled with tobacco smoke; "M. Folantin, pris à la gorge, recula. Cette pièce était noyée dans une épaisse fumée de tabac, traversée par des coups de

queues; M. Martinet entraîna son invité dans une autre pièce, où la buée était peut-être plus intense encore, et ça et là, dans des chants de pipes bouchées, dans des écroulements de dominos, dans des éclats de rire, des corps passaient presque invisibles, devinés seulement par le déplacement de vapeur qu'ils opéraient. M. Folantin resta là, ahuri, cherchant à tâtons une chaise. ” (205) Folantin anxiously grasps for a chair to sit in while Martinet tries to secure a table in the very busy dining room.

While waiting for an hour in the smoky anteroom where “ l'on pouvait fumer, mais où l'on ne se nourrissait pas,” Martinet disappears periodically to check on the availability of a table (205). Folantin develops an escape plan and regrets stepping foot in what he now refers to as an *estaminet* to downgrade its stature from a respectable dining establishment to a shabby bistro (205). After sitting down at the table, Folantin downgrades this restaurant further to a poorly cared for pension like Mme Vauquer's in *Père Goriot*; “Cette salle rappela à M. Folantin le réfectoire d'une pension, mais d'une pension mal tenue où on laisse brailler à table. Il n'y manquait vraiment que les timbales au fond rougi par l'abondance, et l'assiette retournée pour étaler sur une place moins sale les pruneaux ou les confitures” (207). The server tosses plates of tough beef that cannot be cut through with the provided knife and bland vegetables onto a tablecloth stained with splashes of sauce and littered with breadcrumbs from previous diners. Lavrate's engraving of a bourgeois pension in Figure 7 depicts the rapid surly service of this type of establishment that enervates Folantin.



Figure 8- Lavrate's Pension Bourgeoise engraving Archives Chamet at Musée de la Ville de Paris at [Bridgeman Art](http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/199734/Lavrate-19th-century/Middle-Class-Boarding-House-caricature-1881-col). 2013 Musée de la Ville de Paris Archives Chamet. 13 August 2013 <http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/199734/Lavrate-19th-century/Middle-Class-Boarding-House-caricature-1881-col>

Folantin finds the food and wine unpalatable, but he finds his fellow diners and the servers more miserable and bothersome. Without mentioning much more about the poor condition of the food and wine, he describes his fear of the surly waiters and waitresses:

C'étaient les maigres servantes qui apportaient les plats, des femmes sèches, aux traits accentués et sévères, aux yeux hostiles. Une complète impuissance vous venait, en les regardant; on se sentait surveillé et l'on mangeait, découragé, avec ménagement, n'osant laisser les tirants et les peaux, de peur d'une semonce, appréhendant de reprendre d'un plat, sous ces yeux qui jaugaient votre faim et vous la refoulaient au fond du ventre. (208)

Folantin's dislike of this dining establishment stems from the people and setting, rather than from the food and wine served at the table. The perceived severity and hostility of the servers discomforts Folantin, but it is perhaps his fellow diners that cause him the most anxiety.

As he looks around the room, Folantin hears different accents and observes people from many different regions of France sitting at the tables:

Toutes les races du Midi emplissaient les sièges, crachaient et se vautraient, en mugissant. Tous les gens de la Provence, de la Lozère, de la Gascogne, du Languedoc, tous ces gens, aux joues obscures par des copeaux d'ébène, aux narines et aux doigts poilus, aux voix retentissantes, s'esclaffaient comme des forcenés, et leur accent, souligné par des gestes d'épileptiques, hachait les phrases et vous les enfournait, toutes broyées, dans le tympan...M. Folantin voyait défilier devant lui tous les lieux communs, toutes les calembredaines, toutes les opinions littéraires surannées, tous les paradoxes usés par cent ans d'âge. (208)

He witnesses workers and students rushing in and out of the dining room and is unnerved by the different types of people with whom he is sharing this dining space. The brisk movements of the servers and diners coupled with the crowd and smoke-filled air stifles Folantin and his anxiety overtakes him. He now describes this table d'hôte as a "buffet d'une gare" in a final attempt to downgrade the experience to the most basic food establishment where one quickly shovels food into his mouth in a passing moment while waiting to board a train (209). To Folantin, the experience of dining at a table d'hôte is the same as dining amidst a crowd of strangers in a public train station.

#### Folantin's quest for a bygone time

As an only child with parents who have passed away and very little extended family, other than an aunt living in a convent, Folantin has no family with which to share his meals. At this stage in his life, Folantin's friends have married and started their own

families and many have moved away from the city. Folantin did date a young woman in his youth, but for no reason, she disappeared one evening leaving him with a sexually transmitted disease. Understandably, this episode turns him off of a continued sexual relationship with any other women for quite some time; “Maintenant les amours étaient bien finies, les élans bien réprimés; aux halètements, aux fièvres, avaient succédé une continence, une paix profondes; mais aussi quel abominable vide s’était creusé dans son existence depuis le moment où les questions sensuelles n’y avaient plus tenu de place” (180). In his youth, Folantin had visited brothels where the slightest smile or kind word from one of the women would satisfy his desire to be loved. At this stage in his life, however, he wants a deeper and more meaningful relationship with a woman, but finds it is too late for him to marry or take another lover:

Le mariage est impossible, à mon âge, se disait-il- Ah! Si j’avais eu, dans ma jeunesse une maîtresse et si je l’avais conservée, je finirais mes années avec elle, j’aurais, à mon retour ma lampe allumée et ma cuisine prête. Si la vie était à recommencer je la mènerais autrement! Je me ferais une alliée pour mes vieux jours; décidément, j’ai trop présumé de mes forces, je suis à bout. (221)

Folantin yearns to trade his evening meal out at a restaurant for a meal in the privacy of his own home.

He idealizes the intimacy and privacy of sharing a meal at home with a loved one; “Il avait toujours un peu de chocolat et de vin dans un placard et il mangeait, heureux d’être chez lui, de jouer des coudes, de s’étaler, d’éviter, pour une fois, la place restreinte d’un restaurant” (221). His initial search for an acceptable place at which to eat his evening meal is restricted to the sixth arrondissement where he was born, spent his childhood, works, and continues to live. His family had lived in the neighborhood for many generations and he is comfortable in this neighborhood. In other words, he feels *at*

*home* in his corner of Paris. At the start of the novel, Folantin does share his home with a woman who cooks and cleans for him, but he fires her because it is not enough for him to simply share space with another human being. He wants to feel loved and cared for. It is for this reason that Folantin feels most alone and anxious when he is dining out amidst a crowd of strangers. The couples sharing tables and the friends laughing jovially at the restaurant counter remind Folantin that he is alone because he does not have someone with whom to share his meals.

The effort it takes to dress and venture out into the public spaces Folantin physically; “Le moment était du reste pénible; l’hiver sévissait et le froid de la bise rendait enviable le chez soi et odieux le séjour des traiteurs dont on ouvre constamment les portes” (222). In an effort to avoid venturing outside to eat in the evening, Folantin decides to order dinner from a local patisserie. For the cost of 2 francs, the patisserie delivers his evening meal to his apartment. The prospect of being able to enjoy a prepared meal at home excites Folantin; “Il aspira après la fin de la journée; sa hâte à jouir de son contentement, tout seul, retardait encore la marche des heures” (224). It is at this moment in the novel that Folantin seems most content with his life. In fact, Folantin’s office mate thinks he has taken a mistress because he smiles and is actually happy at work. He impatiently awaits the end of the day so that he can hurry home to enjoy his meal in peace and comfort. He remains hopeful that dining at home is the solution to his problem.

The atmosphere in which Folantin consumes his food is again the focus of his attention rather than what he eats. The actual food that the patisserie delivers is mediocre at best and is often even cold by the time the delivery boy makes it to his apartment, but Folantin tolerates the bad food because he is able to avoid dining in a restaurant. His

renewed outlook on life encourages him to spruce up his apartment and make his dining room more appealing; “L’idée d’habiller les murs glacés de sa chambre s’implanta tout à coup en lui, tandis qu’il lampait un dernier verre” (226). After decorating his apartment with various curios he purchases at the market, rearranging his books on the shelves, hanging drawings on the walls, and changing the curtains, he hardly recognizes his own bedroom. As Folantin grows unrecognizable to his office mates because of his renewed outlook on life, his surroundings change as well; “L’on est bien chez soi, se disait-il; et, en effet, sa chambre n’était plus reconnaissable” (227). Folantin’s predetermined opinions about life influence his actual experiences.

