

Culinary Man

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Academic Abstract

This dissertation offers an exploration of the field of normative subjectivity circulated within western fine dining traditions. I use the notion of “normative subjectivity” which derives from the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault’s emphasis on the use of disciplinary repetition to mold, circumscribe, and modulate the conduct of subjects informs my own argument that fine dining spaces feature a normative regime of subjectivity centered on the hegemonic governance of a figure which I call “Culinary Man.” This phrase follows from Sylvia Wynter’s account of “the overrepresentation of Man,” which describes the colonial field of subjectivity which revolves around a normatively white, male, and European figure of authority.

Drawing from these sources, this dissertation seeks to give a theoretical analysis of the governing relationship between the chef (who embodies Culinary Man) and the fine dining brigade (the organizational unit of labor within commercial kitchens). As I argue, Culinary Man deploys a heterogeneous set of disciplinary discourses and practices which have the effect of consolidating monopolies on epistemic authority and governance. Each position within the brigade’s hierarchy is subject to distinct, though related, disciplinary practices. Thus, several chapters seek to identify the specific practices pertinent to each brigade subject, while also illuminating how they fit together as a coherent hegemonic project. Additionally, a genealogy, in the style of Sylvia Wynter, is carried out to illuminate points of variance as well as continuity within the figure of Culinary Man. While the bulk of the dissertation seeks to carry out a discursive analysis of Culinary Man’s disciplinary regime, there are also moves toward alternative projects which do not replicate the brigade form. The concluding chapters seek to identify where extant modes of resistance or alternative forms of culinary organization may hold the potential to move beyond the hegemonic overrepresentation of Culinary Man.

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General Abstract

Within fine dining kitchens, work is generally organized by the hierarchical division of labor known as the “brigade.” As the name suggests, this formation is modeled on the military, and the chef sits at the top of the brigade’s hierarchy. This dissertation explores the relationship between the governing chef and the subordinate brigade of culinary laborers within western fine dining spaces. While the image of the domineering chef is somewhat ubiquitous in popular culture, this project seeks to understand how the authority of governing chefs is rooted in practices and discourses which encourage consent among the brigade, rather than merely compliance. As I argue, the field of fine dining labor is dominated by a particular set of practices, values, and habits which become solidified as norms through repetition. These norms uphold and legitimate the figure of the brilliant, masterful, and authoritative chef (called “Culinary Man”) at the expense of the brigade’s subordination. Additionally, there are racialized and gendered implications, as the archetype of Culinary Man is a white, male figure.

This dissertation offers an exploration of the collection of practices, norms, and discourses which “shape” members of the brigade and direct the ways in which they conduct themselves. Several of the chapters identify particular positions within the brigade’s hierarchy and analyze how distinct practices mold the conduct expected of culinary workers. Additionally, a genealogy of Culinary Man explores several different variations or “genres” of this figure. While much of the dissertation endeavors to identify and theorize Culinary Man’s governance over the brigade, the last two chapters feature some discussion of models which might potentially move beyond Culinary Man as a normative archetype.

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Introduction: Mapping Culinary Man

Cameron Yates's 2019 documentary film, *Chef Flynn*, explores the unusual culinary life of the highly precocious Flynn McGarry. At age twelve, McGarry started a "supper club" featuring \$160 per person tasting menus at his family's home in San Fernando, California. McGarry reports that his passion for fine dining cuisine was sparked by his discovery of Chef Thomas Keller's *The French Laundry Cookbook*.¹ Yates's film features several scenes with the young Flynn, fully uniformed in child-sized chef whites and toque, presenting colorful, elegant, and technically sophisticated haute cuisine dishes to smiling adults while delicately placing garnishes by tweezer. Eventually, viewers follow McGarry as a teenager while he travels to various elite restaurants for training visits as well as to conduct his own pop-up services. While the documentary does acknowledge the novel, sometimes humorous, and generally unusual qualities of Flynn's situation, it strives to take Flynn seriously and to sympathize with him as he struggles with experiences of dismissal and condescension motivated by his age.

The film's central narrative transposes McGarry's unorthodox entry into the fine dining world into a critical meditation on the industry's hierarchical and exclusionary norms. This exposition finds its apex toward the end of the film as McGarry delivers a speech at the second annual "Bitten Food Conference" in 2016. Flynn notes:

The traditional system of becoming a chef is, you kind of, put your head down for 10, 20 years, work your way up the ranks. Now, what you see with pop-ups as well as social media, and the internet and all this has really disrupted that. Why is it still only acceptable to become a chef one way? Look, the industry is mostly men who are in a kitchen together, who yell at each other, they tease each other. Which, yes, is part of it, but does it really have to be part of it? I think, as kind of the next generation, why would

¹ Carina Chocano, "The Chef at 15," *New York Times.com*, (March 28, 2014), [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com).

we hinder new chefs from coming into this, from being inspired? The industry is changing so much, but there are still parts of it that are set in its ways. Why does it have to stay that way?²

McGarry's address provides a useful illustration of the contemporary moment in which the culinary industry is undergoing a critical discussion about its longstanding norms, particularly as extant tendencies (some of which can be observed in *Flynn* as well) towards stasis co-exist alongside these emerging challenges. As McGarry's case illustrates, these competing discourses can be acutely observed on the terrain of the "chef" moniker and in the debates over who can (and cannot) legitimately gain access to the title. *Chef Flynn*'s treatment of this tension is neatly summarized by the film's provocative synopsis which states: "Ten-year-old Flynn transforms his living room into a supper club using his classmates as line cooks. With sudden fame, Flynn outgrows his bedroom kitchen, and sets out to challenge the hierarchy of the culinary world."³

This dissertation seeks to give a critical account of the restaurant's hierarchically ordered mode of organizing and distributing labor, and it also engages a critique of the ensconced authority, power, and status conferred upon the figure of the chef. Like McGarry and other contemporary voices, I seek to critically analyze the practices, discourses, and culture of the fine dining "brigade," with the intention of working toward a vision of food production under more egalitarian and liberatory horizons. However, my argument presents the problem(s) of fine dining hierarchy as a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the discursive operations, disciplinary

² Yates, Cameron, (director), "Chef Flynn," *Kino Lorber International*, 2018. Film length: 1hr, 23m. Scene referenced: 1:12m.

³ Ibid.

practices, and epistemological production of culinary subjectivity in normative terms which value whiteness, maleness, and certain notions of European cultural supremacy.

As I argue, these systems are reproduced by the cultivation of disciplinary habits and through the discursive production of a certain “commonsense,” which saturates the field of kitchen subjectivity. These deeply rooted structures are not easy to challenge (much less uproot), as *Chef Flynn*’s tagline might suggest. Still, the documentary, which provides a useful framing device for this introductory chapter’s elaborations, locates an important conjuncture in which themes of generational change, culture transformation, and workplace norms are, at least for now, up for discussion. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in critical conversations regarding the industry’s longstanding practices, norms, and values. Thus, the current moment seems to contain possibilities for transformation. However, there are also deeply entrenched forms of hegemonic power that threaten to absorb, redirect, or defeat them.

This oscillation between rupture and continuity indexes a major theme within the work of Caribbean theorist Sylvia Wynter, who, alongside French philosopher Michel Foucault, crucially inform this project’s central theoretical framework. In this introductory chapter, I will pursue an initial description of these hegemonic formations by offering a preliminary account of “Culinary Man,” a normative figure which, following Wynter, I take to be a critical framework for the purposes of exploring the hierarchies of the culinary world. In what follows, I offer a more detailed outlining of the problem of Culinary Man, and I supply an overview of the Wynterian-Foucauldian constellation of concepts and methodological approaches that inform the following chapters.

Culinary Man and the Brigade

The hierarchical form of labor and authority utilized within the kitchen is known as the “brigade system.” While typically explored through its connections to 19th century European industrial modes of production (which are based on optimizing efficiency through the specialization and distribution of tasks), the brigade should be studied more closely for its disciplinary function, its performative militaristic dimensions, and its normalizing effects achieved through repetition. By combining an emphasis on an efficient division of tasks with a mimetic performance of militarism, the brigade form is designed to serve as an ideal unit of organization for generating and disciplining modes of conduct which aim at a normalization of productivity and acceptance of hierarchical authority. These elements are further explored below, in addition to the explicitly racialized division of labor which often structures the brigade, particularly in its American context, all of which are key to disciplining and stratifying culinary subjectivities in the kitchen. It is also important to note that, while the brigade often serves as a model of influence for many types of kitchens, this dissertation focuses primarily on the haute cuisine operations of fine dining restaurants.

The brigade system is generally understood to have been developed in the late 1800s and is popularly credited to French chef Auguste Escoffier.⁴ Escoffier’s reorganization of kitchen production upturned the traditional craft style division of labor, which consisted of independent sections operating separately (and which stretched back to medieval era culinary practice that

⁴ Amy Trubek writes: “Escoffier was also a key player in the reorganization of the professional kitchen. The change in the way food was produced, essentially a breakdown of labor into a series of specific tasks (hence, the different stations with different responsibilities—saucier, rôtiisseur, pâtissier) allowed for a more expedient and intensive process.” Amy Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2008), 49.

dominated kitchen work until Escoffier's intervention).⁵ Escoffier replaced this system with the brigade form, which was understood to be more efficient, more modern, and better suited to the commercial and social atmosphere of the restaurant.⁶ Stephen Mennell has noted that Escoffier's reorganization of the kitchen hierarchy reflects more general shifts that took place within the broader context of an industrializing economy, and so he casts Escoffier as less of a "unique and isolated great man" of history and more as one whose greatness stemmed from his capacity to adapt to these changing social circumstances.⁷ While Mennell's sociological positioning of Escoffier's influence is useful in probing the relationship between nascent forms of culinary labor in the context of emergent industrial capitalism, it is important not to ignore Escoffier's own military service during the Franco-Prussian war prior to his famous involvement with hotel kitchens in the 1890s.⁸

The degree to which the metaphoric language of the brigade reflects a military hierarchy and signals a more serious performance of mimetic militarism is a significant point which is often underemphasized in discussions of culinary organization and production. For instance, the official account offered by the Culinary Institute of America matter-of-factly states: "The brigade system was instituted by Escoffier to streamline and simplify work in hotel kitchens. It served to eliminate chaos and duplication of effort that could result when workers did not have clear-cut

⁵ Stephen Mennell, *All Matters of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from Middle Ages to the Present*, (New York, NY: Blackwell, 1985), 158.

⁶ Escoffier writes: [regarding the previous style of cooking, service, and presentation, inappropriate for] "the light and frivolous atmosphere of the restaurant...It[the previous mode of organization] is eminently suited to State dinners...but it is a mere hindrance to the modern, rapid service. The complicated and sometimes heavy menus would be unwelcome to the hypercritical appetites so common nowadays, hence the need for radical change not only in the culinary preparations themselves, but in the arrangements of the menus, and the service." Auguste Escoffier, *A Guide to Modern Cookery*, Translated by William Heinemann, (London, UK: Reprint Publishing, 1907 [2015]), v-vi.

⁷ Ibid. 157-159

⁸ Escoffier's posthumously collected memoir *Memories of My Life* provides useful narration for this point.

responsibilities.”⁹ Moving beyond this simplified, technical explanation might allow us to catch a glimpse of the deeper implications involved in administering control and cultivating subjectivities predicated on the acceptance of hierarchy, all of which often exceeds the ostensibly progressive, modernizing, or rational intentions of improving and streamlining kitchen labor.

Beyond the goal of optimizing efficiency put forth by the brigade form, the brigade also imposes a command structure modeled on militaristic hierarchy which, apart from helping to promote docile, apolitical, and subordinate dispositions,¹⁰ seems also to act productively to cultivate a certain image of cooking and of the self among culinary workers. This theme of the brigade’s disciplinary form and “militarized affect” is explored in more depth throughout the dissertation, particularly in chapter 3.

The use of the brigade metaphor also captures the sense in which each culinary soldier is tasked with specific duties according to respective positions within the brigade’s hierarchy. Those on the lowest rungs perform the most menial, physically taxing, and repetitive work (such as washing dishes), and those at the top of the brigade perform the tasks which are credited with higher value and considered to require a superior skill set and a deeper base of knowledge. The first four chapters of this dissertation explore several key “rungs” in the brigade’s hierarchy, including the dishwasher (chapter 1), the prep cook (chapter 2), the line cook (chapter 3), and the chef (chapter 4). Each of these levels evince crucial kitchen subjectivities and subjects which, in order to be successful in a brigade context, must internalize (and apply) crucial disciplinary norms and must recognize the authority (and superior subjectivity) of Culinary Man.

⁹ The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), *The Professional Chef*, 9th edition, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 9

¹⁰ Adam Plitt, sous-chef of La Bernadin offers: “Also, we use the French Brigade system. It’s like the chef is God. The chef says, so you do” Eric Ripert, Christine Muhlke, *On the Line*, (New York, NY: Artisan, 2008), 38

Importantly, all of the haute cuisine kitchen's tasks, from chopping onions to garnishing plates, follow certain "best practice" guidelines derived from the brigade form, which notably tend to require very precise techniques, procedures, and specific movements in space. The insistence on these very fine, particular, and often difficult technical maneuvers functions both as a point of corrective discipline as well as a way of exercising/displaying mastery of expertise. Michel Foucault's work can be helpful here as it further identifies the application of hierarchical power and the generation of normative subjectivities in connection to the oversight of very particular activities carried out by bodies at work.

Foucault offers an instructive account of the formation of subjects through discipline, particularly with regard to producing what he terms "docile and useful bodies."¹¹ Foucault's claim asserts that the rise of novel modes of disciplining workers (and soldiers, prisoners, students, and individuals in other modern institutions) has had the effect of making them both more efficient and easier to manage and/or control. In enacting discipline, there is a heavy emphasis on the utility of focusing on small features of movement. These techniques, as Foucault describes, are based on "exercising upon it [the body] a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself—movements, gestures, attitudes, and rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body."¹² Foucault's insight here is useful in studying the intersections of subject formation and discipline within the kitchen, in part due to the militaristic modes of behavior and performance which the brigade is modeled upon.¹³ Furthermore, the organization of the workday for culinary laborers is heavily predicated on a totalizing and urgent

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prisons*, Translated by Alan Sheridan, (New York, NY: Random House, 1977), 25

¹² Ibid. 137

¹³ And for Foucault, the "ideal figure of the soldier" and the hierarchical formations of the military are important points of reference for his theorizations of docility. Ibid. 135

management of time geared toward more efficient, quicker, and more masterful production—even for those who do not work busy services, such as prep cooks, bakers, night porters, etc. — accompanied by an insistence on very particular techniques, methods, and procedures, which are considered most suitable for increasingly achieving speed and perfection.

