



**BELLY TALK*:
Gastronomie, gastrolâtrie, and gourmandise in the 19th century**

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As ‘crystallizations of the past,’ to adopt the formulation of Norbert Elias (Pt I), words track social change. Just so, language about food charts our ever-shifting relationships to this fundamental social phenomenon and elemental human activity. As Brillat-Savarin told us long ago, talking about the food we eat reveals our very being: ‘Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es’ (Aphorisme IV). Following Brillat, I should like in my turn to propose gastrology as a privileged entry into 19th-century France. The gastrological path leads us not only to meals actually or fictionally consumed but also, and still more importantly, to the mores of the city Walter Benjamin so memorably baptized the Capital of the Nineteenth Century. If gastrological analysis finds particularly rich terrain in France generally, 19th-century Paris offers an embarrassment of those riches. To be sure, culinary discourse antedates the 19th century, and by centuries. Nor can France claim either precedence or singularity. The most extraordinary gastrological monument in western culture we owe to Athenaeus, a Greek writing in early third-century Rome. France reaches to Rabelais for its premier gastrologist. Even so 19th-century Paris stands apart. This frenetically urbanizing world brought forth modern modes of consumption, modes expressed and legitimated in new words such as *gastronomie* and *gastronome* and in new meanings attached to venerable terms such as *gourmandise* and *gourmand*. And these, surely, belong among what Raymond Williams identified as the ‘key words’ of modern times, precisely because they crystallize social relations within the recognizably modern but still modernizing world of the 19th century.

Gastrologie / gastrology is not a common term. To modern ears it sounds disquietingly medical, perhaps because the medicalized extensions of *gastro* overwhelm possible culinary usages.¹ Constructed from the Greek *gastro* — stomach— and *logos* — story, narrative, explanation —, gastrology is, in my understanding, what French might call *le discours du ventre*, or, absent the post-modern resonance, in plain English, belly talk. As the etymology makes clear, that talk explains as it narrates the stories of the eating order, in this case, the order that emerged in France over the 19th century. New terms were needed for what contemporaries easily identified as a new culinary order.

The most obvious transformations in the foodways of post-Revolutionary France concerned the production of food. The proliferation of restaurants in Paris helped push cooking into a professionalized mode. Consumption altered accordingly. Moreover, given their cultural visibility, the consumers who trumpeted the virtues of culinary perfection did as much if not more for French culinary hegemony as the producers of that perfection. For the culinary becomes truly cultural only when food gets out of the kitchen, when cuisine makes its way into the dictionary and the encyclopedia, onto the sites where we can pinpoint the words that track cultural change, into the public sphere of social exchange. Responding to conditions felt to be so new and so untoward as to require a whole new lexicon, 19th-century France constructed an elaborate gastrological taxonomy. Terms were resuscitated from the distant past; others were invented, while still others underwent radical redefinition.

I NEW WORDS FOR A NEW WORLD

Already in the 18th century, *gourmet* spoke to a specialized and sophisticated relationship to food, surprisingly enough, rooted in the purveyance, then appreciation of wine, an association that persisted through the 1835 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*:

GOURMET- 15e valet de marchand de vins; Vieilli– dégustateur en vins;
18e– personne qui apprécie le raffinement en matière de boire et de manger. (Robert)

But the 19th century offers an even more fertile site in which to explore the new worlds of food. First off is *gastronomie*. With the Greek roots *gastro* and *nomos* (law), *gastronomie* glosses alimentary consumption as both an art and a science:

GASTRONOMIE/ *gastronome* – (Greek, *nomos*, loi) : un art qui mérite de marcher de pair avec la littérature, la *gastronomie*. Toute passion raisonnée et dirigée devient un art; or, plus que toute autre passion, la *gastronomie* est susceptible de raisonnement et de direction (Larousse).²

As a science, gastronomy, true to its etymology, has its laws and its rules. With *gastronomie* and *gastronome* the invocation of science — in the traditional sense of knowledge — became a favored trope. Gastronomy emphasized the *connaissance* and discrimination optimally characteristic of the consumption of food. Knowledge lays the base of this decidedly modern social practice and the attendant social status. Once again, following Elias, who proposed the idea of civilization as the expression of the self-consciousness of the West (Pt 1), I suggest gastronomy as the expression of the culinary consciousness of France — the conspicuously modernizing France of the 19th century. Gastronomy decisively divorced taste from hunger. To gustatory pleasure this new France assigned the intellectual virtue of reason. It had its rules — its 'laws' (*nomos*). *Gastronomie* tamed, socialized and 'civilized' appetite, to call upon a suitably loaded term that contemporaries would have recognized as such.