Folantin protests when Martinet invites him to join him at the table d’hôte because he believes the experience will be unpleasant. Not surprisingly, Folantin finds his preconceived notions about dining out to be true; “Ainsi, c’est là la fameuse table d’hôte qui distribuait jadis la becquée aux débutants de la politique, songeait M. Folantin, et, la pensée que ces gens qui emplissaient les salles de leur bacchanal deviendraient, à leur tout, de solennels personnages, gorgés et d’honneurs et de places, lui fit lever le cœur...S’empiffrer de la charcuterie chez soi et boire de l’eau, tout, excepté de dîner ici, se dit-il” (209). In fact, Folantin begins to feel anxious before he even steps foot inside the restaurant.

Predictably, Folantin eventually grows suspicious of his home delivery arrangement with the patisserie. He eventually realizes that dining at home alone in a freshly decorated dining room is a poor substitute for the love and intimacy he really desires. This home delivery arrangement enables him to ignore the true root of his sadness for some time as he is not constantly reminded of his solitude by seeing others

dining together in a restaurant. After a few evenings of having the delivery boy arrive late with cold food and bruises on his face, Folantin cancels the arrangement and is resigned to continue dining out in solitude in the crowd.

Folantin's melancholy presents itself as a physical ailment throughout the novel; "Ni le lendemain, ni le surlendemain, la tristesse de M. Folantin ne se dissipa; il se laissait aller à vau-l'eau, incapable de réagir contre ce spleen qui l'écrasait" (185). He blames the poor food he consumes in the various restaurants in the city for his deteriorating health and tries numerous remedies. He drinks creosoted water and manganese preparations to ease his stomach problems and becomes so impressed by their efficacy that he encourages his coworkers to do the same. The more likely cause of his physical discomfort is his defeated spirit and intense loneliness. The food he consumes has little to do with his physical condition just as the food he consumes has little to do with his ultimate opinion of the particular dining establishments he visits.

There is a much stronger link between his attitudes toward life and his physical condition than between the food he consumes and his health; "Et il se désespérait, car à ses ennuis moraux se joignait maintenant le délabrement physique" (189). We see Folantin's stomach aches grow more frequent when he falls into his familiar pattern of unsuccessful attempts to try different restaurants, and we see his health improve immensely when he decides to eat at home. He describes his outlook on life and his physical condition while dining at home:

Aussi quel empressement à rentrer maintenant chez lui, à éclairer tout, à s'enfoncer dans son fauteuil ! le froid lui semblait parqué au dehors, repoussé par cette intimité de petit coin choyé, et la neige qui tombait, qui assoupissait tous les bruits de la rue, ajoutait encore à son bien-être; dans le silence du soir, le dîner, les pieds devant le feu, tandis que les assiettes chauffaient devant la grille, près du

vin dégourdi, était charmant, et les ennuis du bureau, la tristesse du célibat s'envolaient dans cette pacifiante quiétude. (228)

In contrast to the periods when his pessimism about the future and his disappointment with his life prevail, Folantin feels content at this moment with his feet up in his cozy apartment, not because he is eating cold food delivered from the pâtisserie, but because he is able to forget his unsettling state of affairs. Dining in a restaurant, however, prevents him from feeling comfortable and so it takes a toll on his physical health. During the winter, he grows tired of the bouillon restaurant in which he had been dining since the Autumn because of the inattentiveness of the servers, but at this same moment, his melancholy returns and is most likely the true reason for his discontent (216). He ventures across the river to the Right Bank in search of a satisfactory meal; “La nourriture n’ était pas supérieure à celle de la rive gauche et le service était arrogant et dérisoire. M. Folantin se le tint pour dit et il resta désormais dans son arrondissement, bien résolu à ne plus en démarrer. Le manque d’appétit lui revint” (216). As Folantin grows sad and discontented with his life, he loses his appetite despite an attempt to try different foods and restaurants in the city.

Unlike in *Père Goriot* where Rastignac seeks to climb the social ladder in order to gain access to better restaurants and in *Bel Ami* where Duroy does the same by taking advantage of his lovers, Folantin would be content living a simple life with a family. He does not want to join the race to the top of the social ladder. After dining out at a local traiteur, Folantin stops to admire the coachmen voraciously eating and enjoying one another’s company in a local wine shop, one of the dining establishments on the lowest rung of the restaurant hierarchy:

Folantin admirait l'inébranlable appétit des cochers attablés chez des mastroquets et il prenait comme une prise de faim. Ces platées de bœuf reposant sur des lits épais de choux, ces haricots de mouton emplissant la petite et massive assiette, ces triangles de brie, ces verres pleins, lui communiquaient des fringales et ces gens aux joues gonflées par d'énormes bouchées de pain, aux grosses mains tenant à un couteau la pointe en l'air, au chapeau de cuir bouilli montant et descendant en même temps que les mâchoires, l'excitaient et il filait, tâchant de conserver cette impression de voracité pendant la route. (200)

Folantin envies these coachmen sitting down in a simple dining establishment devoid of the fancy table linens, well-dressed clientele, and expensive plates of food one would find in one of the fine restaurants along one of the city's boulevards. Whereas he hardly touches his dinner while dining out at one of the bouillon restaurants or at a host's table, merely seeing the energy with which these men eat at the wine shop, makes Folantin hungry. He hungers for the food but also metaphorically for the excitement and contentment with which these men seem to live their lives.

In the last chapter of Huysmans' novel, Folantin's aunt who had lived in a convent and whom he envied for her simple piety and religious life dies. He is forced to reexamine his long-held belief that living outside of society in a convent where one passes every day in prayer would be a solution to his ailments. He ultimately decides that the convent is actually a place of desolation and terror and feels even more helpless, so he grows tired of the food he has been eating at the pâtisserie and ventures out to a restaurant where a prostitute propositions him. He reluctantly spends the evening with the prostitute. Throughout the novel, Folantin yearns for human contact and intimacy and it ultimately comes to him in this final chapter as a mere financial transaction. He pays for the woman's meal and then offers her 5 Francs in her room to spend the evening with him.

Just as this commodification of intimacy troubles Folantin, so too does the restaurant's rendering of a meal into a financial transaction. We learn early in the novel that Folantin earns 237,40 Francs per month as a civil servant (181). Periodically, Folantin provides the reader with prices to dine at a Duval bouillon and the cost of having food delivered to his home. The monthly membership fee that Martinet pays to dine at the *table d'hôte* is 90 Francs. Huysmans carefully lays out the prices of meals and this final transaction with the prostitute in the restaurant, but we never learn the cost of Folantin's rent or how much he pays for clothing. That only the costs of food and of hiring a prostitute are highlighted here demonstrates to readers that Folantin equates the two to the ills of modern society that he laments throughout the novel. Even though Folantin can afford to pay for his meals at a restaurant, he would prefer to take his meals at home; "Ah! Ce n'est pas pour dire, mais les gens qui ont dans leur poche de quoi s'alimenter et qui ne peuvent cependant manger, faute d'appétit, sont tout aussi à plaindre que les malheureux qui n'ont pas le sou pour apaiser leur faim" (231). Folantin views himself like the poor who cannot afford to eat even though his middle-class salary would enable him to do so. In the final lines of the novels, Folantin laments that life only offers the worst to the poor and the best is reserved for the wealthy- a true lamentation against this rapidly modernizing "society.

Chapter 5- “Le maigre et le gras”

An analysis of the individuals who dined in restaurants during the nineteenth century omits an important segment of French society. The cost of dining out was prohibitive for the poorest members of French society. I have demonstrated that restaurants were stratified largely along social class lines during this period with the most expensive *grands restaurants du boulevard* reserved for society's wealthy classes and *gargotes*, wine shops, boarding houses, and *traiteurs* for the poorer members of the working class. The middle classes dined at various establishments such as Duval's bouillon restaurants. Even the cheap meals served around a communal table at a *table d'hôte* were inaccessible to society's poorest members. In chapter 1, I cited Jean-Paul Aron's conclusions about the vast number of poor Parisians who surely could not afford to dine out during the nineteenth century. By mid-century, less than half of the population of Paris were dining out at restaurants, bouillons Duval, *traiteurs*, or even *tables d'hôte*. Many in the hungry masses ate perhaps once a day, had never tasted meat, and often stole bread from bakeries in order to nourish themselves (11).

The restaurant, the industrial food system that helped sustain it, and an emergent capitalist system further separated the hungriest members of society from those who paid vast sums of money to dine out in elegantly decorated dining rooms during this period. Dining on extravagant meals in ostentatiously-decorated restaurants is a badge of honor for those who can afford them. The artistry in dining out, the style of eating, and opulent décor are the important aspects of having a meal for the bourgeoisie and upper classes of

French society. For the “others,” food is a basic necessity that sustains their lives. Émile Zola writes about this conflict between social classes in *Le Ventre de Paris* where marketplace workers, *les maigres*, live and work alongside abundant piles of food that are destined for the city’s restaurants and wealthy households. Charles Baudelaire describes an encounter between a hungry family and a diner in one of the city’s restaurants in “Les Yeux des pauvres.” Both Zola and Baudelaire write about the conflict between those who have money to dine out in restaurants and those who cannot afford to eat at all. As restaurants became ubiquitous in nineteenth century Paris, the width of the gap between these “haves” and “have nots” became more visible.