Differently put, Foucault’s theory of discipline can help us to consider the techniques and modes of operation involved in commercial fine dining preparation, which typically emphasizes the pursuit of optimized movements and transforms them into norms through repetition and discursive reinforcement. The “micro-economy” of practices, techniques, and movements which constitutes the brigade’s normative mode of operation is explored in chapter 2, especially through a detailed analysis of the “mise en place” kitchen system. It is also important to note that these transformative subjectivity effects sought for by disciplinary practices are often carried into arenas of life *outside* of the kitchen. For example, food writer Michael Ruhlman contributes an interesting dimension to the study of culinary subjectivity as he offers an experiential report of the institutionalized educational processes which he underwent at the Culinary Institute of America. As Ruhlman documents his own culinary education, he provides an important narration of the changes which he notices in himself:

Efficiency: no wasted movement. This idea, this will, bore not only on one’s actions in the kitchen; it extended to one’s life outside that kitchen. It changed how I packed for the trip—I tried to diminish the number of times I moved from closet to bureau to suitcase...I didn’t go from bedroom to living room, stop before I got there, and go back to the bedroom because I *forgot* something, and if I did, it made me mad.¹⁴

Ruhlman’s description gestures toward the capacity of an economy of movement within the workplace to affect changes in disposition and activities which go on outside of it. This gives

¹⁴ Michael Ruhlmann, *The Making of a Chef*. (New York, NY: St Martin’s Griffin, 1977), 103.

us a clearer sense in which culinary subjectivity is *productive* rather than merely repressive, and it also illustrates the broader consequences of adopting and repetitively performing rigidly outlined best practices. The style of discipline which helps to generate culinary subjectivity relies on the internalization of the norms which it proliferates. Ruhlman's adoption of the expectation to constantly economize bodily movements again translates beyond the kitchen into distinctly non-culinary duties, as the above passage illustrates. This speaks to the depth of the socialization and internalized disciplinization which is imparted onto brigade members at all times, even if not always evenly.

The brigade's normative ethos, then, is a peculiar combination of a productivist work ethic and a militaristic performance of discipline structured around a tiered hierarchy of tasks and command positions, often supervised by or, better yet, expected from the hegemonic presence of the chef (i.e., Culinary Man). These distributions of authority, labor, and discipline are so routinely performed that they become normative fixtures which escape critical questioning—not to mention that, as Chef Marcus Samuelsson reports, fine dining demands that brigade members “do the work and keep your mouth shut”¹⁵—through the everyday character which they acquire by way of repetition. As indicated above, the types of subjectivities generated by the brigade's hierarchy, pace, and division of labor tend to result in apolitical and well-disciplined dispositions.

The Racialized Brigade

The brigade's racialized character plays an important role in producing disciplinary subjectivity through stratifying kitchen workers, marginalizing practices outside of the Euro-

¹⁵ Marcus Samuelsson, *Yes, Chef: A Memoir*. (New York, NY: Random House, 2013), 95.

American tradition, and reifying Culinary Man as a normative celebration of white male mastery, knowledge, and power.

Historically, fine dining (where culinary labor receives relatively higher compensation) has tended to largely exclude workers of color much more so than other kitchen settings, although one finds a significant exception to this pattern within the lower rungs of the brigade.¹⁶

Saru Jayaraman summarizes the racialized distribution of labor within restaurants well:

After a few years of doing outreach, another pattern became clear to me: servers and bartenders in urban areas, and particularly in fine dining restaurants, were mostly white; the bussers, runners, and exhausted sweaty workers in the back of the house were usually a different color...Even when the front of house was a little more diverse, the workers in the back were almost always darker than the workers in the front. The chefs and sous chefs were often white, but you'd certainly never find a white dishwasher in New York City, Chicago, or Los Angeles. The people doing physical labor—cleaning and carrying dishes and making everything in the kitchen run smoothly—were mostly nonwhite workers.¹⁷

Jayaraman's note on the presence of white male bodies as chefs and sous chefs, but not as dishwashers, importantly highlights the governing role of Culinary Man as well as the brigade's racialized division of labor whereby "lower skilled" (and lower waged) work is typically associated with colored bodies. Even if fine dining spaces do not draw the color line neatly between the front and back of the house as is more common in other settings,¹⁸ a clearly racialized division of labor takes shape within the brigade form. The arrangement of white, male authority overseeing bodies of color who are performing tasks which are coded as "lower skilled" restages (in the United States, in particular) a racial logic of work which is painfully

¹⁶ For a clear depiction of the racialized labor demographics within U.S. restaurants, see the report "Racial and Gender Occupational Segregation in the Restaurant Industry" Food Labor Research Center, (Berkeley, CA, 2015).

¹⁷ Saru Jayaraman, *Behind the Kitchen Door*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 105

¹⁸ For a deeper exploration of this kind of racialized division of labor see Eli Reville Yano Wilson, *Front of the House Back of the House: Race and Inequality in the Lives of Restaurant Workers*, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2021).

resonant with the historically white supremacist institutions of slavery and other distributive schemas of labor within the United States.¹⁹ Incorporating these insights into the study of the brigade helps to identify an additional layer of stratification carried out within kitchen hierarchies, and one which potentially provides an extra barrier against modes of solidarity in the workplace.²⁰ As Jacques Pepin helpfully clarifies, this labor dynamic springs in part from an American alteration of the more traditional French brigade system.²¹ Pepin writes:

M. Diat's style of management was more representative of the traditional French *brigade de cuisine* and it was diametrically opposite to what often happens now in the United States, where the emphasis is on specialization. Today the idea is to take someone, often an immigrant from Latin America, and train him or her to do one specific task and that's it.²²

Whereas Pepin notes that the American brigade's emphasis on specialization departs from the more holistic education of the French system,²³ one can also identify an explicitly racial dimension to the brigade's organization of labor. As Pepin's comment highlights, the problem of a racialized division of labor within American kitchens takes on a particular relevance with regard to workers of color who originate from Central and South America, although this is by no means the only form of culinary racism.

¹⁹ Naa Oyo A. Kwate identifies a similar point of resonance between the signifying, discursive, and representational work of restaurants and food advertising which draws on images of labor steeped in racial stereotypes: "Certainly, nostalgia for a past in which Black people were relegated to servitude has a traction in many public areas...and racial caricatures of Black people in subservient positions grace the packaging of manifold products. Racist restaurants, like these products, may evoke nostalgia for slavery itself, and the racial dictatorship it comprised." Naa Oyo A. Kwate, *Burgers in Blackface: Anti-Black Restaurants Then and Now*. (Minneapolis, MN:University of Minnesota Press, 2019),79.

²⁰ For explorations of how racial divisions may impede the possibilities for social solidarity within labor settings, see W.E.B. Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1935) and David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2007).

²¹ Though it is important not to overlook extant elements of brigade racism in the traditional French line, such as the kitchen slang use of the term "négres" to denote brigade "underlings." Samuelsson, *Yes Chef*, 129

²² Jacques Pepin, *The Apprentice: My Life in the Kitchen*. (New York, NY: Rux Martin, 2007), 90

²³ In which cooks rotate as apprentices (or commis) through various positions while learning techniques, methods, and knowledge relevant to each.

The problem of an explicitly racialized schema of stratification within the culinary brigade sadly reflects a demographic reality which is not unique to the kitchen or to the restaurant industry. But it does potentially help significantly with the disciplinary production of normative subjectivities in kitchen settings. In this regard, Culinary Man can ward off potential sources of deviation or challenge by drawing from workers whose social vulnerabilities related to class power, racial coding, and immigration status make them less likely to mobilize politically.²⁴ There is, however, an additional point of interest with regard to the representational work which the racialized division of labor does for the promotion of Culinary Man as a normative subject, something which Anthony Bourdain helps to clarify below.

Throughout his public and literary career, Bourdain consistently spoke to the intersections of immigration policy, exploitation, and racism with regard to this long running “open secret” of the restaurant world’s dependence on labor provided by non-white immigrants.²⁵ Bourdain adeptly chronicled the condition of the invisibilized labor of racialized minorities²⁶ that helps to support the valorization of Culinary Man as a normative center.

Bourdain wrote:

Whose sweat and toil allows annoyingly well-known white-boy chefs like me to go around the country flogging books, appearing on TV, writing obnoxious magazine articles, and baiting their peers?...There is no deception more hypocritical, more nauseating, more willfully self-deluding than the industry-approved image of ‘the chef.’ We all know who is doing the heavy lifting, who’s making that nice risotto with white

²⁴ On this point, Eli Reville Yano Wilson notes: “For back of the house restaurant jobs, employers see strategic advantages to hiring a “brown collar” and foreign-born workforce. The precarious legal status of many Latino immigrants, coupled with their disadvantaged race and class backgrounds, renders these workers all but powerless to resist exploitative labor conditions.” Wilson, *Front of the House Back of the House*, 10.

²⁵ For an account of this see Remezcla Staff, “Remembering How Anthony Bourdain Advocated for Latinos” (Remezcla.com, 2018).

²⁶ Bourdain’s diagnosis of restaurant industry racism is an expansive one which notably includes anti-Blackness in addition to the well-known exploitation of latinx labor: “It’s racism, pure and simple. I’d go on, more than happy to open the *next* can of worms—the How come I don’t see many African Americans in good restaurant kitchens? Question—but I’ll leave that to another, more reasoned advocate... Anthony, Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits* (New York, NY: Bloomsburg, 2006), 45-46.

truffles and porcini mushrooms, the pan-seared Hamachi with *sauce vierge*...our perennially unrecognized coworkers from Mexico, Ecuador, and points south. The ones you *don't* see hurling around catchphrases on the TV Food Network or grinning witlessly at the camera after the latest freebie for Beard House.²⁷

As Bourdain's statement discloses, the unrecognized and racialized labor of the stratified members of the kitchen acts as a material and representational basis for the glorification of the white chef. Disavowing (inter)dependence by erasing the labor of lower rung workers in this way provides an important function for the production of Culinary Man's own subjectivity—whose proper place as governing chef is often articulated in terms of finer mastery of technique, superior knowledge, and enhanced leadership/managerial skills—as well as the other kitchen subjectivities which are subordinated to Culinary Man. Further, there is a long running dimension of culinary articulation within the Euro-French tradition which takes on an educating, modernizing, or civilizing mission, particularly as it historically relates to the distinctly gendered methods by which cooking became a professionalized activity associated with the public sphere.²⁸

An examination of both the gendered emergence of the male chef as a pedagogical figure of expertise alongside the Eurocentric elaboration of culinary supremacy and the racialized structure of labor helps to underscore the white, male normative dimensions which organize Culinary Man's subjectivity. The histories of these identity preferences within western culinary spaces can be linked to contemporary labor concerns over disparities in wages and recognition, discrimination, harassment, and the disproportional distribution of menial tasks. An emphasis on

²⁷ Ibid. 42

²⁸ Amy Trubek offers a more detailed rendering of this as part of her account of the emergence of recipe and cooking manuals as a novel genre of culinary literature. Trubek examines such texts as *La Cuisine Pratique* and the types of imagery, tone, and description involved in instruction in "proper" modes of cooking delivered by male professional chefs for an intended audience of female housewives and domestic servants. Trubek, *Haute Cuisine*, 27-30.

the normatively male quality which informs Wynter's Man can also shed light on restaurant culture's notorious set of misogynistic and heteronormative norms, aptly summarized by Bourdain as he uncomfortably notes: "Um...you know I came out of a brutal, oppressive business that was historically unfriendly to women."²⁹

In sum, the brigade form functions to demobilize kitchen workers through its militaristic hierarchical performance, disciplined modes of normative conduct, and the gendered and racial logics by which it further stratifies and depoliticizes the kitchen. The next section engages with the theoretical work of Sylvia Wynter, whose conception of Man's overrepresentation serves as a central framework for this project's investigation of Culinary Man.

Wynterian Man

Sylvia Wynter's transdisciplinary work spans numerous areas of scholarly study, including literary criticism, dramaturgy, postcolonial theory, philosophy, and more. My engagement with Wynter draws primarily from her theoretical work which offers a critique of western hegemony. Wynter's critique of western hegemony primarily takes place through a theoretical challenge to the production of a hegemonic subjectivity-type, which she names "Man's overrepresentation." Wynter's critique crucially highlights the epistemic qua discursive dimensions of this overrepresentation as her work details the manner in which normative subjectivity is solidified in practice through its dissemination in discourse. Below, I introduce some key elements of Wynter's work which inform the theoretical underpinnings and

²⁹ Anthony Bourdain, "Telling Stories Through Food on Parts Unknown: Interview with Trevor Noah, The Daily Show with Trevor Noah." *Anthony Bourdain: The Last Interview and Other Conversations* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2018), 96.

methodological approach to mapping out Culinary Man's brigade hegemony that I undertake in this study.

Wynter's primary method to describe Man is a form of genealogy which traces a historical narration of European discourses and the normative subject (Man) which these discourses generate. While forms of "mutation" of this normative subject occur along the way, Wynter's main point wishes to demonstrate that Man, as a normative figure, remains intact through history, albeit taking on various "updated" forms along the way. Key moments in Wynter's work also seek to give a genealogical account of the various points of change throughout Man's historical trajectory.

Katherine McKittrick has described Wynter's approach to genealogy as follows:

"Spanning roughly 1492 to the present, Wynter's analyses of the inventions of Man/human and his human Others are genealogies which trace how racial-sexual-economic categories get made, remade, and disrupted through the production of knowledge and conceptions of time-space."³⁰

As McKittrick outlines in the above quotation, Wynter's genealogy is one which places crucial emphasis on the entangled nexus of racism, patriarchal domination, and bourgeois hegemony within Man's overrepresentation. This intersection of comingling subjectivities, which Wynter describes as "genre," is a useful mode of analysis for tracing the brigade's style of hierarchical domination within the fine dining kitchen.³¹ Wynter's account tracks down the grounding of Man's overrepresentation in the discursive production of normative categories, and, for Wynter,

³⁰ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 123

³¹ See descriptions of racism and (hetero)sexism in American kitchens as offered by culinary workers and writers; see Onwuachi, Kwame (2019), Samuelsson, Marcus (2020), Endolyn, Osayi (2019), Vantrece, Deborah (2020). More generally, it can be understood that issues of race, class, gender and so on inform the wider social and political context of American society.

these categories are best thought of as *genres* of being. Elaborating further about this conceptual move, which also aims at warding off analytical reductionism, Wynter notes:

I am trying to insist that “race” is really a code-word for “genre.” Our issue is not the issue of “race.” Our issue is the issue of the genre of “Man.” It is this issue of the “genre” of “Man” that causes all the “–isms...Now when I speak at a feminist gathering and I come up with “genre” and say “gender” is a function of “genre,” they don’t want to hear that.³²

Genealogy for Wynter, then, is most centrally about narrating how one genre (European, white, bourgeois man) has historically come to represent itself discursively as the only legitimate form of humanity. Crucially for Wynter, genealogy is about revealing the exclusionary function that Man’s ascendancy holds, and thus Wynter’s methodology also seeks to foreground discourses, practices, and modes of being which have been marginalized, silenced, or rendered invisible under Man’s historical narrations. Put differently, in addition to critically telling the story of Man, Wynter’s account seeks explicitly to clarify history in a way which makes space for those excluded by Man.

In doing so, Wynter offers a historical tracing of the epistemological development of Man by organizing the argument around two distinct, though overlapping, points of emergence, which she calls Man1 and Man2.³³ Wynter’s project denotes that, as novel epistemic ruptures develop and produce new mutations to Man, these developments do not cleanly replace one another, but rather are layered on top of one another in the form of a palimpsest.

³² Sylvia Wynter, “Interview with Greg Thomas,” *PROUDFLESH: A New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness*. Issue 4 (2006).

³³ See Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation- An Argument,” *The New Centennial Review*. Vol 3 No. 3(2003), Michigan State University Press.

Wynter's Man1 emerges with the Renaissance era reformulation of Man from a theocentrically described subject of the church into a political subject who demonstrates his rationality through adherence to the laws and norms set by the state.³⁴ Wynter's account of this changing subjectivity is one in which epistemic³⁵ rupture occurs as a process of graduated change, rather than proceeding by way of a sudden discontinuous break.³⁶ For instance, Wynter describes the "first secularizing, if still hybridly religio-secular terms"³⁷ by which Man1 becomes (re)described as a rational, political subject of the state. In other words, the development of a secular, rationalized worldview and the corresponding description of the normative human subject occurred as a process rather than as a singular event.