In mid-century, Larousse's dictionary consecrated the emphasis on reason that Brillat-Savarin had advanced some 40 years before:

La gastronomie est la connaissance raisonnée de tout ce qui a rapport à l'homme, en tant qu'il se nourrit. (Brillat-Savarin, *Méditation III* [1826])

Brillat was neither alone nor even the first to suggest that the rules to which gastronomy is subject turn this gustatory enterprise into a very French member of the beaux-arts. The self-styled Hermit of the Chaussée d'Antin, poking about Paris at the very end of the Empire, reported on the issues of the times. A connoisseur of the Parisian scene could not overlook *gastronomie* :

La gastronomie, pour me servir de mot à la mode, est un art qui a maintenant ses règles, sa poésie et ses professeurs; des sociétés se sont vouées à son culte; des almanachs ont propagé la doctrine des gastronomes ... (V.J. Étienne, dit, de Jouy [1814], *L'Hermite de la chaussée d'Antin*)

Those rules only became more visible. Thus *Le Code Gourmand* of 1827 billed itself as a *Manuel complet de Gastronomie*, which therefore contained 'les lois, règles, applications et exemples de l'art de bien vivre par l'auteur du Code des Honnêtes Gens'. Three years later one wag, railing against the invasion of foreign foods that denature French cuisine, went so far as to connect cuisine with the most unimpeachable of classical sources, Aristotle: 'La cuisine, comme la comédie, avec laquelle elle a plus d'un rapport, doit se conformer aux règles d'Aristote.' (*Almanach perpétuel des Gourmands contenant Le Code Gourmand et des applications, règles et méditations de gastronomie transcendante*, 1830, 106).

The utopian philosopher Charles Fourier went further still to raise the gastronomy of Brillat-Savarin into the stratosphere of philosophy. Making the belly the source of wisdom as well as the site of pleasure, Fourier transformed gastronomy into gastrosophy, another order altogether. Brillat-Savarin and others may have talked about 'transcendent gastronomy', Fourier constructed an entire social and philosophical system around the profound knowledge of the belly.³

la Gastronomie, science badinée aujourd'hui et frivole en apparence, devient en Harmonie [Fourier's ideal society] ... Gastrosophie, haute sagesse gastronomique, profonde et sublime théorie d'équilibre social. (Fourier, *Théorie de l'unité universelle* [1841-43] 4:130)

[la] gastrosophie est une science de la plus haute sagesse qui doit réunir aux lumières de la médecine et de l'agronomie celles de plusieurs autres sciences inconnues des civilisés.... (Fourier, *Le Nouveau Monde amoureux* 7:130)⁴

II OLD WORDS, OLD WORLDS

These modern concepts stood out all the more against a background of familiar terms derived from the Latin descended into French, rather than deliberately revived learned

Greek. Indeed, it seems that the French reached to the exotic Greek the better to mark the distance of the modern from the familiar words and quasi-proverbial concepts that had been around for centuries.⁵ Consider the range of terms and the very different world that they reveal, a world of undisguised, unreasoned, definitely uncivilized appetite.

GOURMAND 1354 (Vieux) – Gros mangeur V glouton, goinfre; Moderne – qui aime la bonne cuisine, est exigeant en matière de nourriture V. bec fin. (Robert)

adj. Glouton, goulu, qui mange avec avidité & avec excès. ...*le brochet est un poisson extrêmement gourmand. Il se met souvent au substantif, & alors il ne se dit que de l'homme. C'est un gourmand, un vilain gourmand, un gros gourmand. (Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 1694)*

adj. Glouton, goulu, qui mange avec avidité et avec excès. [...] *Le brochet est un poisson fort gourmand. Il s'emploie aussi au substantif, en parlant d'un homme ou d'une femme. C'est un gourmand, un vilain gourmand, une grosse gourmande. On appelle Branches gourmandes, Les branches d'un arbre fruitier qui poussent avec beaucoup de vigueur, et qui épuisent les branches voisines. (Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 1798)*