In Baudelaire’s poem, a couple sits down to enjoy a meal at one of the new cafés that had opened up along one of the recently built boulevards in the city. The pair is interrupted by the sight of a poor family standing at the boundary between the *terrasse* of the café and the public sidewalk. In describing this interaction, Baudelaire emphasizes the newness of this café and its street corner; “Le soir, un peu fatiguée, vous voulûtes vous asseoir devant un café neuf qui formait le coin d'un boulevard neuf, encore tout plein de gravois et montrant déjà glorieusement ses splendeurs inachevées.” This café and its street are a product of turn-of-the century urban development. As the Parisian cityscape transformed during the nineteenth century, so too did society. One senses from the poem that this problem of poverty and hunger is more pronounced by the emergence of restaurants and cafés such as this. These new dining establishments promoted the stratification of society along economic class lines.

This divide between the rich and the poor is certainly not unique to the nineteenth century, but what is particularly notable at this moment in history is the fact that the

restaurant encouraged the ostentatious display of diners' wealth along the city's public thoroughfares. Baudelaire describes the unfinished, but already spectacular, interior of the newly opened café:

Le café étincelait. Le gaz lui-même y déployait toute l'ardeur d'un début, et éclairait de toutes ses forces les murs aveuglants de blancheur, les nappes éblouissantes des miroirs, les ors des baguettes et des corniches, les pages aux joues rebondies traînés par les chiens en laisse, les dames riant au faucon perché sur leur poing, les nymphes et les déesses portant sur leur tête des fruits, des pâtés et du gibier, les Hébés et les Ganymèdes présentant à bras tendu la petite amphore à bavaroises ou l'obélisque bicolore des glaces panachées; toute l'histoire et toute la mythologie mises au service de la goinfrerie.

Like the images on its walls, this café-restaurant is the setting for gluttonous gatherings in which diners order more food than they can eat and drink more than they need. Directly on the other side of the barrier between the restaurant and the public street, however, a tired old man stands holding his children. We infer that the youngest child, who cannot even stand by herself, is weak from hunger or perhaps illness. All three are wearing rags and stare bewildered at the luxurious restaurant and the abundance of food and drink that lies just beyond their reach.

Noticing this family staring at him causes the man seated at the table to reflect introspectively on his privileged status in society. He imagines these three admiring the beauty of the restaurant's gilded interior and their reactions to it. The older man is impressed by the amount of gold on the walls and certainly this unbelievable display of wealth in the café. The youngest child is also fascinated by what she sees, but is too young and weak to do much more than stare. It is, however, the eldest child's reaction to standing outside of the café that moves the man dining inside. He reads the boy's thoughts; "Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! mais c'est une maison où peuvent seuls entrer

les gens qui ne sont pas comme nous.” Seeing this restaurant and its diners inside makes the child aware of his lower social status. Already at a young age, this boy is made aware of the class and wealth distinctions between people. Zola characterizes these “haves” and “have-nots” in *Le Ventre de Paris* as *les maigres* and *les gras*. This boy and his family belong to the underprivileged group of people that will never have access to an ostentatious restaurant or café as this couple sitting in this café does.

While the poor family is reminded of their lower social status upon seeing the café, the diners inside are equally reminded of *their* status in society. The café-restaurant is a visual reminder of the separation between the poor and the wealthy. The diners inside the café react to this visual reminder of their privileged status in different ways as the three members of the family do. The man is embarrassed and ashamed that he sits in a gilded room with abundant food while poor families outside wear rags and grow weak with hunger; “Non seulement j'étais attendri par cette famille d'yeux, mais je me sentais un peu honteux de nos verres et de nos carafes, plus grands que notre soif.” The sight of the poor family, however, disturbs the woman. She rejects them because she does not want to be reminded of the poverty that lies just outside the restaurant's doors. She says to her date at the café; “Ces gens-là me sont insupportables avec leurs yeux ouverts comme des portes cochères! Ne pourriez-vous pas prier le maître du café de les éloigner d'ici?”

The woman wants the family removed from her line of sight so that she can enjoy her meal at the café peacefully without having to be bothered by thinking about society's problems. Dining in the café-restaurant for this woman is a leisure activity that enables her to escape from society's ills. Urban development in the nineteenth century forced the

members of different social classes to share many of the same spaces, such as public streets and parks. The presence of this family in sight of the diners violates the woman's perception about the distinctions between public and private space. It is fine for her to pass beggars in the street on her way to dine at a café, but it is unacceptable for her to have to look at a poor family while she eats. I have demonstrated that the restaurant challenged the way space was allocated in the urban environment by blurring these lines between what was considered public and private. Baudelaire places the poor family on the border between the public street corner and the restaurant's *terrasse* to highlight this problem. David Harvey writes about the representation of the blurring of the lines between what was considered public and private spaces in Baudelaire's poem in *Paris Capital of Modernity*; "The boundary between public and private spaces is depicted as porous. The poem signals ambiguity of proprietorship, of aesthetics, of social relations, and a point of contestation for control over public space" (221). One of the diners is willing to share the public spaces of his urban environment, whereas his partner wants someone to assert control over the public street by removing the poor family.

Honoré Blanc describes in *Le Guide des Dîneurs de Paris 1815* this forced confrontation between upper class patrons walking into one of the city's most expensive restaurants, Frères Provençaux, and the poor beggars sitting on its steps in front:

Le pauvre, assis, depuis quinze ans, sur la première marche de l'escalier de cette maison, indique à tout venant le chemin des salons où il n'est jamais entré. Une remarque que j'ai faite, et dont je n'ai pas encore cherché à me rendre compte, c'est que ce mendiant ne reçoit de secours que de ceux qui descendent: ce qui me semble prouver que les hommes, contre l'habitude des autres animaux carnassiers, sont moins généreux quand il sont repus, que lorsqu'ils sont à jeun. Sur les repos de l'escalier, vous rencontrez les avant-postes, des écaillères qui vous offrent, d'un ton qui leur est tout particulier, les coquillages de Cancale et d'Étretat. (16-17)

Blanc paints a picture here of poor beggars lining the pathway to the Palais-Royal district of the city. The restaurants there attracted wealthy patrons and the poorest members of society as well. The poor beg for scraps of food or money from the wealthy diners as they pass by. The presence of these restaurants in the city forces the type of interaction between the wealthiest and poorest members of society that is depicted in Baudelaire's poem. The poor are as much a part of the spectacle of the modernizing Parisian cityscape as the wealthy restaurant diners are. The poor cannot ignore the gilded rooms of these elaborately-decorated restaurants just as the diners are forced to confront the inequality and injustice of society that is precipitated by the emergence of the restaurant along Paris' boulevards.

This forced confrontation between social classes that the restaurant encouraged caused anxiety amongst bourgeois diners as they were forced to participate in the commodification of basic goods such as food and spectacle in the public sphere. David Harvey writes:

The sense of bourgeois anxiety and insecurity in the midst of the spectacle is palpable. The anxiety in part reflected the rise of new senses of class distinctions based on consumption and appearances rather than on relations to production. Class divisions stood out more than ever, the mask now became more significant than the reality as daily life came to mimic the facades displayed at the masked ball or during Carnaval. (221)

It is the varied reaction to this anxiety that separates the man and woman in the poem and ultimately leads him to conclude; "Tant il est difficile de s'entendre, mon cher ange, et tant la pensée est incommunicable, même entre gens qui s'aiment!" The man appreciates the mixing of different people in the urban environment and feels guilty because he is in a space of exclusion at the café table. His lover, however, wants to exclude different people from the city by removing them from the public street.

Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*

Zola depicts this conflict between the starving poor and those who dine out in restaurants as a battle between the *Gras* and the *Maigres* in *Le Ventre de Paris*. With Paris's central marketplace as the battlefield, we encounter the poorest members of the working class like Marjolin and Cadine stealing food in order to survive while wealthier shop owners like Lisa Quenu and Louise Méhudin grow fatter on the abundance of food in the marketplace. Claude describes this central conflict between the “haves” and the “have nots” at the end of the novel to Florent as the principal problem in society at the time:

Il cita certains épisodes: les Gras, énormes à crever, préparant la goinfrerie du soir, tandis que les Maigres, pliés par le jeûne, regardent de la rue avec la mine d'échallas envieux; et encore les Gras, à table, les joues débordantes, chassant un Maigre qui a eu l'audace de s'introduire humblement, et qui ressemble à une quille au milieu d'un peuple de boules. Il voyait là tout le drame humain; il finit par classer les hommes en Maigres et en Gras, en deux groupes hostiles dont l'un dévore l'autre, s'arrondit le ventre et jouit. (246-247)

Zola describes this societal issue by assigning different characters in the novel to both sides of this battle. The characters belong primarily to the lowest rung of the social ladder in Paris, but he portrays a *petite bourgeoisie* class that is improving its status by running food establishments and selling goods in the market as a result of an ever more important gastronomic culture in the city.