For Wynter, the elaboration of Man in terms of rational ability also produced a negative opposite image, that of his "irrational Other."³⁸ This model of palimpsestic continuity is also potentially quite useful with regard to theorizing Culinary Man in that it leads one to take seriously the possibility of lingering effects from previous eras of practice and it also underscores relationality between subjectivities. For instance, Chapter 4 explores the overlapping and

³⁴ Ibid.277

³⁵ Wynter's usage of "episteme" is largely similar to Foucault's formulation of the underlying, though generally unarticulated, ordering structures which determine what is considered knowledge in a given time/context. Wynter also sees epistemes as key in the production of subjectivities, though her formulation differs importantly from Foucault's in at least two important ways. For one, Wynter sees the emergence of new epistemes in a more progressive schema of "breakthrough" or "advance" whereas Foucault does not impute such a sensibility. Further, Wynter notes: "Where Foucault brings up the idea that each *episteme* institutes a new and discontinuous "politics" or regime of truth and leaves it at that, from my different terrain, I see each such politics of truth as both the effect and the proximate function of a more fundamental politics, one that institutes a regime of being... The episteme, therefore, functions to enact a specific genre of being human." Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism...",199

³⁶ Padgett Henry gives a thorough account of Wynter's theory of epistemic change in his *Caliban's Reason*. Henry: "The key to this model of epistemic change is the magnitude of the systemic errors that are compounded in representing what is outside of the *episteme's* conceptual schema. These errors are greatest with objects which occupy the point that is most antithetical, most radically other, to the core of the schema. ...Gross misrepresentation makes an elaborated discourse and its founding *episteme* vulnerable to the contrary signals that continue to emerge from the misrepresented object, person, or event. The greater the misrepresentation, the greater the vulnerability of the *episteme*." Padgett, Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*,(London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 129

³⁷ Wynter, "Unsettling...", 281

³⁸ Ibid. 300

diverging sets of practices, dispositions, and discourses between two different models of the chef which, following Wynter, I refer to as “Culinary Man1” and “Culinary Man2.” Additionally, Chapter 5 takes up the more contemporary figure of a subject that I call “Culinary Man3” in an attempt to show how alterations to key practices and contexts deployed by Culinary Man might still exist within a broader field of continuity shared with the previous genres of Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2.

Furthermore, Wynter’s highlighting of a western European philosophical tradition largely predicated on oppositional formulations of difference, exclusionary normativity, and gradations of deviance separating binary opposites presents a useful model for thinking through disciplinary and discursive formations of subjectivity within the kitchen. Namely, Wynter’s approach allows one to recognize that not all deviance is considered equally transgressive of the norm. Put differently, “deviant” bodies and subjectivities are not evenly stratified, disciplined, or dominated. Thus, it is useful to examine the various brigade positions independently in order to identify the particular set of practices, contexts, and subjectivities generated for each as well as the way in which the particular positions come together as part of the production of the brigade’s field of subjectivity.

In addition to pointing to important shifts with regard to the institutional site of dominant disciplinary power (from church to state), Wynter’s account of Man1’s redescription of the normative image of the human ushered in broader ontological³⁹ and geographical⁴⁰ consequences

³⁹ These include a novel description of the Christian God as “a Caring father who had created the universe specifically for Man’s sake.” This premise implies a world with considerably wider epistemological possibilities (for humans) than previously dominant notion of a distant, omnipotent force. This medieval era of thought both made humans into contingent creation and rigidly separated the realms of heaven/earth as different in kind in such way that precluded access to knowledge of the rational, nonarbitrary rules by which the earth operates. Redescribing the earth as “for humans” also suggests that it must be knowable for humans. *Ibid.* 278

⁴⁰ Prior to Man1, Wynter discusses European knowledge systems which believed the geographic boundaries of Europe to be the extent of the habitable world. Wynter notes the incommensurability of the “non-navigable Atlantic

for the western episteme in that the colonial voyages of Columbus (and others) would further substantiate the newly established claim of earth's substance as homogenous (and therefore, accessible) and further would contribute to the waning legitimacy of the medieval episteme's theocentric hegemony. Here, a key connection exists for Wynter between the descriptive processes by which a given epoch's worldview sets the criterion, borders, and discourses for what counts as truth/knowledge and the ways in which events transpire which disrupt and deflate previously central knowledge claims, such as in the above example of colonial ventures rendering previously held geographic knowledge (generated by theological modes of knowing) no longer viable.

What is instructive here is that each epoch's mode of knowledge generates a "descriptive statement" of the normative human, although Wynter's framing avoids casting subjectivity production in purely cognitive terms through its continued emphasis on the impact of material world events (and for Wynter's scope and narration, of colonial events, in particular) and their capacity to alter processes of knowledge production. Events in the world then generate new descriptive statements that update the terms of normative subjectivity (even though Man historically remains as/at the center), often as a response to challenges against them. For Wynter, the colonial encounters presented a challenge to the European worldview—as McKittrick describes, "Humanness was thrown into crisis by the seeable, ungodly, indigenous peoples and their lands"⁴¹ —which was alleviated somewhat by generating new descriptive statements that excluded indigenous people from the category of human and naturalized their social position as one of irrationality, sub personhood, and servitude.⁴² Chapter 4 too considers moments of

Ocean (since both of these areas, Black Africa and the Americas, had been held to be uninhabitable)" and the implication that land outside of Europe could not support human life. Ibid.275

⁴¹ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 125

⁴² Padgett, *Caliban's Reason*, 132

challenge, crisis, and redescription which have given rise to (or are currently provoking) a new iteration of Culinary Man as the humanitarian chef, or “Culinary Man3.”

Wynter’s dialectical framing of coloniality and subjectivity generating forms of knowledge production in the European worldview is important in its clarification that the hegemonic image of Man as “The Human” (which licenses a hierarchical social order) is illegible without also articulating a constellation of less human and non-human others. In other words, part of “who” Man is derives from his articulated position of domination, superiority, and governance over the “others” who emerged through the colonial encounter. Relatedly, Culinary Man’s overrepresentation is predicated on the existence of a stratified brigade. It is through this mode of articulation that, for Wynter, the concept of race (which was developed within the context of novel forms of scientific discourse—i.e., biological and evolutionary models) performs a crucial task in continually upholding an unequal social order, even as points of epistemic rupture force the modes of describing Man’s superiority to shift.⁴³

On this point, Wynter’s narration of the shift from Man1 to Man2 follows a movement in descriptive emphasis from irrationality as the primary grounds of normative exclusion to bodily difference and race as exclusionary and othering modalities.⁴⁴ Of equal importance is the fact that Man2, now most dominantly conceived of as a secular, biological being, was elaborated as “homo economicus,” a subject whose best conduct is designed to optimize economic activity.⁴⁵ The discursive elaboration of Man2 as economic man imparts an important emphasis on

⁴³ Following Wynter’s framework as well as certain strands of contemporary culinary discourse, race and gender appear as central categories of analysis within this dissertation. However, this emphasis should not imply that other form of social normativity or stratification are not significant or do not have import with regard to the production of Culinary Man. For Wynter, the total production of Man as a normative subjectivity involves the interplay of all of the forms of stratification which assemble as an overrepresented “genre” of the human, as explored further above.

⁴⁴ Wynter, “Unsettling...”, 316

⁴⁵ Ibid. 314

“mastering scarcity”⁴⁶ as the mode of activity which best accomplishes optimization. This is discursively significant as it denotes a course of self-interested, rational pursuit of economization and fiscal accumulation, which maps a novel economic dimension onto Man’s normative race (white) and gender (male) characteristics.

Within this subjectivity formation predicated on a normatively white, male, and bourgeois human, the sense of mastery produced by Man’s stated superior attributes (which, again, in Wynter’s account, shift throughout different epochal knowledge formations from divine character to rationality to economic acumen, etc.) provides an important model for thinking through culinary subjectivities. In particular, a certain “culinary Cartesianism” exists which hierarchically separates the Chef/Mind (articulated as a master of the technical, aesthetic, and managerial aspects of fine dining work) from the brigade/body. This dynamic, explored further in chapter 3, mirrors Man’s relational description of himself as proper hegemon through exclusion of his subordinated others from access to rationality, mastery, and, subsequently, full personhood.

In sum, Wynter’s genealogical account is a key methodological influence on my project’s efforts to trace a theoretical account of Culinary Man who, like Wynter’s Man, enjoys an “overrepresented” hegemony within the field of fine dining. While Wynter provides an overarching framework for the conception of Culinary Man, Foucault’s work, as suggested above, adds an emphasis on the particular practices, discourses, and forms of discipline which work to mold normative forms of subjectivity. The next section elaborates this overall complementary relationship between Wynterian and Foucauldian modes of analysis which most centrally inform this dissertation’s analytical framework.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 321

Foucault and Wynter

Wynter and Foucault both place great emphasis on tracing the ways in which subjects are formed, particularly through discourses and the guiding epistemic structures which organize them. For both thinkers, the focus on subjectivity is important, at least in part because it enables a mode of analysis which can move beyond the sometimes limited realm of ideological inquiry. Foucault's methodological orientation tends towards specific, localized, and bodily sites of entanglement between power and knowledge, which the framework of ideology often does not capture or make legible.⁴⁷ Wynter similarly points to the limits of ideology in expressing important dynamics of domination, which in her case often involves colonial subjugation. She notes: "And I don't think it was just ideology. Rather, it was the conception of being a British subject... This was simply how the English saw themselves. And this is how they would make their native-colonial subjects see themselves—derivatively."⁴⁸ This statement is useful for contextualizing Culinary Man's presentation of haute cuisine, which is typically positioned discursively as the highest and most influential form of cooking, with all other culinary modes rendered as derivations of it (and usually as failed, inadequate, or incomplete versions).

Wynter importantly identifies a dimension of power beyond the level of ideology. She also provides a crucial clue with regard to the role of images, particularly self-images, in constituting subjectivities. It is also clear that, while Foucault and Wynter trace subjectivities, they do not seem to posit them ontologically as essential, static/natural, or grounded in an

⁴⁷ Foucault writes: "I'm not one of those who try to elicit the effects of power at the level of ideology. Indeed, I wonder whether, before one poses the question of ideology, it wouldn't be more materialist to study first the question of the body and the effects of power on it." Michel Foucault, "Body/Power," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1975), 58.

⁴⁸ Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism...", 131

absolute ‘Truth.’⁴⁹ Instead, they see subjectivities as ongoing formations which are produced by discourses and epistemic formations that shape discourses. For Wynter, the role of “descriptive statements” is key in transmitting governing codes for allowable (normative) subjectivity as set by a given (historically contingent) epistemic arrangement of authority.

To further elaborate this point of departure and discuss her epistemology-focused politics as it relates to global capitalism (as well as to Foucault’s work), Wynter is best quoted at length:

For what I’m going to suggest is that in the world in which we live today, it is not primarily the mode of production—capitalism—that controls us, although it controls us at the overtly empirical level through the institution of the free market system... But you see, for these to function, the processes of their functioning must be *discursively* instituted, regulated, *and* at the same time, normalized, legitimated. So what I am going to suggest is that what institutes, regulates, normalizes, and legitimates, what controls us, is instead the *economic* conception of the human—*Man*—that is produced by disciplinary discourses... What I’m saying is that it is the bioeconomic conception of the human that we inscript and institute by means of our present disciplines and their epistemic order, as Foucault shows so incisively, that determined the hegemony of the *economic* system over the social and political systems—even more, that mandates the functioning of the capitalist mode of production as the everyday expression of that hegemony.⁵⁰

Much of what Wynter expresses here is resonant with the Foucauldian project(s) in that normalization, discourse, and disciplinary forms function to generate and regulate subjectivity. Although normalization, discourse, and discipline do operate through material/economic institutions, they cannot be reduced to them either. An important Foucauldian insight, which

⁴⁹ Wynter frequently uses the term “truth-for” or “adaptive truth” to point to the role of discourses in producing knowledge claims, legitimations, and justifications rather than actual/absolute Truth. For instance: “But the way an order must know itself is in the adaptive terms that it needs to secure its own reproduction” “Unsettling...”: 169. Foucault notes: “Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in circular relation with the systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces, and which extend it. A ‘regime’ of truth.” Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 133

⁵⁰ Ibid. 160

seems to be implicit in Wynter's framework as well, emphasizes the point that, through these processes, power should be characterized as productive and not merely as repressive.⁵¹

Beyond giving an account of the ways in which Man has emerged, mutated, and continuously overrepresented itself, Wynter's approach to history as genealogy seeks to provincialize Man so that the knowledges, struggles, and experiences of those who are marginalized and/or suppressed by Man might become legible. In this way, Wynter's project can be described as a "counter humanism,"⁵² which corresponds to and speaks from Wynter's assertion that, "while it is this history in whose now purely secular terms we are all led to imagine ourselves as Man,...there has been no history of the human."⁵³ Wynter's genealogy, then, is a mode of critical analysis which seeks to reveal Man as something narratively constructed and institutionally inscribed through historical tracings of discursive production in order to make space for a more inclusive vision of the human. This humanistic prescription likely constitutes a point of divergence with Foucault, but prior to exploring this point, it is helpful to review a few notes on Foucault's own genre of genealogical analysis.

Foucault's approach to genealogy grows out of his earlier archaeological method of investigating epistemes, but it also seeks to provide a more causal, rather than merely descriptive, account of change.⁵⁴ Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* demonstrates this desire to

⁵¹ "What make power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression." Ibid. 119

⁵² Katherine McKittrick writes of Wynter: "Because her ongoing work still strives...to fully realize that emancipatory legacy by putting forward an alternative, *yet no less* secular, version of humanness imagined outside liberal monohumanism, her overall project can be identified as that of a *counter humanism*—one now ecumenically 'made to the measure of the world'" McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe...", 11

⁵³ Scott, "The Re-Enchantment," 198

⁵⁴ Foucault writes in the forward to the English version of *The Order of Things*: "In this work, then, I left the problem of causes to one side; I chose instead to confine myself to describing the transformations themselves, thinking that this would be an indispensable step, if, one day, a theory of scientific change and epistemological

give a more substantial account of change and, through this work, Foucault develops genealogy as the use of historical tracing to pursue explanations of present practices and institutions by way of attending to specific techniques,⁵⁵ discourses, and developments in practice. Again, this Foucauldian emphasis on particularity informs the first several chapters of this dissertation, which explore specific levels of the brigade's hierarchy. Foucault's emphasis on specificity influences his approach to the question of subjectivity, which he describes in articulating the wish to:

arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc. without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the fields of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.⁵⁶

Foucault eschews broad, vague, and presumptive conclusions grounded in general assumptions of progress (such as those found in Hegelian teleology, for example) in favor of an analytical emphasis on relations of power.⁵⁷ Summarized differently, Foucault describes the role of the genealogical approach in his analysis as follows:

What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claim of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchize, and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.⁵⁸

causality was to be constructed." Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, [1970] 1994), xiii.

⁵⁵ Foucault notes: "Analyze punitive methods not simply as consequences of legislations or as indicators of social structures, but as techniques possessing their own specificity in the more general field of other ways of exercising power." Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 23.

⁵⁶ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 117

⁵⁷ "The history which bears and determines us has the form of war rather than that of language: relations of power, not relations of meaning... 'Dialectic' is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to a Hegelian skeleton..." Ibid. 114-115

⁵⁸ Ibid. 83

What Foucault calls a “painstaking rediscovery of struggles” of “subjugated knowledges”—knowledges and practices which have been “disqualified” by hegemonic epistemic formations—further stresses the importance of particular historical details while highlighting an important critical dimension of genealogy.⁵⁹ All these elements of analysis are largely points of commonality between Wynter and Foucault since both thinkers wish to use genealogy in order to critically examine present circumstances by accounting for the production of subjects, discourses, and material arrangements of power through key historical moments. But there are some additional points where it seems a bit clearer that Wynter’s approach departs from Foucault’s in a few important ways.