GOURMANDISE v. 1400 Caractère, défaut de celui qui est gourmand (Robert)

s. f. Gloutonnie, vice de celui qui est gourmand. Gourmandise insatiable. le péché de gourmandise. (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 1694*)

s. fém. Gloutonnerie, vice de celui qui est gourmand. Gourmandise insatiable. Le péché de gourmandise. (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 1798*)

s. f. Vice de celui qui est gourmand. Gourmandise insatiable. Le péché de gourmandise. Satisfaire sa gourmandise. (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 1835*)

Not until 1932 does the 8th edition replace *vice* with *defect* (*défaut*), although it retains 'le péché de gourmandise.'

The glutton is the gourmand pushed to animality and associated with the lower classes:

GLOUTON/ gloutonnerie *gloton* – canaille (1080) bas lat. *glutto, gluttire* – avaler, de *gluttus* 'gosier'. Qui mange avidement, excessivement, en engloutissant les morceaux. V *goinfre, goulu, vorace* (Robert)

GOINFRE (1578)/ goinfrierie (1646). Personne qui mange avec excès et salement (Robert)

s. m. Celui qui met tout son plaisir dans la bonne chère, dans la desbauche de la table. *C'est un goinfre. c'est un bon goinfre.*

Goinfrer. v. n. Prendre avec excez le plaisir de la bonne chere, faire desbauche à table. *Il aime à goinfrer. il ne fait que goinfrer.*

Goinfrerie. s. f. Desbauche de table. Aimer la goinfrerie. estre adonné à la goinfrerie. (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 1694*)

s. m. Celui qui met tout son plaisir à manger. *C'est un goinfre.* Ce mot et les deux suivans sont populaires. (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française (1798)*)

s. m. Celui qui met tout son plaisir à manger. *C'est un goinfre.* Il est populaire. (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 1835*)

Gastronomy was positioned at the far pole from these excesses. Yet, even, perhaps especially, in the newly modern world, behind the eminently reasonable, reasoned and, above all, regulated relationship to food that gastronomy supposes, lurked the unreasoned, pulsating desires of appetite. These excesses of an uncontrolled love of food blight the new culinary landscape. Whence, appearing close on the heels of *gastronomie*:

GASTROMANIE-/ *gastromane* 1803 (du gr., *mania*, fureur) goût très vif pour les plaisirs de la table; amour de la bonne chère poussée jusqu'à l'excès (*Larousse*)

GASTROLÂTRIE-/ *gastrolâtre* (du gr., *Latreuein*, servir, adorer; [more immediately from] *idolâtrie* [in the secular sense of] 'amour passionné, admiration outrée,' 1550) (*Larousse*).

Indulging in a modern version of gluttony (*gourmandise*), baptized and secularized by Rabelais, the *gastrolâtre* worships the base. *Gastrolâtrie* displaces adoration from the divine to the terrestrial; the *gastrolâtre* 'se fait un dieu de son ventre' (*Larousse*).

If we wonder why this term appeared in 19th-century France, we can see that gastrolatry threatens the new social order far more than 'simple' gluttony. Concerned to fill his belly, the glutton eats indiscriminately. Haunted by the possibility of food shortages, the glutton is a creature of famine. The modern gastrolater, on the other hand, does not worry so much about food supply as about food quality. He eats with discrimination, concerned to fill his belly to be sure, but with exquisite foods. (Gluttons are invariably represented as male.) In both cases, the belly is profoundly anti-social. In both, unchecked appetite disrupts the natural and the social order. The glutton and the gastrolater each exceeds the bounds of nature, the one for sheer quantity of food ingested, the other for the hyper-refinement demanded of the foods consumed. The belly rules the glutton directly whereas for the gastrolater, the belly commands indirectly, through a highly educated, trained palate. The gastrolater not only appreciates but requires culinary sophistication. The gastrolater needs — and surely 'need' is the operative term — not simply more food, but more refined, exquisite, exotic, varied, extraordinary food.