Lisa Quenu, an owner of the Quenu-Gradelle pork shop with her husband, and Louise Méhudin, eventually the café owner Lebigre's wife, are classified as “gras.” Both of these women are married to men who own dining establishments in Paris that belong to the group of lower order restaurants. This group of dining establishments includes *traiteurs*, inns, and wine shops. Zola provides us with a “tableau” of the lowest rung of

the social ladder in this novel. As in any social class, the individuals do not form a homogenous group, but rather can be further stratified. Despite the fact that the dining establishments owned by Lisa and Louise cater to the lower social class, both of these women are property owners that run food businesses, so they have more resources and societal access than some of the other characters. Representing the poorest members of society who steal food from the marketplace and live underneath the stalls, Cadine and Marjolin are classified as “maigres.” These characters are portrayed as animals that roam the streets foraging for food. They peer into restaurants and shops hoping to one day be able to enter. Florent vacillates between these two sides as a poor prisoner who arrives at the market dying from hunger and as an eventual fish inspector employed at the market. A character study of the “Gras,” “Maigres,” and “in-betweeners,” such as Florent, in this novel reveals the widening of the gap between the wealthy and poor that was illuminated by the emergence of the restaurant in nineteenth-century Paris. We also see how Zola uses the restaurant as a metaphor for the changing Parisian society.

#### Lisa “La Grasse”

Like the woman in Baudelaire’s poem, Lisa is fortunate enough to have the resources to not only be able to eat at home, but to dine out in the city’s restaurants as well. We know that Lisa and Quenu have enough money to renovate their pork shop, that they have free time, and spend excess money on leisure activities such as dining out; “Elle comptait, l’après-midi, le pousser à une promenade, à un de ces congés qu’ils prenaient parfois; ils allaient au bois de Boulogne, en fiacre, mangeaient au restaurant, s’oubliaient dans quelque café concert” (321). Lisa and her family have benefitted from

the political, economic, and social changes in Paris that occurred during the late nineteenth century. The pork shop thrives because middle class consumers have money to purchase prepared dishes to take home or to eat at one of the dining room tables. When renovating their shop, Lisa and Quenu pay particular attention to the shop's appearance rather than to its functionality in order to continue to attract these valuable consumers:

Le revêtement des murs était tout en marbre blanc; au plafond, une immense glace carrée s'encadrait dans un large lambris doré et très-orné, laissant pendre, au milieu, un lustre à quatre branches; et, derrière le comptoir, tenant le panneau entier, à gauche encore, et au fond, d'autres glaces, prises entre les plaques de marbre, mettaient des lacs de clarté, des portes qui semblaient s'ouvrir sur d'autres salles, à l'infini, toutes emplies des viandes étalées. À droite, le comptoir, très-grand, fut surtout trouvé d'un beau travail; des losanges de marbre rose y dessinaient des médaillons symétriques. À terre, il y avait, comme dallage, des carreaux blancs et roses, alternés, avec une grecque rouge sombre pour bordure. (63)

In order to attract a higher-class clientele to their shop, Lisa and Quenu decorate with mirrors, glass, and lights to convey an image of infinite space. They use expensive materials such as gold paint, ornate fixtures, and colored tiles to create a luxurious atmosphere. They are concerned about the shop's reputation, so they pay particular attention to its appearance.



Figure 9- “*Les Halles*” by Leon Lhermitte at Musée de la ville de Paris, reprinted p 110 in Anka Muhlstein and Adriana Hunter, Tr. *Balzac’s Omelette: A Delicious tour of French food and culture with Honoré de Balzac*. Other Press; New York, 2010.

Because of her continued success as a result of running this dining establishment, Lisa supports the capitalist principles that enabled her and her family to take a step upward on the social ladder. As a result, she is very suspicious of those who do not subscribe to these same ideas. She blames the poor people in the market for their own undesirable circumstances rather than the capitalist system; “Un homme capable d’être resté trois jours sans manger était pour elle un être absolument dangereux. Car, enfin, jamais les honnêtes gens ne se mettent dans des positions pareilles” (108). Lisa will try to persuade Florent to take his place in the middle class when she sees him sympathizing with and acting like one of the *Maigres* she so greatly distrusts. She secures for him an inspector job in the fish market and explains to him; “Vous appartenez à une famille

honorable, vous avez reçu de l'éducation, et c'est peu convenable vraiment, de courir les chemins, en véritable gueux... À votre âge, les enfantillages ne sont plus permis... Vous avez fait des folies, eh bien, on les oubliera, on vous les pardonnera. Vous rentrerez dans votre classe, dans la classe des honnêtes gens, vous vivrez comme tout le monde, enfin” (113). Lisa considers the middle class to be genuine and honest, unlike the poor workers who should be blamed for their own dire situations. When she sees Florent conspiring to change the political system to benefit the poor members of society, Lisa feels threatened. She will eventually report him to the police in order to preserve her preferential status in society.

#### Marjolin “Le Maigre”

Zola places Lisa on one side of this battle between the “Fat” and the “Thin.” Lisa, and the other characters described as “Gras,” have access to plenty of food through their own food establishments or by dining out in restaurants. The “Gras” have financial and social capital that enable them to be able to do this. Marjolin, Cadine, and the other “Maigres” do not enjoy this same access. They, like the poor family in Baudelaire’s poem, stand on the other side of the barrier between the city’s restaurants and cafés and the public streets. The food on display in the marketplace and in the windows of the restaurants and shops serve as reminders to them of the inequality in Parisian society. Starting his life as an abandoned child who grows up amongst the cabbages in the market stalls, Marjolin is poor, wears tattered clothes, and resorts to stealing food in order to survive; “Marjolin fut trouvé au marché des Innocents, dans un tas de choux, sous un chou blanc, énorme, et dont une des grandes feuilles rabattues cachait son visage rose

d'enfant endormi. On ignora toujours quelle main misérable l'avait posé là" (196). Marjolin's upbringing as an orphan in the marketplace will condemn him to a life of theft, begging, and poverty. He lives in a city teeming with food, yet it will always lie just beyond his reach.

As Marjolin and Cadine wander through the streets of Paris, they pass opulently-decorated restaurants and food shops that are constant reminders of their lack of access to the city's riches:

Rue Saint-Denis, ils entraient dans la gourmandise; ils souriaient aux pommes tapées, au bois de réglisse, aux pruneaux, au sucre candi des épiciers et des droguistes. Leurs flâneries aboutissaient chaque fois à des idées de bonnes choses, à des envies de manger les étalages des yeux. Le quartier était pour eux une grande table toujours servie, un dessert éternel, dans lequel ils auraient bien voulu allonger les doigts. (215)

Because the "maigres" cannot afford to partake in the luxurious food offered in the restaurants and the shops, they gorge themselves, instead, on the mere sight of the products in the windows. They pass the restaurants along the rue Montorgueil and rue Montmartre and breathe in the scents of soups boiling and chickens roasting to satisfy their hunger (215). The actual taste of the food served by the restaurants and food establishments remains out of reach for Cadine and Marjolin. They want to eat the food and enter the restaurants, but they remain off-limits to members of the "maigre" class.

In order to entertain his lover Cadine, Marjolin mimics the behavior of bourgeois men. His poverty, however, prevents him from being able to take her to a "cabinet particulier" in a restaurant as bourgeois gentlemen would do, so he steals some food from the market and they dine hidden from sight in one of the "caves" underneath the stalls; "Il faisait le galant, la menait en cabinet particulier, pour croquer des pommes crues ou des cœurs de céleri, dans quelque coin noir des caves. Il vola un jour un hareng saur qu'ils

mangèrent délicieusement, sur le toit du pavillon de la marée, au bord des gouttières” (221). Despite not ever stepping foot inside a cabinet particulier, the restaurant culture in the city is so pervasive that Marjolin wants to entertain his lover in the same manner as a middle-class restaurant diner. Lacking access to the money to take Cadine out, he improvises and creates his own “cabinet” in the marketplace. The restaurant and the food served within it remain just out of reach to Marjolin, Cadine, and other members of the working class poor, so they improvise.