As explored in a more detail fashion below, Wynter’s methodology has an important interest in reading history with a certain sense of continuity, even as her account highlights Man’s evolution by attending to moments of rupture. Continuity also plays an important role for Wynter in the long history of anti-Blackness and in the prominent role which alterity (especially racial difference) has played throughout western epistemological history.⁶⁰ Wynter parts ways with what may be considered to be Foucault’s discontinuous approach as she intimates that too great an emphasis on discontinuity with regard to anti-racist and decolonial sensibilities might risk reproducing the fallacious notion of racism as “a thing of the past” and, furthermore, might obscure important connections between otherwise distinct historical periods.

There is also seemingly a metaphysical claim of immanence at work in key moments of Wynter’s theoretical framing of continuity which one probably does not find in Foucault’s work.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ This sense of immanence of continuity with regard to reading practices of western racism remains important. Further explorations of this theme are carried out by Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake* and expressed succinctly by Sharpe’s description of “that past not yet past, in the present.” Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016),13

This is visible, for example, in her assertion that “there can be no utopian saltationism, whether in politics or in epistemologies, that discontinuities can erupt only out of seedbeds that have been empirically pre-prepared for them.”⁶¹ Wynter’s approach to continuity, then, is one which seeks to examine connective strands that stretch across points of discontinuous rupture while giving a causal account of those points of rupture. For Foucault’s project, the sense of continuity with which he often critically engages takes on a different tone (and probably has politically different stakes) as it seems to refer more to sweeping accounts which flatten important particulars into overly general or universal accounts. As Foucault puts it: “It occurred to me that these changes should be examined more closely, without being reduced, in the name of continuity, in either abruptness or scope.”⁶² Foucault’s preference for localized analyses and his aversion to overarching universal (or even general) explanations respond well to this concern with homogenizing continuity, even though he insists on resisting characterizations of his work as essentially or primarily concerned with discontinuity.⁶³

In this regard, both Wynter’s and Foucault’s respective frameworks chart some relation between continuity and discontinuity. Yet they differ perhaps with regard to the proportionality of emphasis placed on each of these two notions (with Wynter’s position as one which seems to lean more toward continuity), but also with regard to analytical context and motivation, and in relation to the political ramifications which follow from the methodological choices made by each scholar. For the purpose of this dissertation though, each approach provides useful tools

⁶¹ Scott, “The Re-Enchantment,” 159.

⁶² Foucault, *Order of Things*, xii.

⁶³ “This business about discontinuity has always bewildered me...My problem was not at all to say, ‘Voilà’ long live discontinuity, we are in the discontinuous and a good thing too’, but to pose the question, ‘How is it that in certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited?’” Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 112.

with regard to mapping out Culinary Man and his field of subjectivity and hegemony. For instance, several of the following chapters trace the particular practices and points of departure which distinguish the various brigade positions from one another. Yet, these specific dimensions are also read in relation to a sense of continuity produced by Culinary Man's overall domination.

Race and Positionality

Another somewhat related point of difference between Wynter and Foucault is about the relationship of each theorist to thinking racial difference. This dimension of Wynter's framework is particularly important for my proposed study of contemporary western (and mostly American) haute cuisine culinary practices given the historically situated legacy of racism within restaurant settings in the west and, above all, in the United States.⁶⁴ With regard to the restaurant kitchen, the notes offered above by Bourdain and Jayaraman specify the manner in which the hierarchical stratification and disciplinary proceedings derived from the French brigade model are translated into and appear in the U.S. context with an explicitly racialized insistence on specialization. Commonly, and as noted above, one can see the lower rungs of the US restaurant kitchen hierarchy occupied by lower paid workers of color. Wynter's emphasis on race, which still takes place in the context of her primary emphasis on genre, clarifies the important intersections of class, nationality, and immigration status⁶⁵ which influence the normative ordering of subjectivities within the kitchen brigade.

⁶⁴ This is obviously not to assert that the French context which historically informs the development of its haute cuisine did not or does not involve racism, but to note that racism in the U.S. has a particular history which differs significantly from other contexts.

⁶⁵ Immigration and national identity seem only to become animated as deviance when in the context of racialized subjects. Saru Jayaraman notes the role that justificatory criteria such as "language ability" and "accent" play in legitimating discrimination and blocked opportunities for workers of color within the restaurant, though these seem not to impact white immigrant workers. Jayaraman notes: "We also found that a strong, even incomprehensible European accent is an advantage, while a Third World accent is a serious detriment" Jayaraman, *Behind the Kitchen Door*, 127 This otherwise peculiar discrepancy can be compellingly accounted for both by Wynter's centering of

Part of Wynter's focus on continuity, as explained above, results from the earlier historical points⁶⁶ highlighted in her analyses and where she locates the production of Man as a response to European colonial encounters.⁶⁷ Following from this move, Wynter's analysis of Man's epistemological content to this day retains a much stronger sense of the defining role of race and coloniality than Foucault's framework provides, and, in fact, critics have often been quick to characterize this point as a significant lack (or at least, an analytical limit) within Foucault's body of thought.⁶⁸ Patricia Hill Collins is more charitable to Foucault on this issue, as she extols the many influences which her own analysis of intersectionality as a form of critical theory have derived from Foucault's work. She writes: "Just as no social theory has all the answers, no one social theorist has them either. Foucault avoided dealing with racism and colonialism in these classic works, only returning to them in his later writings."⁶⁹ In pursuing this thread a bit further, Wynter's own reflections on Foucault's relation to racial difference help to further identify positionality as a crucial point of distinction between their works, although I believe that this is not as disharmonious as it may seem.

race in Man's organizing difference as well as by the analytic of continuity which would suggest that a strong European accent might marshal the cultural capital, prestige, and influence of the French/European haute cuisine roots which continue to strongly inform American fine dining norms.

⁶⁶ This point is described well by Demetrius Eudell who notes: "As Michel Foucault has pointed out, "the figure of man" emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century as the result of a reconfiguration of the fundamental arrangements of knowledge. Wynter has identified this figure as fully secular *Man*, this in order to make a distinction from the partially secular variant that arose during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the wake of lay humanism." Demetrius Eudell, "Come On Kid, Let's Go Get The Thing: The Sociogenic Principle and the Being of Being Black/Human" *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Edited by Katherine McKittrick, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 237-238

⁶⁷ Denise Da Silva notes: "Both the renaissance and Enlightenment epistemological transformations, she[Wynter] argues, were made possible only on the basis of the dynamics of a colonizer/colonized relation that the West was to discursively constitute and empirically institutionalize on the islands of the Caribbean and, later, on the mainlands of the Americas." Denise Da Silva, "Before Man: Sylvia Wynter's Rewriting of the Modern Episteme," McKittrick, "*Sylvia Wynter...*", 92.

⁶⁸ Da Silva explores this theme extensively, writing: "I think about Wynter and Foucault together in order to demonstrate that the latter's glassy depiction of classical order is related to how he formulated a view of power as a "theory of domination" without systematically considering colonial domination." Ibid.97

⁶⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality As Critical Social Theory*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 79.

Foucault's rejection of universal theorizing results in part from his suspicion of and disinterest in some of the ways in which intellectuals have been articulated as bearers of mastery and "spokesmen of the universal," and whose task it is to speak on behalf of the subjugated or the oppressed.⁷⁰ Foucault roundly rejects this sense of prescriptivism⁷¹ as well as the notion of the intellectual as an epistemologically privileged agent. Instead, he declares that "the intellectual no longer has to play the role of an advisor. The project, tactics, and goals to be adopted are a matter for those who do the fighting."⁷²

The analyst, for Foucault, is instead one who occupies a specific position in society and one who might intervene in epistemological production so as to detach it from forms of hegemony.⁷³ Wynter seems to follow Foucault's formulation of the "specific intellectual," but for her, this take does not result in the same kind of theoretical, political, or perspectival outcomes. Responding to a question about the more comprehensive character of her theoretical perspective—which seemingly constitutes a departure from the sense of partiality promoted by Foucault—Wynter offers an instructive framing of positionality which, for her in particular, both informs and results in the large scope of her analytical framework. Her point here is again best quoted at length:

Well, it's like this. Gayatri Spivak made the point in her essay ["Can the Subaltern Speak?"] that Foucault and other European theorists know nothing about the broader narratives of imperialism, of the existence of imperialism. Yet this is the very point that Foucault made himself when he called for an alliance politics. Each group, he suggested, is limited to the experiences of its local, its specific situation. It is this local situation that then provides both the specific terrain and the specific "motive for combat", which determined the form of struggle for each such group. Why my theoretical projects have all these different registers comes directly from the terrain, the kind of situation in which I found and still find myself, and which impels my motive for combat...Now, from the very beginning of the modern world, the people from whom I will

⁷⁰ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 126

⁷¹ "But as for saying, 'Here is what you must do!,' certainly not." Ibid. 62

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. 132-133

descend, the *negros/Negras* who are interned in the slave plantation, would have found themselves experiencing the destructive underside of the ‘broader narrative’...I knew what it was to experience a total abjection of being. And Foucault would never have experienced that, in those terms. Yet this was his very point. That terrain on which we “natives” find ourselves calls for an appropriate and specific motive for combat.⁷⁴

It would seem, then, that Wynter and Foucault actually hold similar viewpoints with regard to the epistemological implications of embodied positionality as pertain to analytic activity. Yet, differing ramifications follow from the particular circumstances that prompt each scholar to think about positionality. Wynter’s much larger scope entails taking seriously the experience of a totalizing form of domination at the intersections of colonial subjugation, racialization, patriarchy, and class stratification, which she hopes to respond to with an equivalent framework for resistance.

These notes on positionality inform the analysis carried out in this dissertation, particularly with regard to matters of scope. At times, in the analysis performed in this work, I draw from my own experiences as a white, male, culinary worker to engage various critiques of Culinary Man. But generally, this work stops short of prescribing what culinarians marginalized by Man’s racialized and/or gendered norms should seek to do. Rather, in what follows, I seek to give a critical reading of Culinary Man’s hegemony in such a way as to open up space for alternatives without definitively stipulating what they should be, even if, at key moments, I still attempt to offer some thoughts on this matter.

In sum, Wynter’s project puts forth certain features which mark it as distinct from Foucauldian genealogy, such as an enhanced attention to colonial and racial difference, greater emphasis on continuity, a collective formulation of resistance, an unabashedly humanistic take,

⁷⁴ Scott, “Re-Enchantment”, 187-188.

and a critical embrace of (non-teleological) formulations of progress. Other points, such as an interest in key moments of historical, categorical, and epistemological production of subjectivity, resonate well with Foucault's genealogical approach. Next, I turn to Wynter's usage of the concept of "archipelago," which presents a helpful lens through which to think about the heterogenous field of subjectivities generated in the context of Culinary Man.

Archipelagic Reading

The imagery of an archipelago does important conceptual work for Wynter in positing an analytic of continuity which connects those excluded by Man without reducing them to one homogenous category. For Wynter, anti-Blackness has set the grounds for western colonial epistemology at crucial historical moments. But Wynter's archipelago links together wide, racially heterogenous networks of subjectivities which are rendered deviant, albeit in different degrees, through the normative ordering gaze of Man. In other words, setting a point of absolute otherness is an anti-reductionist move for Wynter because a key function of the absolute point of deviance is its implicit construction of a related constellation of non-identical marginalized identities. In illuminating the signifying role which marginality played in the emergence of Man in particular, Wynter asserts that:

Outside Europe, at the same time, however, a more global "name of what is evil" is being put in place: Caliban is its dramatic projection. The "Indians" in the encomienda, the "Negroes" in the slave plantation are its real-life referent-as will be the Mad in Europe. No longer in theological terms but in secular politico-juridical terms So Indians and Negroes are expropriated and enslaved, while in Europe, the Mad are interned, not as men, women, and children, but as the embodiment of the by-nature-irrational "name of what is evil."⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ibid. 179

Wynter's illustration above emphasizes the point that deviance emerges as a historically contingent and epistemically specific notion. For her, it also serves to shape an archipelagic framework predicated on a relation between discontinuous particularities and a broader sense of shared continuity, which eventually might become the basis for cross-bloc collaborations.

Wynter continues:

This means that we too, as blacks...as nonwhite natives, like the Jew inside Nazi Germany, have been made to institutionally embody the new biological name of what is evil, we are not going to be able to reduce that "name of what is evil" to ourselves... "if we look at the Holocaust and see that Jews were exterminated...as the extreme embodiment of "life unworthy of life", we can see then why other "under men" such as [Roma], Slavs, Poles, homosexuals, the handicapped, mentally ill, and so on, were also exterminated. And this is so even though the most totally "unworthy" remained the "Jew", as in the US the most "unworthy" remains the black.⁷⁶

As each island of a geographical archipelago retains its interior difference, the naming of them as a single, if collective, formation offers a useful organizing image, which Wynter mobilizes in response to Man's overrepresentation. Notably, Wynter also utilizes the conceptual notion of the archipelago as a way to describe the violent networks of discipline, stratification, and exploitation which reproduce Man's coloniality.⁷⁷ Thus, the term "archipelago" can help to illuminate both the structures of domination and the potential agent(s) of resistance which are implicitly organized by such structures.

For my project, an archipelagic formulation is helpful to think relationally across the various stratified positions of the kitchen brigade, a unit of analysis which resonates well with

⁷⁶ Ibid. 180

⁷⁷ For examples of this see Wynter's references to Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, such as her allusion to the "Black ghetto cum Gulag Archipelago" Sylvia Wynter, *Human Being as Noun? Or Being Human as Praxis? Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overtun: A Manifesto* (August 25, 2007), 49), and the description of the "Archipelagos of poverty producing institutions in the Third and Fourth Worlds" (Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation- An Argument." *The New Centennial Review*. Vol 3 No. 3 (2003) Michigan State University Press, 329).

Wynter's distinctly collective formulation of resistance.⁷⁸ Apart from supplying clarity with regard to the relational development of dominant and subordinate subjectivities within the kitchen, the Wynterian archipelago is also a promising tool with regard to moving toward new, egalitarian, and collective pathways for kitchen subjectivity outside of Culinary Man's normative logic or gaze.⁷⁹ Thus, what can be termed a method of "archipelagic reading," again informed by Wynter's framework as well as by Foucauldian engagements with discourse, provides a central approach to analyzing Culinary Man in this dissertation.