While the Church early on categorized gluttony — *gourmandise* in French — as one of the seven deadly sins,⁶ closer to modern times, *L'Encyclopédie* brought many of the same

charges, seeing the deleterious social consequences of excessive alimentary refinement (see Bonnet). Where the Church was concerned above all with the moral health of the individual, the *Encyclopédie* adopted a resolutely societal perspective. Gourmandise was bad for the health, and it was bad for the social order. Even the most basic term — cuisine — had negative connotations. Cuisine transgresses whenever it takes us beyond what nature prescribes for the most basic needs of ‘temperate’ people.

CUISINE (*Art méchan*) cet art de flatter le goût, ce luxe, j'allois dire cette luxure de bonne chere dont on fait tant de cas, est ce qu'on nomme dans le monde la *cuisine par excellence*; Montagne [*sic*] la définit plus brièvement la *science de la gueule*; & M. de la Mothe le Vayer, *la Gastrologie*. Tous ces termes désignent proprement le secret réduit en méthode savante, de faire manger au-delà du nécessaire; car la *cuisine* des gens sobres ou pauvres, ne signifie que l'art le plus commun d'apprêter les mets pour satisfaire aux besoins de la vie.

GOURMANDISE (*Morale*), amour raffiné & désordonné de la bonne-chère. ... la *gourmandise* est un mérite dans les pays de luxe & de vanité, où les vices sont érigés en vertus: c'est le fruit de la mollesse opulente; il se forme dans son sein, se perfectionne par l'habitude, & devient enfin si délicat, qu'il faut tout le génie d'un cuisinier pour satisfaire ses raffinemens. (Voyez CUISINE)

The practitioners of *gourmandise*, the *gourmand* or *gourmande*, aren't even human:

GOURMAND (*Gramm*) il se prend tantôt substantivement, & tantôt adjectivement, & se dit en général d'un animal qui mange avec excès & avec avidité.

For the gastrolater the pleasure of the plate trumps the pleasure of the table. Since gastronomic pleasure brooks no competition, the gastrolater dines alone. Other so-called pleasures are no better than distractions, and people, and women in particular, constitute the ultimate distraction.⁷

Grimod de la Reynière's aptly entitled *Gastronomia* advocates dining late:

Il est commode de dîner tard, parce qu'on peut alors concentrer toutes ses pensées sur son assiette, ne songer qu'à ce qu'on mange, puis s'en aller coucher après. (Cited Monselet, 'Aphorismes du *Gastronomia*')

Those contemplating social relations as a whole, however, like the chevalier de Jaucourt in the *Encyclopédie* and later Brillat-Savarin, viewed the situation with some alarm, and voiced concern about the deleterious effects of gustatory solipsism, on the individual as on society. Sensing the criticisms of solitary gustatory pleasure, in a statement the abbé Morellet chose jocularly:

Il faut être deux pour manger une dinde truffée; je ne fais jamais autrement. J'en ai une aujourd'hui, la dinde et moi. (cited *Larousse*)⁸

The reason that tempers the gastronome's search for refinement has no hold over the gastrolater. As Balzac clearly saw, gastrolatry corrupts as surely as courtesans or gambling.

Comment résister aux habiles séductions qui se trament en ce pays? Aussi Paris a-t-il ses thérakis, pour qui le jeu, la gastrolâtrie ou la courtisane sont un opium. (*La Fille aux yeux d'or* [1835], 5:1050)

The modern city turns the ancient association of food and sex into a matter of real urgency. Think how often the temptations join forces. The courtesans in the *Comédie humaine*, seduce by the luxury of the meals they serve as well as through the opulence of their persons. Balzac elaborates the association with his typical narrative excess. Predicting the failure of the seductive powers of the sympathetic but unalluring Adeline Hulot on her erstwhile suitor, he intones:

N'est pas courtisane qui veut! La femme est le potage de l'homme, a dit plaisamment Molière... Cette comparaison suppose une sorte de science culinaire en amour. La femme vertueuse serait alors le repas homérique, la chair jetée sur les charbons ardents. La courtisane, au contraire, serait l'oeuvre de Carême avec ses condiments, avec ses épices et ses recherches. (*La Cousine Bette*, 7: 319)

Like other monomaniacs — take the concupiscent baron Hulot in *La Cousine Bette* (1846) —, the gastrolater is profoundly asocial. He no longer thinks, he no longer reasons, he no longer makes the measured judgments that define and distinguish the gastronome. The imperatives of appetite override reason and discretion. In the hapless Sylvain Pons, Balzac portrays the modern gastrolater, a truly tragic figure whose inability to control his appetite precipitates his downfall. Avaricious and canny relatives play upon Pons's good nature and, above all, his gourmandise.