#### Florent Sides with the Starving

At the beginning of the novel, Florent arrives in Paris as a member of this group of poverty-stricken outcasts from society. Having been imprisoned for seven years, he has lost all of his money, his property, and is found starving on the roadway leading into the city. He is tired, poor, and hungry. The *marâchers* transporting their produce into the city’s central marketplace pass him on the street because they think he is a homeless drunk. The tears in his dirty clothes reveal his skeletal body. The narrator describes the moment when Madame François notices him on the side of the road; “Elle le voyait mieux, et il était lamentable, avec son pantalon noir, sa redingote noire, tout effiloqués, montrant les sécheresses des os. Sa casquette, de gros drap noir, rabattue peureusement sur les sourcils, découvrait deux grands yeux bruns, d’une singulière douceur, dans un visage dur et tourmenté” (3). As Florent walks to Paris, his hunger grows and the roads seems to stretch longer and longer until he eventually collapses in a heap to be found by Madame François.

Zola describes Florent's hunger in vivid detail throughout this first section of the novel. He writes, "La faim s'était réveillée, intolérable, atroce. Ses membres dormaient; il ne sentait en lui que son estomac, tordu, tenaillé comme par un fer rouge" (6). By the time Madame François' cart rolls past the barricades and into the city, Florent is so hungry that he has fainted again on a bed of cabbages and carrots. His hunger will grow stronger when he wakes up surrounded by the piles of produce in the marketplace. In an effort to distract himself from this unfamiliar and unpleasant sensation of starvation, Florent thinks about the last time he was in Paris when his life was very different. He remembers the evening during Carnival when he was arrested seven years prior. He imagines the revelers in the restaurants along rue Vivienne as he crosses the pont D'Austerlitz (12). His image of celebrating in the city's restaurants seven years prior contrasts with his present state as a starving homeless convict:

Non, la faim ne l'avait plus quitté. Il fouillait ses souvenirs, ne se rappelait pas une heure de plénitude. Il était devenu sec, l'estomac rétréci, la peau collée aux os. Et il retrouvait Paris, gras, superbe, débordant de nourriture, au fond des ténèbres; il y rentrait, sur un lit de légumes; il y roulait, dans un inconnu de mangeailles, qu'il sentait pulluler autour de lui et qui l'inquiétait. La nuit heureuse de carnaval avait donc continué pendant sept ans. Il revoyait les fenêtres luisantes des boulevards, les femmes rieuses, la ville gourmande qu'il avait laissée par cette lointaine nuit de janvier; et il lui semblait que tout cela avait grandi, s'était épanoui dans cette énormité des Halles, dont il commençait à entendre le souffle colossal, épais encore de l'indigestion de la veille. (13)

While the city of Paris has continued to grow and industrialize during the seven years that Florent has been away, he has actually grown smaller. He is skinnier, hungrier, and poorer than he was before his imprisonment. Now unable to afford purchasing even a carrot in the marketplace, he relies on Madame François' generosity. The restaurants of his former life are well beyond his reach.

To emphasize the disparity between Florent's life in the middle-class before imprisonment and his life now as an indigent, Zola juxtaposes paragraphs about Florent's hunger against those describing the abundance of food in the city of Paris. Florent and the other poorest members of Parisian society are in complete agony as a result of their hunger:

C'était l'agonie. Le frisson du matin le prenait; il claquait des dents, il avait peur de tomber là et de rester par terre. Il chercha, ne trouva pas un coin sur un banc; il y aurait dormi, quitte à être réveillé par les sergents de ville. Puis, comme un éblouissement l'aveuglait, il s'adossa à un arbre, les yeux fermés, les oreilles bourdonnantes. La carotte crue qu'il avait avalée, sans presque la mâcher, lui déchirait l'estomac, et le verre de punch l'avait grisé. Il était gris de misère, de lassitude, de faim. Un feu ardent le brûlait de nouveau au creux de la poitrine; il y portait les deux mains, par moments, comme pour boucher un trou par lequel il croyait sentir tout son être s'en aller. Le trottoir avait un large balancement; sa souffrance devenait si intolérable, qu'il voulut marcher encore pour la faire taire. Il marcha devant lui, entra dans les légumes. (36)

Despite the piles of food, rows of *traiteurs*, and exquisite restaurants located along the boulevard, Florent, Cadine, Marjolin, and the other members of the poorest class of Parisians are dying from hunger. The inequity of being surrounded by food that one cannot consume eventually overcomes Florent and he breaks down crying (38).

Unlike Cadine, Marjolin, and countless other members of the starving poor, Florent will be saved from this life of poverty by his brother Quenu who feeds him and offers a place for him to live above the pork shop. He will accept a job as an inspector in the fish market and re-enter the middle class with Quenu, Lisa, and the other shop owners. His seven-year interlude as a member of the poorest class of Parisians will deeply impact his future perception of society. Like the man in Baudelaire's poem, Florent will grow anxious over being able to afford to eat and drink in Monsieur Lebigre's tavern every night while he watches others starve in the streets; "Pour la

première fois, Florent se sentait importun; il avait conscience de la façon malapprise dont il était tombé au milieu de ce monde gras, en maigre naïf; il s'avouait nettement qu'il dérangeait tout le quartier, qu'il devenait une gêne pour les Quenu, un cousin de contrebande, de mine par trop compromettante" (94-95). Florent is so troubled by his status and society's attitudes towards the poor that he feels he no longer belongs in the middle class with his brother. He resigns himself to fixing the inequity caused by industrialization, the commodification of food, and a rise in capitalism in the city. The revolution Florent plans with his compatriots at Lebigre's will benefit the poor instead of the bourgeoisie; "Toutes les révolutions, c'est pour les bourgeois. Il y en a assez, à la fin. À la première, ce sera pour nous" (177).

Florent develops a plan to reform the marketplace district and help the poor instead of the "fat" shop owners, who the current system seems to favor; "Successivement, il ébaucha une réforme absolue du système administratif des Halles, une transformation des octrois en taxes sur les transactions, une répartition nouvelle de l'approvisionnement dans les quartiers pauvres, enfin une loi humanitaire, encore très-confuse, qui emmagasinait en commun les arrivages et assurait chaque jour un minimum de provisions à tous les ménages de Paris" (159). He blames the marketplace for this unequal distribution of food and wealth in the city. It is at the marketplace that the wealthy purchase food to serve at their elaborate tables and the restaurants buy up more food than their customers can consume while the poor starve. He describes the marketplace as "le ventre boutiquier, le ventre de l'honnêteté moyenne, se ballonnant, heureux, luisant au soleil, trouvant que tout allait pour le mieux, que jamais les gens de mœurs paisibles n'avaient engraisé si bellement" (160). The city's abundant food supply

that passes through the central marketplace sustains the *traiteurs*, restaurants, wine shops, and taverns that lift their owners out of poverty.

Florent develops this plan to “venger sa maigreur contre cette ville engraisée” while visiting Monsieur Lebigre’s *cabinet particulier* (258). Zola refers to Monsieur Lebigre’s as a “marchand de vin,” which is considered for this study a restaurant on the lower end of the scale of dining establishments in the city (21). This wine shop contains all of the important elements of a restaurant. The tavern is decorated in a manner that is inviting to its clientele:

Monsieur Lebigre tenait un fort bel établissement, d’un luxe tout moderne. Placé à l’encoignure droite de la rue Pirouette, sur la rue Rambuteau, flanqué de quatre petits pins de Norvège dans des caisses peintes en vert, il faisait un digne pendant à la grande charcuterie des Quenu-Gradelle. Les glaces claires laissaient voir la salle, ornée de guirlandes de feuillages, de pampres et de grappes, sur un fond vert tendre. Le dallage était blanc et noir, à grands carreaux. Au fond, le trou béant de la cave s’ouvrait sous l’escalier tournant, à draperie rouge, qui menait au billard du premier étage. Mais le comptoir surtout, à droite, était très riche, avec son large reflet d’argent poli. Le zinc retombant sur le soubassement de marbre blanc et rouge, en une haute bordure gondolée, l’entourait d’une moire, d’une nappe de métal, comme un maître-autel chargé de ses broderies. (126)

Monsieur Lebigre serves food and drinks that are ordered from a menu. Diners can eat their prepared dishes at the large counter, at one of the small tables in the dining room, or in the *cabinet particulier*. Men stand around drinking and talking at the counter, while others play billiards in a room on the second floor. Zola describes this uniquely appointed wine shop; “Pour donner à son établissement un air de café, monsieur Lebigre avait placé, en face du comptoir, contre le mur, deux petites tables de fonte vernie, avec quatre chaises. Un lustre à cinq becs et à globes dépolis pendait du plafond. L’œil-de-bœuf, une horloge toute dorée, était à gauche, au-dessus d’un tourniquet scellé dans la muraille” (126).