Simply put, the central methodological approach which guides this study is an attempt to apply a critical lens towards the discourses which construct both Culinary Man and the brigade as normative subjectivities. This approach extends from the Wynterian-Foucauldian emphasis on discursive subjects, although a parallel notion is offered by Hortense Spillers, who reflects: "I am far less wed to formalist methods of reading than to *reading* as a method."⁸⁰ Thus, a method of "archipelagic reading" largely consists of critically examining fine dining (and associated)

⁷⁸ For a deeper account of Wynter's collective framing of resistance as well as how this diverges from Foucault's framework, see Silva, Denise Ferreira, "Before Man," 99-100

⁷⁹ And there is reason to believe that the project of cultivating new forms of culinary formations is underway. For examples and descriptions of contemporary social movements rooted in food labor, see William Finnegan, 2014. "Dignity: Fast Food Workers and a New Form of Labor Activism" (*The New Yorker.com*, Sept 15, 2014., Sarah Jaffe, "We Triggered Something Epic: Natasha LeGrand & the Fight for \$15," *The Progressive*, August 8, 2015. Phillip McMichael, "Global Development and the Corporate Food Regime" *New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development Research in Rural Sociology and Development*. Vol. 11(2005), Pgs. 269-303, Carole Counihan, "Mexicanas Taking Food Public: The Power of the Kitchen in the San Luis Valley" and Schroeder, Kathleen. "A Feminist Examination of Community Kitchens in Peru and Bolivia" both in *Taking Food Public*. Edited by Psyche Williams-Forsson and Carole Counihan (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

⁸⁰ Hortense Spillers, "Peter's Pans: Eating in the Diaspora." *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6. Spiller's theoretical framework shares much in common with Wynter's work. See, for instance, Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) Weheliye's text utilizes a framework centrally informed by Wynter and Spillers.

discourses in such a way as to “see” where and how brigade subjectivities (including Culinary Man) are produced, altered, and maintained.⁸¹

Moreover, in order to put together a vision of Culinary Man, this study seeks to examine the various subject positions collected by the brigade and to discern the sets of relations (between brigade subjects as well as in relation to Culinary Man) which mark them as similar as well as distinct from one another.⁸² Much of the discursive materials which are examined throughout this work derive from the perspective of Culinary Man, such as institutional literature, chef memoirs, and published recipe books. These sources are useful points of reference for Culinary Man’s broader field of discourse and reveal the descriptive statements that are used to construct subjectivity. While these resources aid with the central errand of this dissertation, that of critically mapping out the field of Culinary Man, the fact that these resources gravitate around Culinary Man presents certain issues with regard to the more stratified members of the brigade. For instance, most dishwashers and prep cooks do not have book deals.⁸³ Thus, archipelagic reading must also seek out the unannounced, disregarded, and excluded perspectives within Culinary Man’s discursive field. The approach to finding the “absent presence” within these discourses bears similarity to Sadiya Hartman’s notion of reading “against the grain.” Hartman writes: “one recognizes that writing the history of the dominated requires not only the interrogation of dominant narratives and the exposure of their contingent and partisan character but also the reclamation of archival material for contrary purposes...I have tried to read them [archival documents] against the grain in order to write a different account of the past.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Spillers similarly notes that her method of reading seeks to put forth “an examination of a field of discursive objects and events.” (Ibid. 13).

⁸² Or, differently put, how do these subject positions relate to one another archipelagically.

⁸³ Although two texts written as dishwashers serve as central objects of analysis within the first chapter, these authors are not representative of the typical dishwasher.

⁸⁴ Sadiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in the Nineteenth-Century America*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10.

Hartman's approach is useful as it reminds us that hegemonic narratives are not only dominant, but, in many cases, have also held monopolies over the construction of archives. In other words, knowledge production itself bears the influence of dominant groups in society. Thus, one often must adopt a more creative posture in order to "excavate" the experiences of marginalized groups from incomplete archival sources. Having outlined a preliminary notion of Culinary Man, the concluding section of this introduction chapter returns to *Chef Flynn* in order to offer a more concrete example of archipelagic reading as a critical method.

Chef Flynn

As the opening pages of this chapter noted, the documentary *Chef Flynn* provides a glimpse of a unique culinary subject (McGarry) while opening up certain lines of critique regarding the culinary industry's exclusionary hierarchy. McGarry expresses dismay as he identifies the limited and conservative qualities of the "traditional" path of becoming a chef, and this sentiment drives the film's critical inquiry. Indeed, McGarry serves as an interesting case study and opens up a critical dialogue which may be useful to challenge some dimensions of Culinary Man's hegemony. However, in ruminating on McGarry's "deviant" status as a young cook who has not passed through the arduous path up the brigade's hierarchy,⁸⁵ it is important not to lose sight of the substantial amount of continuity which McGarry shares with Culinary Man. Ultimately, viewers of the film see McGarry develop a sense of culinary subjectivity which is largely mimetic of Culinary Man. Notably, McGarry states that his interest in cooking began

⁸⁵ Flynn's central critique of the industry denotes that it offers only "one way" of becoming a chef, namely, working up the ranks of the brigade and tolerating large amounts of abuse while doing so. See Flynn's address at the 2016 "Bitten" food conference.

with a sense of dissatisfaction with his mother's cooking.⁸⁶ As is explored in several chapters below, much of Culinary Man's elevated status is discursively imposed at the expense of cooking carried out in the domestic sphere, particularly by women. The "professional" character of fine dining is contrasted against the more simple, less sophisticated, and supposedly less interesting fare produced in the private sphere. In addition to spurning his mother's culinary efforts to care for her family, McGarry's cooking explicitly reproduces Culinary Man's privileging of haute culinary aesthetics in reaction to his mother's "failed" attempts at cooking.

As mentioned above, McGarry's first culinary "bible" is Thomas Keller's *The French Laundry Cookbook*. While Chapter 4 explores this point in more depth, for now it suffices to note that Keller serves as an archetypal example of Culinary Man², a figure which primarily secures hegemony over the brigade through cultivating fidelity to his aesthetic and technical mastery. Throughout the film, viewers see McGarry recreating dishes in Keller's style.⁸⁷ More importantly, McGarry (in a later interview) offers a description of his embrace of Keller's fine dining aesthetics which more acutely gestures toward the subjectivity-altering dimensions of this performance.

Recalling his early days of discovering Keller's cookbooks, Flynn notes: "I read them like philosophy...it's about the mindset."⁸⁸ Furthermore, McGarry's culinary aspirations are directed solely toward accomplishments within fine dining, which is taken to be the highest form of cooking. As McGarry's mother notes: "he likes the fancy, he wants the top of the game and

⁸⁶ McGarry notes: "My mom would, like, try to cook...when I was a kid, I just got sick of it." Yates, *Chef Flynn*, 14m

⁸⁷ At times, these are literal dishes from Keller's cookbook, and at other times they merely resemble the aesthetic stylings of Keller and similarly minded fine dining chefs. For instance, one segment of the film shows McGarry assembling various complicated veloutés, reductions, and purées while narrating the directions for a "signature dish" of sous-vide short ribs with a blackberry-red wine sauce which must be "drizzled" in a particular manner. Ibid. 15m-18m.

⁸⁸ Anna Ben Yehruda. Rahmanan,. "This 20 Year Old Chef is Serving a 200\$ Tasting Menu in New York City." *Fortune.com*. (Sept. 29, 2019).

that's fine dining.”⁸⁹ As several of the chapters below will show, part of Culinary Man's hegemony relies on the ongoing discursive construction which centralizes Western haute cuisine as the world's foremost culinary tradition, implicitly (and explicitly) relegating all other traditions to an inferior status.

Often, the “commonsense” notion of Euro-American cultural superiority relies on an argument that fine dining techniques, methods, and knowledges outpace all others. Thus, Culinary Man performs a form of technical and epistemic mastery which legitimates “his” governance over the brigade. McGarry displays similar tendencies. While the film makes much of his apparent subversion of the brigadier's path to chefdom, McGarry commands a brigade during several “pop up” services.⁹⁰ In one scene, the white, male McGarry orders around three cooks—two are brown skinned, one is white—and, while offering technical directions, he exclaims: “no one knows what they're doing!”⁹¹ In addition to restaging the brigade's racialized division of labor, McGarry attaches his governance over the kitchen and its subjects to an implicit assertion of his own epistemic privilege. McGarry displays technical knowledge in this performance and, crucially, this involves McGarry teaching professional cooks how to plate the dishes according to his aesthetic preferences.⁹²

In this moment, McGarry's normative statements and operations mark him as quite close to Culinary Man, age notwithstanding. It is also important to read the scene from the perspective of the cooks who are required to follow McGarry's directions. Surely, the fact that the chef in

⁸⁹ Yates, *Chef Flynn*, 32m.

⁹⁰ The pop up is a temporary culinary event (sometimes a one off, sometimes a series) featuring a chef cooking in contexts which depart from the traditional restaurant. Often, this simply involves a “guest” chef appearing at a restaurant where they do not typically work, but the situation can vary. McGarry uses several pop-ups as means to secure visibility and to attract investment in order to open his own restaurant, thus “skipping” the steps of working for others as a brigade member for many years.

⁹¹ Yates, *Chef Flynn*, 49m

⁹² *Ibid.* 52m

charge is not old enough to legally drink does very little to mitigate the hierarchical set of relations which position the cooks as subordinates. For the two non-white men, the racialized division of labor is not meaningfully altered simply because the governing chef has been referred to as “the Doogie Howser of the kitchen.”⁹³ However, interestingly, the shared subordination among the three cooks (even if each is subordinated somewhat differently) produces a small archipelagic formation as a result of McGarry’s hierarchical performance. If there is a force which presents a more vivid possibility of challenging (rather than mimicking) Culinary Man, the subordinated brigade assembled together archipelagically is perhaps a good place to start.

While McGarry’s age may mark him as slightly unorthodox, it does not negate the vast privileges afforded to him by his embodied social position.⁹⁴ In fact, the pairing of his age alongside his fine dining acumen results in an enhanced form of visibility for McGarry which has, most likely, translated into his status as a restaurant owner. Most importantly, McGarry’s critique of the conservative norms of the fine dining industry does not extend far enough to allow McGarry (and the film) to target the production of Culinary Man as a normative subjectivity.

Thus, McGarry himself does not evade the reproduction of the brigade logic (and practice), even as he ostensibly seeks to move the industry beyond it. It may be inappropriate to assume bad intent on the part of McGarry, as doing so might distort the broader critique which asserts that Culinary Man (as a normative model of culinary subjectivity) lurks, often quite subtly, within deeply ingrained sets of discourses, practices, and “commonsensical”

⁹³ See Odie Henderson’s review of *Chef Flynn*. Odie Henderson, “Chef Flynn: Review,” *RogerEbert.com*, 2018.

⁹⁴ In addition to being a white, American, male, McGarry’s class position provides access to a vast amount of culinary resources, including sophisticated high-end restaurant equipment, such as sous-vide machine, paco jet, All Clad pans, expensive cutlery from both Shun and Global brands, and grills, fans, and induction burners all within his bedroom. *Chef Flynn*: 16m, 32m. Henderson’s review emphasizes this point as well: “Director Cameron Yates doesn’t interrogate, nor even lean into, the privilege that allowed McGarry his opportunities. On cooking shows, young wannabe chefs are a hot commodity, but very few of them would have McGarry’s resources to prepare multiple course meals from the comfort of a home lined with thousands of dollars’ worth of cooking equipment and access to a willing clientele” Ibid, Henderson.

presuppositions. Thus, in order to challenge and disassemble Culinary Man's hegemonic governance, it is first necessary to once again map out and unpack the discursive field within which this normative subjectivity is produced, circulated, and maintained.

Chapter 1 begins this errand by examining the most stratified position within the brigade, that of the dishwasher. While McGarry rightly critiques the "traditional" path toward becoming a chef, this critique does not engage the "terminal" position of the dishwasher (or any of the subordinated brigade members, as we shall see), nor the racial politics which overdetermine its demographic makeup. The first chapter explores two additional narratives provided by white, male dishwashers which, while not unhelpful, similarly require an archipelagic annotation in order to arrive at a fuller picture of dishwasher subjectivity.

If one is able to be promoted and move up from the dish pit, the next level is to the position of the prep cook. Chapter 2 explores this position which, while still subordinated to most other levels within the brigade, begins to develop much of the organizational and logistical habits which are constitutive of brigade subjectivity. Still menial and repetitive, the prep cook job nonetheless begins to undergo disciplinary socialization in a context which is more explicitly related to food production. After a period of "training" at the level of the prep cook, one might next be ready to serve as a proper soldier within Culinary Man's brigade.

Chapter 3 explores the position of the line cook, who carries out most of the cooking operations within Culinary Man's brigade line. This chapter engages the militaristic affective qualities imbued into line cook subjectivity, and particularly those affects which encourage workers to "buy into" Culinary Man's hegemony. The chapter also discusses the social sensibilities which bind workers together, while also forming them as subjects who are in competition with one another. Additionally, this chapter delves into the modes of desiring which

become normative under the brigade's disciplinary socialization. Aspirations to move up to the "upper ranks" of the brigade are key to Culinary Man's understanding of the line cook, although regimes of gendered and racialized normativity often overdetermine who can or cannot reach the position of the chef.

Chapter 4 takes up the brigade's central subjectivity form, that of the chef, in order to identify more clearly the way in which Culinary Man's hegemony operates. Following Foucault and Wynter, this chapter pursues a genealogical account of the contemporary chef by sorting out dominant chef subjectivities according to three major types, namely, Culinary Man1, Culinary Man 2, and Culinary Man 3. Chapter 4 explores the first two of these iterations of Culinary Man, beginning first with "the tyrant" (Culinary Man1). This model of chef subjectivity most closely resembles the "old school" abusive chef, who dominates the kitchen primarily with the use of rage, violence, and intimidation. In contemporary times, the popular model of Culinary Man1 has, to some extent, given way to the more contemporary figure of the "artist" chef. However, rather than thinking these models in terms of succession or as a matter of substitution, and following Wynter's mapping of Man, they can be seen to operate relationally, next or somewhat connected to one another. The second type, Culinary Man2, governs the kitchen brigade primarily through a performance of aesthetic and technical mastery. For the most part, Culinary Man2 does not need to resort to overt displays of anger in order to sustain hegemonic rule over the kitchen. Once again, these two main types are distinct from one another in important ways, but they also do share significant elements and many of their traits actually overlap, whereas the third type, Culinary Man3, seems to deviate from the previous two modalities of Culinary Man a bit more.

Chapter 5 begins with a tracing of Culinary Man3, the “humanitarian chef,” taking up the suggestion that this type of chef might offer a form of subjectivity which avoids Man’s overrepresentation. While important features mark Culinary Man 3 as unique, ultimately, I argue that this model does not move far enough outside of Culinary Man’s hegemonic domain and, perhaps, that it even sustains it, particularly in times of crisis. After offering a critical appraisal of Culinary Man3, and showing in particular that his purported way out of Culinary Man’s hegemonic domain is often unsuccessful, the chapter turns to the work of Vertamae-Smart Grosvenor, which I contrast to Culinary Man3’s subjectivity as I argue that it offers a more promising challenge to Man’s overrepresentation. Ultimately, the work and thought of Smart-Grosvenor, and of other culinarians who are often marginalized by Man, generates alternative approaches to cooking and to organizing kitchen work which open up the door to a more horizontal, relational, and archipelagic culinary field.

The concluding chapter expands upon the resistant themes developed in chapter 5 by exploring various potential alternatives and challenges to Culinary Man and the brigade. This chapter first parses through a set of approaches which seek an expansion of Culinary Man’s domain through inclusion of historically marginalized groups into the domain of Culinary Man’s hegemony. While these initiatives are able to transform certain elements of Culinary Man’s regime, for example, traditional aesthetic prejudices which favor French haute cuisine, they ultimately (and unfortunately) leave the brigade form intact. Thus, they fall short of challenging Culinary Man’s hegemony. After working through these challenges, I consider additional alternatives which fall further away from Culinary Man. The dissertation concludes with an anecdotal exploration of an experiment in alternative culinary subjectivity that may be able to speak to the kinds of challenges that this study hopes to move toward.

Overall, this dissertation gives an account of Culinary Man's field of subjectivity as a contribution toward clearing space for alternative models. By working through the various positions described above, each chapter critically details the particular practices, discourses, and operations which produce distinct, although always relational, forms of subjectivity which cohere around Culinary Man's mode of hegemonic governance. In chapter 1, this exploration begins in the same place where my own culinary career started: the dish pit.