On n'a jamais peint les exigences de la Gueule ... on ne se figure pas le nombre des gens que la Table a ruinés. La Table est, à Paris, sous ce rapport, l'émule de la courtisane... (*Le Cousin Pons* [1846], 7: 492-93)

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... (*Le Cousin Pons*, 7:495).

Appetite itself has been transformed by the brain's competitor lodged in the nether regions. Digestion both mimics and replaces sex:

Le célibat fut donc chez lui [Pons] moins un goût qu'une nécessité. La gourmandise, le péché des moines vertueux, lui tendit les bras; il s'y précipita comme il s'était précipité dans l'adoration des oeuvres 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. (Balzac, *Le Cousin Pons*, 7:495)

Pons is not a glutton, but an addict.

Un estomac dont l'éducation se fait ainsi, réagit nécessairement sur le moral et le corrompt en raison de la haute sagesse culinaire qu'il acquiert. La Volupté, tapie dans tous les plis du coeur, y parle en souveraine, elle bat en brèche la volonté, l'honneur, elle veut à tout prix sa satisfaction. (Balzac, *Le Cousin Pons*, 7: 492-93)

III GOURMANDISE REVISITED

The most striking gastrological development is not the advent of new or unfamiliar terms such as *gastronomie* and *gastronome*, or even *gastrolâtrie*. Rather, it is the radical redefinition of *gourmandise* itself. By eliminating *gourmandise* as gluttony, the 19th century does nothing less than reclassify gustatory pleasure. It reconfigured the sin condemned by the Church as a vehicle of self-knowledge, indeed, as a virtue.

The counter-offensive to traditional negative conceptions is commonly traced to Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût*, which many later authors, including Pierre Larousse, take as their reference.⁹ Brillat is categorical:

La gourmandise est un acte de notre jugement, par lequel nous accordons la préférence aux choses qui sont agréables au goût sur celles qui n'ont pas cette qualité. (Aphorisme VI)

His goal, he tells us in the Second Part of the *Physiologie du goût*, is to define 'avec précision ce qu'on doit entendre par *gourmandise*, et de séparer pour toujours cette qualité sociale de la gloutonnerie et de l'intempérance...' Gluttons begone! No indiscriminate stuffing. Balzac's 'second belly' is nowhere in evidence, for the very good reason that the intellect keeps this belly well under control. Like the magistrate that Brillat-Savarin was all his career, the *gastronome* weighs evidence, pros and cons, gives his rulings according to the code.

Ce sont surtout les gens d'esprit qui tiennent la gourmandise à honneur; les autres ne sont pas capables d'une opération qui consiste dans une suite d'appréciations et de jugemens. (Brillat-Savarin, *Variétés*, XX)

The added ingredient, the one that makes *gourmandise* socially useful as well as individually pleasurable, is conviviality. Brillat's reconfiguration of *gourmandise* insisted on the association with conviviality. True commensality obliterates sin because the pleasure of the table is an inherently social pleasure. It sustains the body, and it sustains the body politic. Well before Brillat-Savarin, Mercier rhapsodized over the social contribution of the culinary arts.

à Paris, douze cents cuisiniers sont du matin au soir à vos ordres; en un clin d'oeil vous êtes servi; rien de plus commode, rien de plus propre à serrer les doux liens de la confraternité ; la table est aussitôt garnie qu'elle est dressée, et l'appétit sourit à l'amitié. (Mercier, 1010-12 [t 5 Ch CCCLXII, 'Pâtissiers, rôtisseurs'])

Somewhat over a half-century later, Eugène Sue's *Gourmandise* recast *gourmandise* as virtue and explicitly redefined this 'sin' as socially and economically useful. In the series of *Les Sept Péchés capitaux*, written before and during the revolution of 1848, Sue argues the social utility of all the deadly sins and accords *gourmandise* the pivotal role. The eight nephews and nieces of the hero are engaged in food production (pastry maker, fish monger, grocer, bread maker, game supplier, butcher, wine merchant, and captain of a merchant vessel with the emblematic name of *Gastronome*, who imports foodstuffs from the colonies). The reformist socialist author sets up a profit sharing scheme, and assembles all the 'sinful' and 'sinning' protagonists of the first six novels for a joyous repast at the end of *Gourmandise*. Economic prosperity bests sin every time. The Académie put the final stamp of approval on the shift, noting in its edition of 1835, that in addition to the usual negative connotations, *gourmand* 'se dit quelquefois pour *Gastronome*.'