It is in Monsieur Lebigre's *cabinet particulier* that Florent spends most of his free time because of the privacy it affords to him and his compatriots as they plot to restore equality to the food distribution system. As I noted in chapter 2, the private dining spaces in the city's restaurants during the nineteenth century were used for secretly plotting revolutions. The narrator describes Lebigre's *cabinet* as a private room that hosted the meetings of a very secret gathering of Gavard and his friends:

Puis, au fond, il y avait le cabinet particulier, un coin de la boutique que séparait une cloison, aux vitres blanchies par un dessin à petits carreaux; pendant le jour, une fenêtre qui s'ouvrait sur la rue Pirouette, l'éclairait d'une clarté louche; le soir, un bec de gaz y brûlait, au-dessus de deux tables peintes en faux marbre. C'était là que Gavard et ses amis politiques se réunissaient après leur dîner, chaque soir. Ils s'y regardaient comme chez eux, ils avaient habitué le patron à leur réserver la place. Quand le dernier venu avait tiré la porte de la cloison vitrée, ils se savaient si bien gardés, qu'ils parlaient très-carrément « du grand coup de balai. » Pas un consommateur n'aurait osé entrer. (127-128)

Paradoxically, Zola uses the *cabinet* in this novel as a space in which Florent and other disgruntled revolutionaries will plot the demise of the very system that supports the existence of restaurants, cafés, traiteurs, and wine shops.

Because of the restaurant's unique role in Parisian society as a space in which members of different social classes came into contact with one another in a public setting, the group that gathered in Lebigre's *cabinet* was composed of men who would not have necessarily crossed paths outside of this venue. For example, Lacaille and Alexandre's initial reproach of the other men in the group is described in terms of dining at different tables in the same private room; "Ces deux hommes étaient longtemps restés à l'autre table du cabinet; ils n'appartenaient pas au même monde que ces messieurs. Puis, la politique aidant, leurs chaises se rapprochèrent, ils firent partie de la société" (133). When Lacaille and Alexandre realize that they share the same political ideas as the rest of

the group, they draw their chairs up to the neighboring table to dine and talk with the rest of the men.

Florent will eventually take up the group's cause with the greatest fervor. He is in a unique position as a member of the middle class who has lived as a poor outcast from society. His former social status has been restored to him, but he does not stop sympathizing with the city's indigents. In fact, despite his ability to dine daily at Monsieur Lebigre's, hold a prestigious position in the marketplace, and live in his brother's home, he still sees himself as a member of the *maigre* class. Zola writes that Florent "lives" in Lebigre's cabinet while he toils away on his plot (295). As time passes on, he takes all of his meals in this little room and remains behind closed doors whenever he is not working in the marketplace. The *cabinet* provides him privacy where he can write out his plan in secrecy and escape from the society he is trying to reform. Interestingly, Zola portrays the restaurant in this novel as both a product of the system Florent wishes to reform and an enabler of that reform by providing a private space in which he develops his revolutionary plan.

#### A Stranger Dines out in Modern Paris

During the seven years Florent is in prison, the landscape of the city of Paris has changed drastically. In this novel, Zola focuses on the commodification of food distribution through the development of institutions devoted to the sale of food as one of the most significant changes that affects Florent. Upon his arrival in Paris, Madame François describes the six pavilions in *les halles* where the produce, meats, cheeses, and other foodstuffs are sold. She describes the destruction of homes in the neighborhood to

make more space for additional pavilions (9-10). Paris is at times unrecognizable to Florent. Even rue Mondétour, the street on which he formerly lived, now appears foreign; “Cette vue clouait Florent de surprise; il devait ne pas reconnaître la boutique; il lut le nom du marchand, *Godebœuf*, sur une enseigne rouge, et resta consterné. Les bras ballants, il examinait les pâtés d’épinards, de l’air désespéré d’un homme auquel il arrive quelque malheur suprême” (20-21). The addition of Godebœuf’s cook shop on a formerly residential street troubles Florent. Restaurants, cafés, taverns, *traiteurs*, and wine shops have sprung up throughout the city. These dining establishments have brought with them the culture of the “gras” against which Florent will fight.

The “gras,” like Lisa and many of the other business owners, have benefitted from this shift towards a capitalist economy that has enabled them to operate restaurants, *traiteurs*, cafés, and wine shops. These shopkeepers earn an income at the expense of others, such as the emerging middle-class. I argue in chapter one that the proliferation of restaurants throughout the city of Paris during the nineteenth century was partially made possible by the emergence of a middle class that had disposable income and the leisure time to dine out. Jean-Paul Aron highlights the year 1880 in *Le Mangeur du XIXe Siècle* as the year in which the Republic was reinstated and the lower fringe of the *petite bourgeoisie* began to earn enough money to dine out (73). He explains that while the *bourgeoisie* and upper classes shunned this group, they, in turn, worked to distinguish themselves from the lowest classes. Lisa explains this to Florent when she believes he is no longer acting in a manner befitting her status in society. Restaurant owners adapted their businesses to cater to this expanding customer base by opening new establishments (73). The “gras, “ were beneficiaries of this emerging *petite bourgeoisie*’s desire to spend

their money on luxuries like prepared foods, alcoholic drinks, and sitting in opulently-decorated dining rooms. As Parisians grew wealthier, different social classes mixed together in the city's restaurants.

Florent and his plotting revolutionaries saw these changes to Paris' landscape and the emergence of a culture supportive of expanding the commodification of food as taking place at the expense of the "maigres." This group, made up of people like Madame François, grow the food, deliver it, and then sell it in the marketplace to the wealthy or to the shop owners. After a long hard day at the marketplace, they return to their meager homes in the countryside. Zola describes the central marketplace throughout the novel as a bodily organ, like the stomach, that is consuming the less-fortunate Parisians; "Paris mâchait les bouchées à ses deux millions d'habitants. C'était comme un grand organe central battant furieusement, jetant le sang de la vie dans toutes les veines" (35). Zola critiques the development of a capitalist economy in fin-de-siècle Paris that enables a physical and cultural transformation of the city.

Florent will ultimately lose his fight against the "gras" by being imprisoned and deported for conspiring against the government. Lisa, fearing a loss of her livelihood and a leveling of the playing field between the lowest class and hers, informs the police of Florent's plan. Claude, viewed as a type of "porte-parole" for Zola, exclaims at the end of the novel that Paris is lost because the culture of consumption has won the battle against the "maigres;" "Il était exaspéré par cette fête du pavé et du ciel. Il injurait les Gras, il disait que les Gras avaient vaincu. Autour de lui, il ne voyait plus que des Gras, s'arrondissant, crevant de santé, saluant un nouveau jour de belle digestion" (357). As Zola predicts in this 1873 novel, the restaurant and its culture of consumption, will persist

into the twentieth century still raising some of the same questions about equality and justice that he highlights<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In his biography of Alice Waters and history of her restaurant *Chez Panisse*, Thomas McNamee highlights her commitment to using the restaurant to combat the industrial food system and promote social justice.

## Conclusion

The emergence of the restaurant as a cultural institution in nineteenth century Paris was a product of the political, economic, and social changes that occurred in France. The restaurant was an urban space that straddled the public and private spheres and reinforced economic distinctions and class stratifications in a way that had never been seen before. While food consumption had always differed by class and region in France, the restaurant moved dining out of the private domestic realm and placed it on display for all to see, thereby showcasing the differences between the rich and the poor.

I have demonstrated in this project that the nineteenth century restaurant and the culinary culture that surrounded it provided authors such as Balzac, Céard, Dujardin, Flaubert, Huysmans, Maupassant, Zola and others with rich environments for their characters to inhabit. Each of these authors uses the restaurant in a different manner in order to advance their narratives, develop their characters, and contribute to their commentaries on the emerging consumer culture of nineteenth century Paris. For example, Folantin's anxiety towards dining out in a restaurant is unfathomable to someone like Cousin Pons who lives for the excitement of dining out at a restaurant. Readers during this period would have been knowledgeable about the city's maturing restaurant culture thanks to the proliferation of restaurant dining guides and their own lived experiences in the city's many eateries.

After providing a brief history of the restaurant and Parisian culinary culture, I have described the different types of eateries found during the nineteenth century in chapter one. In chapter two, "A View from the top," I discussed the culture of the *grands*

*restaurants du boulevard* against which the emerging bourgeois dining establishments were measured. I demonstrated how Balzac uses the restaurant in *Père Goriot* as a signifier of one's social status and how Maupassant uses the restaurant in *Bel-Ami* as a place where members of different social classes come into contact with one another. In my analysis of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and *L'Éducation Sentimentale* and of Henry Céard's *Une Belle Journée* I write about the restaurant's unique role as both public and private space in French society by highlighting its ability to satisfy many "appetites" at the same time. In chapter four, I read Balzac's *Le Cousin Pons*, Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, and Huysmans' *À Vau-l'eau* through the lens of an anxious bourgeoisie trying to navigate the emerging restaurant culture of Paris. In my final chapter, "*Le Maigre et le gras*," I address the restaurant's role in highlighting class distinctions between Parisians through an analysis of Baudelaire's poem "*Les Yeux des pauvres*" and Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*.