Chapter 1. The Dishwasher: Steppingstones and Terminal Points

This chapter takes up the dish pit as a central site of analysis and is largely guided by the premise that an archipelago is defined to a significant degree by its most stratified point. Wynter uses the model of the archipelago to outline the social ontology which is produced by Man's overrepresentation. A key point within the conceptual imagery offered by the archipelago is the set of unevenly distributed, yet still relationally connected, points of deviance produced by Man. Thus, for the purposes of exploring the brigade, itself a subordinated archipelago, it is useful to begin with the dishwasher, a position which is furthest away from Culinary Man. Wynter's account highlights the dependent nature of the relationship between "Man and his human others"¹ in which the normative center is directly constructed from the negation of its deviant margins. In Wynter's genealogical account, an "archipelago of others" is indirectly produced through Man's self-construction, although all positions are not equally stratified. In order to get a clear view of Culinary Man's hegemony (and the sets of social relations which compose it), it is useful to think with the perspective of the most marginalized, or what Wynter, following Jean-François Lyotard, calls the "name of what is evil."² In following this theoretical insight from Wynter, this chapter turns to an examination of the role of the dishwasher, who occupies the lowest rung of the kitchen hierarchy. This analysis proceeds under the guiding assumption that a critical tracing of the major descriptive and social practices which organize this position will help to map out Culinary Man as a broader field of normative subjectivity.

¹ David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe*. Issue 8 (2000), 174

² *Ibid.* 179

In developing this critical analysis of the dishwasher position, I engage two major “classics” on the subject of dishwashing—George Orwell’s *Down and Out in Paris and London*, and Pete Jordan’s *Dishwasher*, respectively—and I parse through the descriptive statements, analysis, and commentary offered by each.³ Orwell and Jordan supply important texts which are useful to clarify some of the distinct practices, narratives, and affects which shape the dishwasher as a devalued and subordinate position. They also offer us something of an initiation into hegemonic kitchen subjectivity. While Orwell’s and Jordan’s narratives are indispensable in offering description of the alterity (with respect to Culinary Man) which more generally encodes the position of the dishwasher, it also seems that neither of these commentators—both white men—are able to grasp the “genre functions” of race, nationality, and gender which significantly define the dishwashing position, particularly in the contemporary United States. Reading with and against these texts, which provide some of the most visible and popular narrative accounts of professional dishwashing, provides the shape of Culinary Man’s hegemony

Dishwasher Pete

Pete Jordan’s 2007 offbeat travelogue and dishwashing memoir, *Dishwasher*, sits as something of an underground classic among dishwashers and to some extent the general public, owing in large part to some of the visibility which Jordan has somewhat surprisingly received from major media coverage.⁴ Jordan’s text is billed as the chronicle of one man’s quirky journey

³ Pete Jordan, *Dishwasher*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2007). George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1940).

⁴ For instance, at one point, Jordan was invited to be a guest on “Late Night with David Letterman.” However, Jordan had little interest in appearing on television and so allowed a friend of his to appear instead, pretending to be Jordan. See Robert May Elder, “The Soapy Adventures of Dishwasher Pete.” *Chicago Tribune*, 2007. Other major media sources, such as NPR, have run stories on Jordan as well. See the segment, “Professional Dishwasher Shares Tales from the Pit,” “All Things Considered,” *NPR*, June 12, 2007

to wash dishes in all fifty states and readers are indeed guided on a compelling quest which pursues this unusual goal. What is perhaps more notable about Jordan's work, for my purposes at least, is the substantive social insight about dishwashing which underpins his cross country odyssey—namely, the fact that dishwashing positions are generally always available. By following this thread and several related themes within Jordan's text, one might see that, in addition to its humorous or eccentric qualities, *Dishwasher* offers useful political insight alongside a vivid introduction to the field of kitchen subjectivities constituted by Culinary Man's overrepresentation.

Pete Jordan was born into a working class Celtic immigrant family in San Francisco, and, like many, he initially takes a dishwashing job out of economic necessity, though he quickly discovers an important insight regarding a curious form of labor power which emerges from the nature of so called "dirty work." Dishwashers, coded as unskilled laborers, are typically thought of as highly replaceable positions, and indeed it is common that, for various reasons, they come and go: Anthony Bourdain refers to dishwashers as the "most transient breed" and reports getting his own first dish post after "one goofball failed to show up for work for two days."⁵ Jordan discovers that this also makes the jobs themselves quite replaceable as restaurants are frequently in need of dish help and *someone* has to do the undesirable, greasy, strenuous, and repetitive manual labor of washing dishes in order for the restaurant to function. After accidentally snapping back at a restaurant owner who, much to Jordan's surprise, sheepishly apologizes, Jordan ruminates:

A couple minutes later, after he'd left, I sat down with a beer and suspected there might be something to this dishwashing business.... why *would* he fire me when there were still stacks of dishes to be washed? If I was to be sacked, he'd be smart to wait until

⁵ Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2000), 20.

I'd finished out the day. Supposing this was the case, I sat around even longer after closing time and hardly swept or mopped.⁶

Jordan's insight is important in highlighting the point that the dishwasher, while marginal within the brigade system (and some do not even consider it a proper part of it), underpaid, and generally overworked, carries out a job which is crucial to restaurant service. Dirty plates, pots, and utensils must be efficiently and quickly cleaned for recirculation so as to keep restaurant production flowing, and this becomes even more important on the busier nights which restaurants (and their notoriously thin profit margins) desperately require. Jordan's identification of this point of vulnerability translates into an unexpected sense of relative autonomy and labor power in a manner which parallels Timothy Mitchell's reporting of the unique qualities of coal,⁷ which, as Mitchell argues, similarly provided the conditions of possibility for the emergence of certain mass democratic labor actions and political forms.⁸

A Nomadic Dishwashing Ethos

While Jordan's narrative does at times reflect on dishwasher unionization and labor struggles of the past as well as meditate on the capacity for future collective action,⁹ his insight most directly translates into a largely personal form of culinary nomadism. While in conversation with fellow dishwashers who are trading geographical accounts of the places in which they have worked, Jordan is struck by the idea for his quest:

⁶ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 36.

⁷ Coal is bulky, located below ground, and requires a substantial workforce, including certain specialists, to viably handle and transport.

⁸ Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy* emphasizes the relative autonomy which coal mining sites provided, narrow and concentrated routes for transportation, and the vulnerability to work disruptions, stoppages, slowdowns which provided laborers with leverage which enabled political demands and social action. Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2013), 19-22

⁹ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 176, 232.

I could envision it so clearly. Traveling the country, seeking out intriguing workplaces in exotic locales, enjoying the freedom of living a life consciously devoted to a lack of responsibility...And as I picked up and dropped dish jobs left and right, if anyone was to every ask if I'd dished in this state or that, I'd always be able to answer, "Yes!"¹⁰

Notable in the above passage is the individual character of Jordan's vision of freedom, the sense of mobility and quasi-colonial descriptive quality of the theme of exploring "exotic" geographies,¹¹ and the ethos which primarily anchors itself within a terrain antithetical to responsibility. While some of these points will be critically examined in greater detail below, there is also much to admire in Jordan's out-of-the ordinary approach to kitchen work and it certainly provides several important resources which offer departures, alternatives, and even challenges to Culinary Man's proliferation of normative subjectivity. Most notably in this regard is the recurring theme of Jordan's opposition to hierarchy and authority, generally construed, which runs throughout the text and informs much of his social outlook, philosophy toward labor, and relations with others. This set of sensibilities draws Jordan to culinary sites which engage in forms of production and operation which depart quite significantly from Culinary Man's fine dining kitchen, with stints at a horizontally structured Anarchist café¹² as well as an intentional community constituting two of the more explicit examples. These passages, particularly when juxtaposed with the fine dining restaurant's normative brigade form, offer instructive critical meditations on alternative forms of organizing foodservice.

Still, there is a sense of privilege (namely by virtue of whiteness, maleness, and U.S. citizenship) which constitutes an enabling condition of Jordan's quest, and given the heavily racialized character of dishwashing in much of Culinary Man's field—Saru Jayaraman reminds

¹⁰ Ibid. 52

¹¹ Jordan also refers to "conquering" and "mastering" states as he checks them off his list. Ibid. 200, 318

¹² Ibid. 157

us that “you’d certainly never find a white dishwasher in New York City, Chicago, or Los Angeles¹³—this point of dissonance is sometimes difficult to ignore. Further, it is not uncommon for dishwashing work to fall to those whose criminalized immigration status makes their existence vulnerable, labor more easily exploitable, and their movements within and across the U.S. always fraught with risk and danger. Jordan’s freewheeling sense of travel exercises a highly privileged form of mobility without risk which many dishwashers are unable to access.

Race in the Dish Pit

Jordan’s translation of his valuable occupational insight into a folk journey reminiscent of “rambling” figures such as Woody Guthrie (who also has dishwashing in his own past—a point of pride and influence for Jordan¹⁴) might further be critiqued from an archipelagic perspective for its ethos of minimal obligations. Jordan’s aversion to responsibility is a coherent feature within the context of his broadly anti-authoritarian and generally anti-work (though this is more mixed) politics. However, some dissonance is created when this fantasy of refusal is read against the deeply embodied ethic of care which drives no small portion of undocumented dishwashers who quite often take on the risk, exploitation, and danger of traveling across borders for work so that they might enact an ethic of deep responsibility for family and friends who are left behind or who emigrate as well. In other words, the desire to unplug from the machinery of work, authority, and responsibility enacted by Jordan is a luxury (even if a relative one) which is at odds with the politics of care demonstrated by Jordan’s more racialized, criminalized, and exploited counterparts in the dish pit.

¹³ Saru Jayaraman, *Behind the Kitchen Door* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 105

¹⁴ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 217

In this context, an archipelagic ethic might reveal that refusal to take a more explicit or active part in Man's overrepresentation (which can only ever be partially refused for white men such as Jordan) is perhaps not sufficient in and of itself. Wynter's solidaristic sensibilities (and those of other notable figures from traditions within or adjacent to Black Feminisms) might instead call for an ethic of care as a positive responsibility and an affirmational task. The insufficiency of a politics of refusal seems to be a particularly important point with regard to Jordan's possession of forms of genre (racial, gendered, and so on) enabled privilege, as they align him more closely with Culinary Man's normative center, class position as a dishwasher notwithstanding.

Jordan's scant sense of appreciation for the significant differences between his own embodied experience and the phenomenology of his more racialized counterparts in the dish pit is somewhat curious given that several of Jordan's stories reveal a professional familiarity with men from Honduras¹⁵ and Mexico,¹⁶ respectively. For instance, Lima, the Honduran man whom Jordan works alongside in Nevada, even invites Jordan to come back to Honduras with him, and additionally informs Jordan that with his meager (relative to the United States context) dish earnings, he could "live like a king and easily find a wife."¹⁷

While the second matter about coupling with a spouse does index a recurring theme throughout narratives of dishwashing (namely, the challenges to social and romantic life—often formulated within patriarchal and/or heteronormative terms—which are structurally posed by dishwashing), and one which I will return to later, the notion of living lavishly in central America is important to note for its instructive political-economic cues. Jordan's financial life is

¹⁵ Ibid. 255

¹⁶ Ibid. 147

¹⁷ Ibid. 257

modest to say the least—he eats leftover food from bussed tables frequently and generally just gets by. But the conversation with Lima introduces a more global perspective which acutely contextualizes the significant differences in social positioning between the two dishwashers—one, an undocumented seasonal laborer working precariously to provide for his wife and kids back in Honduras, and the other, a white U.S. citizen exercising a largely unencumbered freedom of mobility from a class position which still sits well above many in the world.

Jordan's underdeveloped engagement with the overdetermined intersection of race and nationality with regard to the sociological outcomes and material conditions of dishwashers seems mostly to reveal that, while he and Lima share occupations, they inhabit different political worlds. An archipelagic ethos should remain attentive to tracing points of resemblance which hold the potential of translating into solidarity. But it is also crucially important for analysis to yield an honest and accurate account of difference which resides alongside similarity. In addition to the brief passage with Lima, Jordan's account of another similarly abridged encounter with a Mexican man named Ephrem and a crew of three "Hispanic-looking guys"¹⁸ offers another interesting moment in which an instructive sense of difference between Jordan and his racialized counterparts can be observed.

As Jordan enters the dish pit where the three men are seated, they immediately jump up and begin attending to tasks. This reaction confuses Jordan and certainly ruffles his anti-authoritarian sensibilities, though it is instructive in that one can infer from it that whiteness is typically paired with authority in the context of culinary labor. Jordan narrates:

I tried to assure them that they didn't have to do any busywork in my presence. I wasn't The Man...I didn't want any power of authority...I wasn't even the head

¹⁸ Ibid. 148

dishwasher. Yet, no matter how hard I tried, they acted as if I had authority—power that I couldn't turn off!¹⁹

The men's assumption that Jordan was a figure of authority can itself be read as an additional piece of text reflecting the racialized division of labor which is normalized within the restaurant. Furthermore, Jordan's somewhat naïve sense of confusion about this encounter underscores the deeply embodied quality of genre which exceeds the contingent decisions, personality, or intentionality of the individuals upon which its privileges are conferred. Jordan's protest that he wasn't the "Man" takes on a different valence when read through Wynter's terminological and perceptual lens and, indeed, it will take much more than discomfort or refusal to unsettle such deeply embedded and embodied forms of (over)representational power.

The brief comments on Lima's invitation and the confusing interaction related above constitute the extent of Jordan's engagement with Mexican, Central, or South American dishwashers and/or the embodied forms of difference between himself and racialized others. A meditation on fictitious Cuban refugee and short time dishwasher, Tony Montana (played by Al Pacino in the movie, *Scarface*), even receives as a fuller descriptive account than some of the actually existing immigrant dishwashers within Jordan's narrative.²⁰ These silences seem to reflect the conditions of Pete Jordan's embodied life as a traveling white man, though they do speak to a need to engage more deeply with genre in the context of the dishwasher as a stratified position within Culinary Man's division of labor and cultivation of subjectivity.

While Jordan's account should be stretched in certain instances to account for the different material and political experiences of Mexican, Central, and South American

¹⁹ Ibid. 148

²⁰ Ibid. 96

immigrants, there is nonetheless an important insight offered by Jordan, which is instructive in revealing the heavily racialized character of dishwashing. When Jordan arrives in Louisiana seeking to cross the state off his list, he is promptly informed that “it was impossible for a white boy to dish in New Orleans.”²¹ Indeed, this recalls Jayaraman’s commentary on the dearth of white dishwashers in major cities, and Jordan’s account expounds further on this point. Reporting his difficulty in getting hired, Jordan narrates: “And not one, but two boss-guys straight out told me they only hired Mexicans to wash their dishes. One explained he had ‘less trouble with them’—meaning it was easier to keep them in their place.”²² Eli Revelle Wilson similarly analyzes “brown collar work” by noting that

Employers also see immigrant Latino men as less likely to cause trouble on the job. Given their structurally disempowered position in this society—especially those with an undocumented status—foreign born Latinos may of necessity be more tolerant of marginal employment conditions than their US-born counterparts.²³

After struggling to find a position, Jordan is relieved to get an offer from a restaurant in the French Quarter run by a white chef who explains the job in such way that Jordan declines to show up the next day, despite badly wanting to accomplish washing dishes in New Orleans as well as needing money to resume travel. Jordan recounts the conversation:

“You’ll be in charge of the other dishwashers—six to ten of them on any given night,” he said.

I didn’t understand.

“You’ll be head dishwasher,” he explained.