Gourmandise is not confined to elites, but affects every walk of life because dining — *le plaisir de la table* for Brillat — is, or should be, an eminently social situation. Dining alone satisfies solely individual needs, it reinforces egocentrism. Brillat-Savarin considers it a dangerous activity, for the individual but especially for society generally.

Mais ce qui est bien plus funeste pour l'ordre social, c'est que nous regardons comme certain que la réfection solitaire renforce l'égoïsme, habitue l'individu à ne regarder que soi, à s'isoler de tout de qui l'entoure, à se dispenser d'égards. (Méditation XXVIII)¹⁰

The by-word for Brillat is sociability. Where the love of good food operates centripetally to turn the consumer ever more inward, conviviality — *la gourmandise sociale* — turns Brillat's modern *gourmand* outward. Modern *gourmandise* operates centrifugally, connecting the diner to others.

Le plaisir de manger est la sensation actuelle et directe d'un besoin qui se satisfait.

Le plaisir de la table est la sensation réfléchie qui naît des diverses circonstances de faits, de lieux, de choses et de personnes qui accompagnent le repas. (Méditation XIV)

Conviviality keeps society together and, not so incidentally, smooths over very real social and economic differences in the fiction of equality at table.

La gourmandise est une des principaux liens de la société; c'est elle qui étend graduellement cet esprit de convivialité qui réunit chaque jour les divers états, les fonde en un seul but, anime la conversation et adoucit les angles de l'inégalité conventionnelle. (Méditation XI)

The meal as a social enterprise — as opposed to physiological need — turns consumption into the higher order of dining.

quand le besoin commence à être satisfait, la réflexion naît, la conversation s'engage, un autre ordre de choses commence ; et celui qui, jusque là, n'était que consommateur, devient convive plus ou moins aimable (Méditation XIV)

This transmutation of need is what dining is all about.

Convier quelqu'un, c'est se charger de son bonheur pendant tout le temps qu'il est sous notre toit. (Aphorisme XX)

Such a conception of the culinary relationship to food logically leads Brillat-Savarin to dissent vigorously from the standard definitions of *gourmandise*. Because they inevitably confuse *gourmandise* with *gloutonnerie* or *voracité*, dictionaries, he complains, offer no help. In other words, they remain fixed to the old-style *gourmandise* that the Church saw as a sin and the *Encyclopédie* deemed animal behavior. Brillat saw things very differently. Social *gourmandise* could boast of a long and illustrious lineage. In this domain as in others, France made good on its classical heritage:

ils [les lexicographes] ont oublié la gourmandise sociale, qui réunit l'élégance athénienne, le luxe romain et la délicatesse française, qui dispose avec sagacité, fait exécuter sagement, savoure avec énergie, et juge avec profondeur : qualité précieuse, qui pourrait bien être une vertu, et qui est du moins bien certainement la source de nos plus pures jouissances....

Brillat proposes his own hierarchy:

Les animaux se repaissent; l'homme mange; l'homme d'esprit seul sait manger. (Aphorisme II)

Sociability personified, expansive, engaged with the social setting and the company of the repast, Brillat's new *gourmand* also admits the feminine inflection:

La gourmandise comprend aussi la friandise, qui n'est autre que la même préférence appliquée aux mets légers, délicats, de peu de volume, aux confitures, aux pâtisseries, etc. C'est une modification introduite en faveur des femmes et des hommes qui leur ressemblent. (Méditation XI)¹¹

Indeed, Brillat goes so far as to claim that *gourmandise* is instinctual for women, a recompense for things that they cannot do and others that they must do (Méditation XI).