By studying the restaurant in terms of its social history and its role in literature during the nineteenth century, I hope to have illuminated the importance of this unique urban space that too often has been considered merely the means through which diners accessed the *nouvelle cuisine* of the period. Catherine Gautschi-Lanz in *Le Roman à table: Nourriture et repas imaginaires dans le roman français* conducts this type of analysis by examining the composition of meals in novels during this same period, but she does not necessarily consider the spaces in which the meals are consumed. In largely removing the distraction of food and discussions of cuisine from my project, I hope to have shone a light on the function of architecture, décor, clientele, and the ulterior roles the restaurant played in proliferating class distinctions, the forging of identities in

nineteenth century society, and providing a space in which Parisians satisfied myriad hungers in public.

In limiting the scope of this project, I must acknowledge that a number of alternate paths have revealed themselves down which I do envision traveling one day. One could study the gender issues the nineteenth century restaurant brings to the surface. It is important to note that none of the novels I selected for this particular study were written by women. The literature surrounding the restaurant appears to be coded as masculine. It is evident, however, from my research that women did dine in restaurants in Paris during this period, but how were they treated? What different messages did a female diner convey than her male counterparts? Were women diners considered disreputable as Madame Duhamain fears in *Une Belle journée* or could a respectable woman use the restaurant to showcase her wealth and power as Clotilde de Marelle does in Maupassant's *Bel Ami*? I mention in chapter 1 the different attitudes British travelers to France in the nineteenth century had in regards to seeing French women dining outside of the home alone. Was Paris unique in granting women access to the burgeoning restaurant scene?

I restrict this study to the city of Paris given its role as the birthplace of the French restaurant, but we know that the restaurant has spread throughout France and even reached places well outside of continental Europe, such as New York by 1827. I can envision a study that accounts for the cultural adaptations made to the restaurant as it spread throughout France and the world. For example, the *Bouchon Lyonnais* has its own history as it developed alongside the *Grands Restaurants du Boulevard* of Paris that I have not treated in any way in this project. One could even look at the influence of the

restaurant on France's colonial territories. The French brought their culture and language to Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean throughout the colonial period. By doing so, the native food and food ways of the colonized countries were changed. I can envision a study that looks at the social history of the culinary spaces in these colonized countries. Who dined in the "French" restaurants in Vietnam? Were the restaurants in colonized countries utilized in the same way as in Paris for revolutionaries to plot the overthrow of their colonizers? What foods were served in Algerian restaurants? How was food served? How have native cuisines changed as a result of France exporting its restaurants and cuisine?

Finally, I have focused this project only on the nineteenth century. Continuing where Rebecca Spang finishes her study of the restaurant, I argue that this was the period in which the restaurant developed from a meager shop that served restorative soups into an important social space that contributed to the urban culture of Paris. The nineteenth century restaurant paved the way for the restaurants of today. In my epilogue, I hope to briefly discuss how the restaurant has continued to develop throughout the twentieth century.

## Epilogue

The restaurant has continued to be an important part of modern culture throughout the twentieth century and today. The number of restaurants in Paris and throughout France has certainly increased. Many of the elements of dining out in the nineteenth century that I have highlighted in this project remain relevant to the restaurants of today. They continue to contribute to the formation of social identities and are still one of the primary sites where consumers engage with the capitalist economy. In one of his prose poems from *Le Parti Pris des Choses*, in 1942, Francis Ponge writes about groups of people, *des employés et des vendeuses*, dining in a restaurant in Paris on the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. He describes the energy and life of the restaurant:

La lumière et la musique y sont dispensées avec une prodigalité qui fait rêver. Des glaces biseautées, des dorures partout. L'on y entre à travers des plantes vertes par un passage plus sombre aux parois duquel quelques dîneurs déjà à l'étroit sont installés, et qui débouche dans une salle aux proportions énormes, à plusieurs balcons de pitchpin formant un seul étage en huit, où vous accueillent à la fois des bouffées d'odeurs tièdes, le tapage des fourchettes et des assiettes choquées, les appels des serveuses et le bruit des conversations. (70)

Ponge continues in his poem to explain that the scene in the restaurant is similar to that of Manet's *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère* and worthy of being painted in the enormous scale of Paolo Véronèse's paintings. After describing the great spectacle of dining in the dining room, Ponge equates the act of dining in a restaurant to that of capitalist consumption as his predecessors in the nineteenth century do.

Through this equating of dining in a restaurant with capitalist consumption, Ponge appears to call attention to the stratifications of society that have continued into the

twentieth century. The diners in Ponge's restaurant are referred to as superficial "fadeurs et faidaises" who partake in a frivolous activity in order to impress their neighbors:

O monde des fadeurs et des faidaises, tu atteins ici à ta perfection! Toute une jeunesse inconsciente y singe quotidiennement cette frivolité tapageuse que les bourgeois se permettent huit ou dix fois par an, quand le père banquier ou la mère kleptomane ont réalisé quelque bénéfice supplémentaire vraiment inattendu, et veulent comme il faut étonner leurs voisins.

Here Ponge clearly illustrates the commodification of food and the performative nature of dining. The Bourgeois diners allow themselves the luxury of eating in this restaurant only a few times every year because of its cost. Following Baudrillard's analysis of modern consumption as a system of differentiation, we see that Ponge is also illustrating the stratification of society in one of the most basic of human needs- eating. These diners are spending money eating in this restaurant and are therefore differentiating themselves from those who cannot afford to do so. Ponge comments on the dress of the diners as they cling to their plates as hermit crabs cling to their shells and the overly made-up women with tubes of makeup.

Ponge focuses on the actual food in the dining room only once when he mentions the desserts that are served in warm dishes because the restaurant staff does not have enough time to allow them to cool before subsequent diners must use them. He indicates that the warm dishes and the "brouhaha" of the restaurant are not worthy of multi-tiered desserts meticulously prepared in the style of Carême. The focus in this dining room is the exchange of money for food and the act of diners making spectacles of themselves. Ponge writes about the termination of the meal; "C'est alors que la vanité est punie et la modestie récompensée. Pièces et billets bleus s'échangent sur les tables: il semble que chacun retire son épingle du jeu" (73). In Ponge's Restaurant Lemeunier, dining is

equated with an act of capitalist consumption. Like his predecessors in the nineteenth century, Ponge highlights the commercial nature of restaurant dining.

### Dining “up”

Today we still go to the restaurant to celebrate life’s milestones and for the convenience of having a meal prepared by someone else. Even though we may be unaware of this fact, I would argue that we also dine out in order to convey a particular message about ourselves to others as Ponge highlights in his poem. In the same way that many of the characters in the novels I selected for this project dined out in order to convey particular messages about their identities to the public, we today continue to influence social perceptions by dining out in restaurants. Ron Scapp has gone through this self-reflection about dining out in his article titled “Eating Up,” in which he writes about the influence dining out in restaurants in his childhood has had on the formation of his identity as an adult.

Ron Scapp reflects nostalgically on growing up in a middle class family in the 1960s that rarely ever dined out in restaurants:

Restaurants intimidated and confused my family; ‘eating establishments’ were places for people with extra money to spend, having others prepare and serve them their meals. Such exchanges of money for services were reserved for doctors and plumbers, and only after having attempted to care for or repair the problem on our own. Restaurants, therefore, were simultaneously sites of failure and indulgence; who could not or would not cook his or her own meal or desired to be so public about not doing so? (127)

Scapp recalls television programs and magazine advertisements routinely depicting families hosting dinner parties in their homes at the time. The image of what family life was meant to be like was beamed into his family’s small apartment nightly through the

media. Because his family did not have the space or the money to entertain at home, the restaurant presented itself as an alternative in which Scapp's family could meet the expectations of how to entertain at home without squeezing people inside their small apartment. I would argue that today families in France, as well as in the US, which is where Scapp spent his childhood, look outside of the home for dining entertainment on a regular basis.

We celebrate milestones and celebrations in a variety of dining establishments just as Parisians did in the nineteenth century. The stratification of restaurants that was prevalent in the nineteenth century has continued with places like lunch counters and fast food restaurants such as McDonald's serving quick inexpensive meals while other trendy places like Alain Ducasse's Plaza Athénée in Paris serve a tasting menu under its crystal chandeliers for 400 Euros per person. Anyone who can afford it can be an elegant host by inviting his guests to dine at one of society's temples of gastronomy. Scapp writes about this divergence from his childhood that he witnessed as he started dining at some of the finer and higher-priced restaurants as an adult; "When these eating/entertaining dramas unfold in expensive venues, there are interesting changes in the acts of participation, but being entertained by the staff, the other clientele and by the food itself is very much part of the dining experience many have come to expect...Restaurants are places where the social mix can prove to be a surprising cross-class intermingling and evoke complex tensions as well as pleasures" (129-130).