Head dishwasher? Me? I barely managed to be the head of myself, let along anyone else. Besides, as a suds buster who hated authority, was I really expected to push around my fellow workers? I was stunned silent. The shock continued as he gave me a brief tour of

²¹ Ibid. 121

²² Ibid. 126

²³ Eli Revelle Yano Wilson, *Front of the House Back of the House: Race and Inequality in the Lives of Restaurant Workers*, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2021),108

the dish rooms located on two different floors. Indeed, all the other dishwashers were black. Why hadn't he promoted one of them? They obviously knew the setup better than I did. Instead, he hired a white guy to be the head of a bunch of black guys.²⁴

Here, Jordan's text offers an important critical analysis of Culinary Man's racialized division of labor and is further instructive in probing the proliferation of layers of authority even among the lowest strata of the kitchen hierarchy. The notion of a "head dishwasher" mimics Culinary Man's sense of mastery, authority, domination, and organization of the brigade even as any head dishwasher would, by virtue of position, be the subordinate of the entirety of the rest of the kitchen staff. Gary Fine provides a similar indication of this phenomenon in his sociological study of kitchens:

Further, dirty work may have its own divisions: staff distinguishes between pot men and dishwashers...although both groups had low status, the pot men had less status because they had to clean off more food by hand: they dealt directly with pollution. In their flexible and informal kitchen organization, cooks had leeway to order the pot men and dishwashers, and these lower status workers obeyed, even though taking such orders was outside their job description...the right to make demands of these washers also permits cooks to be nasty in ways that are unlikely between cooks who regard each other as status equals.²⁵

This arrangement of hierarchical authority "all the way down" creates an atomized situation which encourages competition, discipline, and surveillance among brigade workers. In this way, Jordan's text allows a glimpse at preliminary forms of socialization into the practices of hierarchical subjugation which occur even at the lowest level of the kitchen. Jordan does not go through with this particular job and, later on, he walks out on a job in Nevada after a fellow worker tries to assert the title of head dishwasher against Jordan. Returning to the rejection of the

²⁴ Ibid. 127

²⁵ Gary Fine, *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996 [2009]), 96-97

racialized offer to assume the head dishwasher position, Jordan's narrative seems to reveal both anti-authoritarian and anti-racist elements, though a similar event later in the book might suggest that the former is more developed than the latter.

Upon returning again to Louisiana, which—in a passage which offers a linguistic sensibility quite resonant with the colonial travel mentality—Jordan deems “unconquered territory,”²⁶ he is able to find a job in a New Orleans restaurant which, upon entry, seems to be curiously staffed by white people exclusively. As Jordan ponders this arrangement, he considers why the owner “skipped the whole white-in-front/black-in back thing” while theorizing that perhaps the racist owner hires only white workers in a city comprised of 70% Black residents.²⁷ After the owner seems to confirm this hypothesis by offering an uninvited racist joke, Jordan begins to walk out of the restaurant, noting:

I put down the dishes. There were better uses of my time and energy than providing them to some racist asshole. I made up my mind to go. When I was untying my apron, I walked the other pearl diver—Bernard. He was Black. His presence wrecked my argument that the Colonel was too racist to hire Blacks. I retied my apron and decided to stay. It took a few more minutes of dishing before it hit me: the *lone Black man was washing dishes* which only confirmed the original claim of institutionalized white-in-front/Black-in-back racism. I was untying my apron again when Bernard sidled up to me and said “I wanna show you something.” He led me to the rear of the dish cave and pointed to a bucket in the corner. He'd filled it with ice cubes and cans of beer. The scales tipped again. I retied my apron and then broke my own rule about not drinking until the second half of a shift by opening a beer.²⁸

There is indeed quite a bit to parse out in the narrative above and Jordan might be admired for providing such an honest and comprehensive account of his internal process of ethical deliberation. The step by step narration of the cognitive assessment of the situation

²⁶ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 185

²⁷ *Ibid.* 192

²⁸ *Ibid.* 192-193

clearly evinces a useful analysis of race, power, and work, even if some of the more pertinent conclusions appear belatedly and are perhaps upended by the final decision's indulgent qualities. Still, an archipelagic reading of this moment might indicate that Jordan's ethos, heavily influenced by George Orwell's "plongeur morality" (which is explored in the next section)²⁹ fundamentally prioritizes the individualized sensibilities of "laziness, drunkenness and ditching jobs without even a minute's notice,"³⁰ rather than a more foundational (and collective) commitment to anti-racism and solidarity. My intention in highlighting this is not to fault Jordan for failing to understand the racialized dynamics at play more quickly, or even for remaining on the job (for payment he likely needed), and certainly not for drinking beer with a coworker while on the clock. Instead, I think this incident is helpful in further outlining the limits of Jordan's political ethos, as well as offering an example of how workers might buy into the brigade. Ultimately, Culinary Man's brigade functions as a hegemonic formation which elicits participation through a mixture of both coercion and consent.

A Politics of Refusal

Jordan clearly denotes a distaste for racism in the form of both discourse (in this situation, a racist joke) and broader, structural practices (his perceptive identification of the racialized division of labor), though his course of activity seems largely to opt out of acting. Quite often (and for a variety of reasons), workers perform resistance, revenge, and redress against employers through individualized means. In Jordan's case, a politics of refusal, quitting without notice, and engaging one's own pursuits of leisure while at work constitute some of the major forms which his anti-work sensibilities take on. While I must admit a similar affinity for

²⁹ Ibid. 252

³⁰ Ibid. 264

taking private or subtle styles of action against employers, it does seem like these forms of resistance cannot translate into broader and more solidaristic challenges to the structures of Culinary Man, or the restaurant at large, even as they still may be useful in constituting different kinds of subjects (and certainly Jordan's practices of self mark him as a delightfully less useful and docile body).³¹

In a similar vein, Jordan's consistent refusal to move up the ladder of the brigade is also an interesting point to consider. This disrupts the general teleology of culinary subjectivity, which is oriented toward the chef (Culinary Man) at the normative center and requires for all to accept and undertake the normative goal of becoming-Man, regardless of the fact that (the majority of) huge swaths of racialized, gendered, and otherwise deviantly coded actors cannot ever actualize this effort. Denying the assumption that the difficult progression up the culinary ladder is the (only) formula for the good life enacts a valuable rupture of a major strand of Culinary Man's ideologically laden descriptive statements. In one instance, Jordan's lack of occupational ambition results in his being passed over for a dish job which further underscores the normatively aspirational character (and its encoding of desire) of culinary subjectivity. That is, brigade subjects are supposed to be constantly watching "up the ladder" for a chance to move up, and for some, eventually, to become Culinary Man. This theme will be explored in later chapters, though Jordan's account offers a useful preliminary demonstration of this phenomenon. Jordan writes:

³¹ In some sense, this discussion bears resemblance to Michel De Certeau's distinction between "strategies and tactics." For De Certeau, strategy is associated with systems or institutions which exercise power, whereas tactics are associated with those who attempt to resist, but must operate within the field imposed by strategies. Tactics do not "have the option of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole," but, rather operate in "isolated actions, blow by blow." Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 35-37. In sum, Jordan's resistance constitutes the exercise of tactics, but does not rise to the level of counter strategy.

The inquisition soon revealed that she was more interested in a careerist for whom dishwashing was but a first rung up the job ladder. She wanted someone who wanted to be a cook someday. In short, she wanted a dishwasher who didn't really want to wash dishes. It made no sense. If her house had been on fire and someone arrived in fireman's gear raring to put it out, she wouldn't have stopped and asked him where he saw himself in five years.³²

Jordan's confusion is significant in its displacement of the culinary commonsense that dishwashing is merely a steppingstone or initiation grounds on the way up the ladder. Instead, Jordan's analogy reveals that he considers it an occupational destination in its own right. It would seem that the chef interviewing Jordan, at least based on his telling—there could be additional reasons which resulted in his not being hired—performed something of a “subjectivity scan” to engage elements of disposition, desire, and ambition, etc. That this would be required for the relatively simple issue of washing dishes speaks to the fact that production under Culinary Man is not merely a pragmatic matter of labor, but also (and more fundamentally) a project of control.

There is also an important revelation about the broader dynamics of genre contained in this exchange in that it emphasizes the manner in which the dish pit takes on a much different character across social locations. For those who conceivably could someday actualize a trajectory to become Culinary Man, particularly if they are white, the position of dishwashing is indeed narrated as a pit stop. For those whose genre characteristics place them too far outside of Man's normative center, the dish pit is intended as a permanent site of occupational residence and the gap between these two paths/sites further underscores the racial logic of Culinary Man—the dirtiest, most menial, and least valued jobs are not intended for white men.

³² Ibid. 98-99

Put differently, Jordan's lack of ambition to move outside of the dish pit is something which is considered unusual, but, as I argue, this is out of the ordinary because of Jordan's status as a white man. If Lima had offered the same articulation of a lack of professional ambition, this would be much more resonant with the general expectations which structure Culinary Man's division of labor (though, on the other hand, the incorporation of a small number of racial minorities into narratives of ascension, progress, and accomplishment is also well utilized by neoliberal diversity imperatives).³³

If Jordan refuses title, authority, and responsibility,³⁴ he does not disavow mastery, which I argue is one of the major traits which comprises Culinary Man's descriptive statement. A major theme of Jordan's narrative involves his own path of becoming a "Dish Master."³⁵ Jordan narrates an initial moment of recognition of this subjectivity formation: "after a couple of months of working everyday under grueling conditions, I no longer felt like a novice. I wasn't even a dish bum. I was now Dishwasher Pete—a full-fledged *Dish Master!*"³⁶ After this moment of reflective coronation, Jordan frequently makes reference to himself as a Dish Master, and even prints custom shirts and aprons which bear this title.³⁷ Certainly some part of Jordan's descriptive maneuver contains an ironic fusing together of the notion of mastery with an activity that is generally coded as "unskilled" work, and this disruption may be useful in critiquing the self-aggrandizing discourses of mastery with which Culinary Man describes "himself."

³³ This theme occupies a central position within chapter 5 and the conclusion.

³⁴ Several of Jordan's accounts underscore that, in addition to the relatively autonomous position which dishwashing provides, the smaller scope of expected tasks is also quite attractive to him. Some of the more humorous examples of maintaining this preference involve Jordan purposely and repeatedly carrying out tasks incorrectly and feigning incompetence, noting that "it was tedious convincing him of my ignorance. But in the end, it was worth the effort" Ibid. 91

³⁵ Ibid. 266, 291

³⁶ Ibid. 71

³⁷ Ibid. 286

On the other hand, it does also seem possible that this form of parody is not primarily or only a subversive gesture and that it also performs some form of mimetic work in service of Culinary Man's project. In one moment of interaction, Jordan becomes frustrated with a potential employer who inquires about his level of experience. Jordan notes exasperatedly "His hang-up with 'experience' was really beginning to irk me. Sure, I was a Dish Master, but anyone with ten minutes in the suds could claim to be experienced."³⁸ Jordan's frustration with the emphasis on experience can be taken as a displeasure with the extension of more formal techniques of inquiry being extended to dishwashing jobs, for which his preference is for informal modes of both hiring and quitting (he is also displeased about having to fill out an application, for instance³⁹).

Despite what may be taken as a critique of formalism or an inappropriate expansion of bureaucratic oversight, Jordan's discussion does also suggest a distinction between masters and novice dishwashers, which, again, has the potential to disrupt some of Jordan's anti-authoritarian and anti-hierarchical commitments. It isn't entirely clear what criteria constitute becoming-Master in this instance (and this ambiguity itself departs from some of the more rigid standards employed by Culinary Man—the highly formalized "certified master chef" exam, for example), though it might be inferred that some combination of knowledge acquisition, time spent, and perhaps even the diverse set of sites and contexts in which Jordan worked may all be relevant features. Jordan emphasizes his early experiences in Alaska as an important part of his path of becoming-Master, and much of this initiation involves Jordan's being schooled by a man named Sonny. Sonny's education explicitly seeks to transform Jordan into a "real dishwasher" and does so by instructing him on the technical elements of timing, organization of space, and other

³⁸ Ibid. 191

³⁹ Ibid. 190

procedural moments. However, a crucial aspect of this training also involves gradually altering Jordan's subjectivity through the repetition of certain best practices, notably including a series of disciplinary instructions regarding physical posture. Jordan recites:

He pushed me aside, assumed my place at the sinks and spread his legs until his feet were about a yard and a half apart. His height dropped dramatically. "The sink's so low, so you gotta get low," he said. "See how I'm doin'? I'm getting lower without bending my back..." I stepped up to the sinks and spread my legs. Sonny laughed. "Dude, you can't be serious."

What? I'm spreading my legs."

"C'mon, man," he said. He kicked my feet like a cop readying a suspect to be frisked.⁴⁰

While seemingly a matter of mere practicality (and indeed, Sonny is correct about the risks of working hours of washing dishes with bent posture), this passage also reveals a moment of fairly explicit disciplinary socialization in the Foucauldian sense of normatively arranging bodies in space. A major theme of Foucauldian normalized practices centers around the use of repetition, and very few things are as repetitive as washing dishes. That Jordan's passage discursively fuses the interrogatory gaze of the police with the instructional cues of a dishwasher also gestures toward an exercise of disciplinary power and his having passed through this initiation ritual may well constitute a major element of Jordan's constitution of self as a Dish Master. If this is the case, then there is an epistemological and disciplinary component to the Dish Master (and this would bear strong continuity with Wynter's Man) and likely an affective component—what does mastery feel like? Is this feeling a similar experience whether one lords over dishes or over other workers? Perhaps we must not think that by saying yes to dishwashing nomadism, Jordan completely says no to Culinary Man.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid. 65

⁴¹ Paraphrased from Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1978[1990]),157

Socializing Culinary Subjectivity

There are additional ways in which Jordan's account reveals continuity between the dishwasher's work-life rhythms and the subjectivity-constituting and disciplinary endeavors of Culinary Man. Notably, the repetitive practices, timing, and operations performed by the dishwasher provide an initiation into the normative, disciplinary, and productivist movements of the kitchen. Another early dish-mentor of Jordan's offers him a bootcamp on the organizational practices (soak pots while running racks of dishes through the machine, etc.) and, most significantly, the economy of movement which organizes the kitchen's production more broadly.

Jordan recounts:

...He was a wealth of information and I immediately fell under his spell. Like me, he wasn't spry. Though his movements were as slothful as my own, a gracefulness to *his* sluggishness allowed much effort. If he left the dish room to take clean plates to the kitchen, for instance, he always carried dirty pans back to the sinks.⁴²

Jordan's account illustrates how the dish pit socializes workers into the normative routines and rhythms of the kitchen, and those destined to move on to prep, line, and chef positions receive a preliminary form of disciplinary socialization. For those who will remain as dishwashers indefinitely, it similarly normalizes a form of productivist, if more menial, subjectivity which maximizes the utility and docility of bodies in service to Culinary Man's aesthetic visions. In another passage, Jordan offers a more granular depiction of this practice as he notes that "our lives revolved around that 82-second [dish] cycle. We hustled to keep the machine running continuously. If it sat idle for just one second, it was one second less we'd have on our next break."⁴³ Even though Jordan's discursive emphasis, true to his slacker ethos,

⁴² Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 51

⁴³ *Ibid.* 67

remains fixated on maximizing eventual leisure time in the form of the few breaks which come in the working day, there is a clear account of his being formed as a productive, regularized, and dependable working subject. This sensibility is indispensable for keeping an efficient circulation of dishes throughout the restaurant's body and, in this way, it somewhat undermines Jordan's anti-work sensibilities.