Brillat-Savarin, then, incarnates and promotes the exemplary modern *gourmand* — discriminating and refined to be sure, but, above all, sociable. Dining is far more than gastronomy. Where the gastronome thinks of his pleasure, the diner — the *convive* — thinks of others and their pleasures. *Convives*, as the etymology tells us once again, are people who live together. The culinary sophistication that determines the judgment of the gastronome hardly comes into play for Brillat's social *gourmandise*.

On goûte ce plaisir [de la table] dans presque toute son étendue toutes les fois qu'on réunit les quatre conditions suivantes: chère au moins passable, bon vin, convives aimables, temps suffisant.

The pleasure of the plate and the palate pales before the infinitely more capacious pleasure of the table:

quelque recherchée que soit la bonne chère, quelque somptueux que soient les accessoires, il n'y a pas plaisir de table, si le vin est mauvais, les convives ramassés sans choix, les physionomies tristes, et le repas consommé avec précipitation. (Méditation XIV)

This sociability, I argue, makes modern gourmandise the ultimate French (culinary) virtue. Brillat, in particular, took great pride in the connection.¹² Gastronomy may well be of every time and every clime. It is nonetheless true that France has a particular claim. In his 'Note d'un gastronome patriote' appended to the Méditation on *gourmandise*, Brillat joins flirting and gourmandise as distinctively French contributions to what Elias called the 'civilizing process'. The physiological yields to the social, and nowhere more strikingly than in France.

Je remarque avec orgueil que la coquetterie et la gourmandise, ces deux grandes modifications que l'extrême sociabilité a apportées à nos plus impérieux besoins, sont toutes deux d'origine française. (Méditation XI)

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The fortunes of these keywords of French culinary culture — *gastronomie*, *gastrolâtrie*, and *gourmandise* — do not tell us either what or how 19th-century France ate. Actual foodways, the norms of production and the customs of consumption, depend upon the primal material constraints of food supply and distribution. At the same time, demand is shaped by the possibilities of thought. We cannot eat either what or in ways that we cannot think of eating. The belly talk of 19th-century France, the words that appeared and reappeared, others that shifted meaning, stand as signposts to a culture rethinking its culinary relationships. As is always the case when we track shifts in sensibilities, the old never disappears entirely. Throughout the 19th century, and, indeed, beyond, Brillat's modern, sociable gourmand battled against the egocentric gastronome celebrated by Monselet and Maupassant and the idolatrous gastrolater. At stake in all this belly talk is not simply the belly or what goes into it. It is our very sense of self and of society. For, to leave

Brillat the last word,

La destinée des nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent.
(Aphorisme III)

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^{1*} This is a heavily revised version of a talk given at the Nineteenth-Century French Studies Colloquium in October 2000 at the University of Illinois (Urbana). I have retained the informality of presentation of that presentation, most notably with its reliance on quotations. However obvious it is that words never speak for themselves, focusing on language in its less elaborated, but especially concentrated state—i.e., words, as opposed to texts—offers a singular, and privileged, entry into cultural consciousness. This, I take it, was behind Walter Benjamin's aspiration to write a book entirely of quotations and the work that almost did that, *Die Passagenwerke*. We dix-neuviémistes do well to follow Benjamin's lead.

¹ The OED refers *gastrology* to the title of a poem quoted by Athenaeus, appearing in English in 1810. The *Encyclopédie* (CUISINE) cites Mothe le Vayer's usage as equivalent to *cuisine*. For Pierre Larousse (1866) *gastrologie* is the 'science qui traite de l'art culinaire et de tout ce qui s'y rattache.' My interpretation takes the etymology at its word(s).

² *Gastronomie* first appeared in French in 1623 as a translation from the Greek of the (lost) poem of the Epicurean philosopher and culinary sage, Arcestratus (Athenaeus, 1:445-447, 2:237). Aside from a few scattered references to Arcestratus in the 17th and 18th centuries, *gastronomie* owes its modern vogue to Joseph de Berchoux's otherwise forgettable poem of 1801, 'La Gastronomie, ou l'Homme des champs à table.' But since a term appears in print well after it has been in circulation, Berchoux is undoubtedly more of a scribe than an inventor. What is important is the role that gastronomy and its derivatives came to play in very short order to designate a practice that was perceived as new.

³ The OED gives *gastrosophy* an 1824 citation from *Blackwood's Magazine* with no reference to Fourier. The etymology was likely the deciding factor in the promotion of alimentary concerns to a loftier status.