The enjoyment of dining out simply for the experience of doing so was not something Scapp had experienced in his childhood, but many of us today can relate to this facet of contemporary restaurant dining. The *Guide Michelin* and the Gault et Millau

restaurant guide rate eateries so that we can select the “best” ones in order to maximize our’ and our guests’ pleasure. It was a friend who introduced Scapp to dining out in restaurants simply for the joy in doing so. In his childhood, Scapp had eaten out for convenience or in order to celebrate graduations, weddings, birthdays, and other milestones. Dining out prior to this moment in his life had been something he had to do as an obligation to friends and family or because his work schedule as a musician prevented him from cooking at home.

Dining out at one of the “grandes tables,” such as Plaza Athénée in Paris, can certainly afford diners great pleasure, but it can also cause a great deal of anxiety over the idea of being served by teams of waiters and waitresses, trying to fit in with the opulent surroundings, and spending large sums of money on one meal. Just as we saw in the nineteenth century novels I discuss in this project, dining in a restaurant today continues to call attention to class distinctions. Scapp writes about the first time he dined in a three-star restaurant in Europe:

The re-inscription of class anxiety, of questioning one’s worth and value and of projecting significance elsewhere, that is to say ‘up there,’ is often automatic and involuntary. Like entering a room and detecting an aroma that throws you back in time, encountering the signs of traditional class privilege and power can push you back. Where? It depends, but often it’s back somewhere without clout and immediate legitimacy, somewhere lacking, somewhere certainly that did not allow you to be comfortable among the trappings of opulence. (133)

The restaurant makes Scapp think about his humble childhood and he begins to fear backsliding towards a lower social status because he thinks that he does not belong at a table in a three-star restaurant.

Despite all of this initial anxiety and questioning of one’s identity, dining upwards or eating above one’s status in society is still a pleasurable and highly transformative

experience. The gustatory pleasure of eating well-prepared food and drinking good wine is combined in these circumstances with the conveyance of a message of social arrival. Even if some diners are faking their way through the meal, the ultimate message conveyed by sitting at a restaurant table is that of economic and social success. Scapp writes, “The cumbersome gestures that were made at the start of this journey are transformed into the self-assured elegant ones one makes with success, indicating the achievement of aiming high, of aiming for the stars and making it” (134). Perhaps unaware of this fact, modern-day social climbers use the restaurant to construct their identities as successful, wealthy, powerful members of society.

Consumption as Baudrillard defines it is a complex system of communication that demands that we consider dining in a restaurant a social act. This social aspect of dining out in a restaurant I hope to have highlighted in this project is hidden beneath the individual pleasurable act of eating good food and drinking fine wine. Scapp writes, “Restaurants may not be *the* sites of metaphysical direction for a given culture, but it is clear that they are places where the *telos* of those individuals who are attempting to eat their way up toward meaning can be witnessed hovering just above the aromas of the Special of the Day” (136). As Scapp’s encounter with dining at a “grande table” illustrates, issues of identity, class status, and economics reveal themselves before you can place your order for an entrée.

#### “La Route Bleue”

Nineteenth-century novelists recognized the unique role the restaurant played in shaping identities, defining social status, and contributing to the development of a rapidly

changing society. I have argued that this is one of the reasons why writers found the restaurant to be a good catalyst to advance narratives or as rich settings for their novels. Similarly, the contemporary restaurant continues to shape societies even as it contributes to the molding of personal identities. The contemporary restaurant, the automobile culture of the 1950s and 1960s, and middle class leisure society converges in France along the “Route Bleue,” or “La Nationale Sept,” which was a 600 mile roadway that linked Paris to the Riviera in the southern part of France.

Like its American counterpart Route 66, N7, which is currently being replaced by Autoroute 77, linked one side of the country to the other. Parisians from the cold north drove down the highway to the sunny warm south crossing the Loire Valley, the Rhône River, and Provence along the way. The road terminated at Menton on the border of Italy. Nicknamed the “Route des Vacances,” the roadway provided access to the Riviera’s beaches for vacationers and their families. The affordability of two new car models from Citroen and Renault in the 1950s increased the number of travelers along N7, which fueled a surge in the number of restaurants one could find along the route.

Expectedly the restaurants along the route range from budget-friendly truck stops and bouchons listed in the “*Relais Routiers*” to expensive Michelin starred restaurants such as La Mère Brazier in Lyon. Sylvie Bigar writes of the proliferation of restaurants she encountered on family vacations during her childhood in France:

We zigzagged from the charcuterie of Lyon, to the calissons of Aix-en-Provence, to Cavaillon’s melons the size of *pétanque* balls, whose musky perfume scented the car. The delicacies that lined Route 7 were as much an indicator of where we were as the *bornes*, the red-and-white cement markers that herald the passage of every kilometer. The flavors changed as we traveled south- the rich tripe dishes of Lyon were replaced by the lighter crayfish gratin in Valence, and finally, the olive-studded *pissaladières* that marked our descent into sun-drenched Provence. Each summer I grew to crave our Michelin-starred feasts, truck stop meals,

impromptu picnics, and detours for local delicacies. Though this road is called so many things- La Route des Vacances, La Route Bleue- to me it was always La Route Gourmande. (92)

The automobile culture of the 1950s and 1960s provided restaurants with diners from all over France to which they would serve local delicacies in opulent settings or at buffet tables in simple rest stops. Eventually, many of the restaurants along N7 became destinations in their own right.

Edouard and André Michelin recognized the importance of restaurant culture to their Clermont-Ferrand tire manufacturing business as more people purchased cars and drove greater distances along routes such as the N7. They printed the first “*Guide Rouge*” in 1900 to provide maps, car repair advice, listings for mechanics, hotel recommendations, and restaurant ratings to their customers. The Michelin brothers introduced the first restaurant star rating in 1926 where one star meant an eatery was good, two stars made a restaurant worth a detour off the road, and three stars indicated that a restaurant was a real destination. Michelin stars are still coveted by many restaurateurs worldwide and thousands of editions of the *Guide Rouge* are printed annually (Bigar 91).

While the development of the N7 and the automobile culture during the 1950s provided a rich environment in which restaurateurs built their eateries, today it is the very existence of these restaurants that sustains some of the small towns along the route and encourages drivers to stop along the road. With high-speed trains and low-cost airlines competing with the automobile, one has to wonder why so many still take to the road each summer. One would also have to wonder why drivers still use the N7 with more direct roadways between Paris and the south having been built since the 1950s. In

addition to enjoying the changes in the meandering scenery along the roadway, I would argue that these drivers are seeking a nostalgic experience of the mid-century and yearn to sample some of the local cuisines that they believe are only available in the “authentic” restaurants located along the route.

Sylvie Bigar nostalgically traces her childhood steps in search of such authentic dining experiences with a new generation along the N7. She writes of her family’s trips to the south of France that took her to many of the restaurants along N7 in “The Road to Paradise.” Fondly remembering trips from her childhood with her parents, Bigar decides to take her own children down the N7 to revisit some of those destination restaurants and make new traditions for her own family. Using Michelin as their guide they visit the bouchons in Lyon, a truck stop restaurant in the Côtes-du-rhône, Michelin-starred restaurants, and finally marketplaces along the Riviera. Bigar and many other families today veer off of the direct highways between Paris and the south in order to stop at the many restaurants that developed along the N7.

The restaurants that line the N7 have become destinations for many travelers searching an “authentic” experience of 1950s France when the automobile became a primary means of transportation for many families. That Bigar writes about her quest along the N7 at the moment when automobile ownership in France declines and the scenic roads between Paris and the south are being replaced by larger superhighways is not surprising. Because of its important role in shaping social history, the restaurant is a window into the past. What remains of the “grands restaurants du boulevard,” Duval’s soup shops, and the host’s tables from nineteenth century Paris similarly attract diners

seeking an understanding of one of Paris' most celebrated, yet tumultuous periods of history<sup>2</sup>. While the original diners may be long gone, the restaurant remains.

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<sup>2</sup> Tony Perrottet published an article in the NY Times titled "Liberty, Equality, Gastronomy: Paris via a 19<sup>th</sup> Century guide" in 2009. He describes a visit to Paris using Grimod de la Reynière's *Almanach des Gourmands* during which he dines in a number of the restaurants cited in this study such as the Véfour and Au Rocher de Cancale.

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