⁴ Fourier had nothing but contempt for gastronomes and particularly Brillat-Savarin: 'Savarin était comme tous les gastronomes, un simpliste ignorant la gastrosophie, [...] l'art d'allier les raffinements de consommation et préparation, avec les rivalités émulatrices et les méthodes hygiéniques; l'art de lier toutes les branches du système de production et de subsistances. [...] La gastronomie composée ou gastrosophie, est une science tout à fait neuve' (*La Fausse Industrie* 8: 283).

⁵ Intellectual distanciation through terms taken from learned or specialized vocabularies is a familiar intellectual ploy. Think of Émile Durkheim with *anomie*, Max Weber with *charisma*, Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu with *habitus*, Roland Barthes with *doxa*. Brillat-Savarin, for his part, justifies his status as a *néologue* by invoking the poverty of the French language (p. 34).

⁶ The other six are avarice, anger, envy, pride, lust, and sloth [avarice, colère, envie, orgueil, luxure, paresse

in French; avaritia, ira, invidia, superbia, gula, luxuria, accidia in the original Latin.]. The seven sins were codified in the 6th century by Pope Gregory as deadly or, 'capital' sins, since these dispositions (rather than acts) were at 'the head of,' and therefore responsible for, a multiplicity of sinful acts (anger, for example, leading to murder). This mechanism works brilliantly as a means of social control: acts could be determined with relative ease, but dispositions are something else again. Just where, with what act, does gluttony begin?

⁷ Cf Monselet, ch 10 on Grimod's critique that women are 'petites mangeuses,' and therefore unworthy gastronomes. Monselet himself writes to an old flame that she interests him now as a hostess, not as a mistress. 'Ah! Émilie, je vous ai bien aimée!— Mais j'aime bien maintenant les cuisses d'ortolans et le vin du château Palmer! ... Je préfère allumer un feu nouveau, — celui de votre office. Chère dame, c'est une autre façon d'aimer; si je ne peux plus être le directeur de votre coeur, je serai au moins le directeur de votre appétit...' (Monselet, ch 2, 14-15). Monselet reprinted this text from his *Cuisinière poétique* (1859).

⁸ Maupassant (mis)quotes the good abbé in a similar defense of gourmandise over love: 'La gourmandise a sur l'amour mille avantages. Mais le plus important, c'est qu'il importe d'être deux pour s'abandonner à celui-ci ; tandis qu'on pratique celle-là tout seul, bien que l'abbé Morellet ait dit : 'Pour manger une dinde truffée, il faut être deux : la dinde et soi.' ' ('Amoureux et primeurs')

⁹ One indicator of Brillat's dominant position is the 30 references to the *Physiologie du goût* among the 41 references to *gourmandise* in ARTFL texts from 1800-1850.

¹⁰ In a singular misreading of the *Physiologie du goût*, Fourier criticized Brillat on just this point, the alleged failure of gastronomes to look beyond what was on their plates. 'Nos gastronomes civilisés sont une troupe d'égoïstes s'occupant de bonne chère pour eux seuls.' (*La Fausse Industrie* 8: 284).

¹⁰ Added benefits for the gourmand include not only living longer but looking younger. '...un régime succulent, délicat et soigné, repousse long-temps et bien loin les apparences extérieures de la vieillesse. Il donne aux yeux plus de brillant, à la peau plus de fraîcheur, et aux muscles plus de soutien ; et comme il est certain, en physiologie, que c'est la dépression des muscles qui cause les rides, ces redoutables ennemis de la beauté, il est également vrai de dire que, toutes choses égales, ceux qui savent manger sont comparativement de dix ans plus jeunes que ceux à qui cette science est étrangère.' True to his prescriptions, Brillat lived to 71, dying from pneumonia caught at the memorial service for Louis XVI at St Denis. On the other hand, the *Physiologie du goût* is suffused with a sense of his impending death.

¹¹ As Allen Weiss notes (18-19), the insistence on conviviality, on the subordination of the individual to the whole, is what led Baudelaire to dismiss Brillat in the *Paradis artificiels* as an 'espèce de brioche insipide'. Brillat's conception of wine as an accompaniment to a meal is anathema to Baudelaire's cultivation of new worlds of sensation. Brillat remains steadfastly in this world.