In a similar vein, Jordan is socialized into a certain kind of relation with the dish machine itself after a manager accuses him of failing to take "proper care"⁴⁴ of it. This assessment is seemingly confirmed shortly after a clogging incident renders the dish machine inoperable for a few hours. Once it is repaired and returned to normal operation, Jordan, with a newly installed sense of care for the machine, describes:

I was so grateful to have my Baby back that I swore to love and adore her. From then on, each day I broke down all of her parts to meticulously remove bits of debris from all forty-eight spout holes on her four spray arms. I polished her stainless steel panels with a good rubdown. At the end of each shift, I followed Lavon's advice by honoring Baby with a kiss.⁴⁵

Setting aside the strange and hygienically ill-advised contact with the dish-washing machine (not to mention the paternalistic and gendered framing), Jordan's description of intensive maintenance and care for the machine strikes a somewhat unlikely chord within the context of his broader anti-work stance. If one of Jordan's major insights is the discovery that the dish pit presents a crucial site of flows for restaurant production—and thus, a major vulnerability—one might expect a more critical stance toward machinic upkeep.⁴⁶ In other

⁴⁴ Ibid. 69

⁴⁵ Ibid. 69

⁴⁶ This sense of potential vulnerability stems from the fact that any backup or delay in the dishwashing process can disrupt the entire brigade's production if the kitchen begins to run out of the pans, utensils, and plates which are needed for cooking and service.

words, the machine itself clearly occupies a highly important role in keeping dishes flowing in and out of the kitchen and as such, represents a terrain of possibility for the types of sabotage, stoppage, and slowdown of production which can help to strengthen the force of collective labor demands. Gavin Mueller's political study of the Luddites, *Breaking Things at Work*, offers a useful vision of a critical stance toward technologies which facilitate production alongside workplace domination:

it views technology not as neutral but as a site of struggle. Luddism rejects production for production's sake: it is critical of "efficiency" as an end goal. Luddism can generalize, it is not an individual moral stance but a series of practices that can proliferate and build through collective action. Finally, Luddism is antagonistic: it sets itself against existing capitalist social relations.⁴⁷

Reading this passage against Jordan's decidedly anti-Luddite sensibilities perhaps once again reveals a moment of normalization (though few would consider kissing a commercial dish machine to be "normal") which helps to fold individuals into Culinary Man's field of subjectivity, which itself is constituted heavily by productivist sensibilities which must, in turn, be reproduced. Offering such attentive maintenance to the dish machine indexes another theme of Culinary Man in which, generally speaking, the tools, food materials, appliances, and other inanimate (though profit enabling) objects are frequently given higher levels of care than the people who handle them. It is also worth noting that Jordan's narrated sequence of engagement with the dish machine begins from a point of surveillance enacted by a manager. It is telling in this set of relations that the disciplinary gaze from above interacts with the body of the worker-subject (Jordan) by way of inspecting the machinery of production. This anticipates a theme of indirect panopticism which will be further examined in the next chapter. Overall, Jordan's

⁴⁷ Gavin Mueller, *Breaking Things at Work*, (London and New York: Verso, 2021), 129

adoption of a fervent routine of cleaning and maintaining the machine which, some might say, enables the capture of his labor for the interests of the restaurant which exploits and dominates him, conjures scenes of military subjectivity's emphasis on weaponry, maintenance, and inspection—for example, the fifth tenet of the U.S. Marine Corps' "Rifle Creed" states:

My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights, and its barrel. I will ever guard it against the ravages of weather and damage as I will ever guard my legs, my arms, my eyes, and my heart against damage. I will keep my rifle clean and ready. We will become part of each other.⁴⁸

In sum, Pete Jordan's dishwashing narrative offers plenty of unique insights, illustrations, and analyses of various intersecting strands of authority, resistance/refusal, and disciplinary socialization. Jordan himself is a worthy guide through the dish pit, and his anti-hierarchical sensibilities are useful resources in the struggle to challenge the normalized disciplinary production of Culinary Man. However, as I have tried to show above, Jordan's ethos does seem limited by its individualized scope, mixed (and in some places contradictory) character with regard to its anti-authority/work stance, and finally, rendered a bit dissonant as a descriptive statement of the figure of the dishwasher by Jordan's embodied racial, national, and gendered privilege, particularly as it pertains to free mobility.

Still, there is much that an appreciation of these limits can offer with regard to developing an archipelagic understanding of the restaurant and the social relations within it. Jordan's entire worldview, as stated by the text, begins with a certain fatalistic observation about the lack of social mobility within American society:

⁴⁸ *Marine Corps Rifle Creed*. Marine Corps University / Research / Marine Corps History Division / Frequently Requested Topics /Marines' Rifle Creed (usmcu.edu)

Since I was going to start out poor and most likely end up poor, I decided not to waste time in between. Climb the career ladder? Hope to be patted on the head by bosses while trying to get rich in the American Dream scam? I decided, instead, to start out on the bottom rung—and stay there.⁴⁹

It would seem that a more global, critical, and intersectional framework would relativize Jordan's statement (empirically speaking, there are many rungs below the one which he considers to be the bottom) as well as highlight some of the forms of privilege which might be obscured by Jordan's emphasis on his class position, although Jordan's text itself indirectly illustrates some of this in its conclusion. After coming to a realization of the Sisyphean nature of the job and then abandoning his quest to wash dishes in all fifty states, Jordan's book ends with one final exercise of privilege which is related to mobility, whiteness, and citizenship. Jordan translates his grandparents' Celtic origins into Irish citizenship, and this allows him to move to Amsterdam to pursue the study of urban planning and bicycles.⁵⁰

Jordan's earlier descriptions of his working class origins emphasize scenes of Celtic immigrant family life intertwined with a sense of futility in the face of generational poverty—"my father had grown up in an impoverished family of eight living in a two room tenement apartment in Glasgow, Scotland...I learned very early on how one could start out poor, work hard all his life—and still end up poor."⁵¹ That Jordan is able to translate these same kinship ties to a secure residence within the European Union speaks to the deep differences which define Jordan's archipelagic relation with other working class dishwashers—I'm not aware of many dishwashers whose retirement plan includes casually moving to Europe as soon as the monotony of the work's repetition finally sets in. Thus, it is helpful to retain an awareness of the significant

⁴⁹ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 12

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 351

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 11

differences in access to resources, opportunity, and privileges, particularly with regard to race, within analysis of the brigade's field of subjectivities. The next section takes up the work of George Orwell, which provides a significantly less rosy, though similarly instructive account of washing dishes professionally.

Down and Out in Paris and London: The Plongeur

In a moment of honest reflection, Bourdain admits that “cooking professionally hurts”⁵² in ways which include physical pain, emotional exhaustion, and a deep sense of frustration with the feeling of being a cog in a hierarchical machine. Bourdain's dispirited assessment of the unequal social conditions in which one breaks themselves “on the wheel of commerce” could conceivably lead to a nihilistic rejection of culinary life (if not life itself), or perhaps instead nihilism could be rejected in favor of a militant desire to transform the dismal conditions which generate discontent. For Bourdain, nihilism is avoided through an affective reinvestment of belief, pride, and dedication to the culinary field, which takes the form of “taking refuge in some old friends,” by which Bourdain means several books which offer comfort, continuity, and the reminder that one is “part of a grand tradition.”⁵³ One of the key texts which Bourdain offers for this rejuvenating errand is George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, a dishwashing chronicle of a decidedly more sociological style than Jordan's folk travelogue. Orwell's text offers a wealth of useful description, insight, and politically instructive content, though it too has limits related to the author's embodied white male normativity and subsequently restricted analytic and epistemological field.

⁵² Anthony Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits*. (New York, NY: Bloomsburg Publishing, 2006), 95.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 96

Orwell's text bears some similarity to Jordan's in that it begins with a meditation on working class life, though it is clear that this experience is also one which is significantly relativized by embodied social advantage. In a voice which can only issue from a phenomenological vantage point of privilege, Orwell writes: "It is altogether curious, your first contact with poverty. You have thought so much about poverty, it is the thing you have feared your entire life... You thought it would be terrible, it is merely squalid and boring."⁵⁴ While this section prefigures a set of narratives which are no doubt genuine experiences of economic difficulty and scarcity, it is also notable that Orwell's discussion of poverty presents it as a foreign and largely contingent state of affairs, rather than something into which he was born and will likely remain. This is the sense in which Orwell's class grounded analysis can perhaps obfuscate other forms of privilege which an Archipelagic analysis would call attention to.

Orwell's text does engage a more explicitly political set of descriptions and meditations than does Jordan's, and while Orwell's framework carries its own blind spots, it does helpfully center inequality as a point of analytic emphasis. In this regard, it is useful with regard to tracing the hierarchical contours of the kitchen, and Orwell offers vivid accounts of the dishwasher's experience as the furthest site from Culinary Man's normative center. Still, Orwell's account must be critically stretched from an Archipelagic perspective in order to help clarify important features of Culinary Man's field of subjectivity and power.

One such example of the decidedly mixed character of Orwell's social commentary comes with his invocation of slavery as metaphor for culinary subjugation. Early into the narrative, Orwell notes that "a plongeur [dishwasher] is a slave's slave,"⁵⁵ and this rhetorical

⁵⁴ Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, 13

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 50

theme is repeated throughout the text.⁵⁶ At one point, Orwell engages in a global-comparative analysis of western dishwashers with regard to other stratified workers, and this rumination does acknowledge difference (and relative privilege) in a useful way despite some of its orientalist imagery, though this reflection is quickly undercut by Orwell's conclusion that the plongeur is "king compared to the rickshaw puller of gharry pony, but his case is analogous. He is the slave of the hotel."⁵⁷

This note is interesting in that it comes quite close to offering an archipelagic discussion which acknowledges difference alongside similarity with the potentiality of forming solidarity, though the recourse to double down on the metaphoric imagery of the slave disrupts this trajectory and distorts Orwell's analysis. This point will be taken up further below with reference to Orwell's text's concluding remarks on the social significance of the dishwasher.

With this critique in mind, Orwell's account still offers an important discussion of the stratified position which the dishwasher occupies within the brigade hierarchy, even offering a comparative picture of the low wage vis-à-vis the other positions in the kitchen.⁵⁸ The command structure of the kitchen, as experienced from the bottom rung, is also described in lucid detail in a manner which offers an illustrative offering of rhetorical content to Gary Fine's note above with regard to dishwashers having to accept orders which derive from well outside of the duties formally included in the job's duties. Orwell narrates one such scene through capturing the angry words hurled at him by a head chef:

Unspeakable Idiot! How many times have I told you not to bleed the beetroots? Quick, let me get to the sink! Put those knives away; get on with the potatoes. What have you done with my strainer? Oh, leave these potatoes alone. Didn't I tell you to skim the *bouillon*? Take that can of

⁵⁶ Ibid. 63, 117.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 119.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 70.

water off the stove. Never mind the washing up, chop this celery. No, not like that, you fool, like this. There! Look at you letting those peas boil over! Now get to work and scale these herrings. Look, do you call this plate clean? Wipe it on your apron. Put that salad on the floor. That's right, put it where I'm bound to step in it! Look out, that pot's boiling over! Get me down that saucepan. No, the other one. Put this on the grill. Throw those potatoes away. Don't waste time, throw them on the floor. Tread them in. Now throw down some sawdust; this floor's like a skating-rink. Look, you fool, that steak's burning! *Mon Dieu*, why did they send me an idiot for a *plongeur*?⁵⁹

Reading Orwell's passage above through its winding, humorous, and fatiguing accumulation of abuse, correction, and annoyance approximates the tedious affective state which fine dining dishwashers often experience alongside physical exhaustion. As a response, Orwell develops the counter-ethos of "Plongeur Morality," which essentially involves foregoing "scruples" and taking a combative stance against employers with the knowledge that they are "quite merciless to their employees."⁶⁰ Orwell's account of plongeur morality often contains a humorous emphasis on very petty forms of bricolage.⁶¹ A major example offered by Orwell includes one dishwasher stealing and drinking four liters of milk every day, despite the fact that "it wasn't that I wanted milk, you understand, because I hate the stuff; it was principle, just principle."⁶² Orwell's notion of plongeur morality is a significant point of influence on Pete Jordan, who notes that Orwell's book "sent me on my way," and one can certainly see the traces of this sensibility in Jordan's own ethos and style (notably including of course, the incorporation of Orwell's use of the French "plongeur").⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid. 109-110.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 58.

⁶¹ Again, this discussion relates to De Certeau's work, in which "bricolage," the improvisational act of "making do," is one of the main forms which tactics take. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 29.

⁶² Ibid. 103. I have witnessed similar occurrences in which one can poke a small hole into the tops of stored, though unopened, cans of beer. Some amount will spill out, but the often the can will then "settle" until it is opened later by a bartender, at which point it will become clear that the beer is half-empty and cannot be served. If lucky, this drink is then turned over to some member of the kitchen staff rather than thrown away, though even if not, one might gain the satisfaction of petty sabotage.

⁶³ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 55

In light of Orwell's antagonistic response to the slew of overbearing orders and directives listed above, Jordan's practiced capacity to avoid responsibility through feigning incompetence perhaps makes more sense, though relatedly, it can be noted that overall, *Down and Out* generally offers a much more faithful picture of the specifically fine dining genre of kitchen norms.⁶⁴

This is likely because Orwell's primary work is in the restaurants of Parisian hotels which, as crucial sites related to the French gastronomic tradition, bear strong resemblance to even significantly more contemporary (and non-hotel) culinary sites. It is in this sense that Bourdain, in reference to Orwell's text, exclaims "'I *know* these people!' was my first impression...the language and worldview of Orwell's cooks matched perfectly with my experiences of the time."⁶⁵

Discipline and Labor

The taking on of additional duties outside of one's usual job (thus, often outside of what one has received training for) also clearly presents an easy opportunity for disciplinary correction, in the Foucauldian sense. Orwell's passage above also recounts a very precise, fairly comprehensive, and enervating microphysics of power which reveals a lucid illustration of the way in which aesthetic practices (and the specific criteria, techniques, and movements required to successfully perform them) shape normalized modes of subjectivity.

Orwell further illustrates how the dish pit can serve as an introductory foray into Culinary Man's field of subjectivity through narrative descriptions of the kitchen's general mood of

⁶⁴ And indeed many, though not all, of Jordan's places of employment are of the more casual, non-traditional, and/or non-restaurant variety. The cheery and light affect which Jordan often strikes feels much less common within fine dining settings.

⁶⁵ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 96-97

“hurry and anger,”⁶⁶ and that this accelerated pace of production acts as a central force in cultivating subjectivity through repetitive practice which wears down the dish washer in material, affective, and cognitive ways. Orwell notes that “I calculated that one had to walk and run about fifteen miles during the day, and yet the strain of the work was more mental than physical. Nothing could be easier, on the face of it, than this stupid scullion work, but it is astonishingly hard when one is in a hurry.”⁶⁷ Becoming adjusted to the pace of dishwashing (and the kitchen more generally) fulfills an important disciplinary function of Culinary subjectivity as well since it socializes workers into individualized imperatives to police others (as opposed to forming solidarities). Orwell describes that “indeed the quarrels were a necessary part of the process, for the pace would never be kept up if everyone did not accuse everyone else of idling.”⁶⁸

Key to Orwell’s account is the extent to which this repeated process socializes one into the kitchen’s field of subjectivity, even if perhaps at something of an “entry level,” and somewhat inherently, deprives the agent of the cognitive resources to engage in critical, much less political, reflection. Orwell describes this in an instructive recollection that

There was—it is hard to express—a sort of heavy contentment, the contentment a well-fed beast might feel, in a life which had become so simple. For nothing could be simpler than the life of a *plongeur*. He lives in a rhythm between work and sleep, without time to think, hardly conscious of the exterior world.; his Paris has shrunk to the hotel, the Metro, a few *bistros*, and his bed.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Orwell, *Down and Out*, 56

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 61-62

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 74

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 90

Orwell doubles down on the point elsewhere, noting that “if plongeur thought at all, they would long ago have formed a union and gone on strike”⁷⁰ and that “it is much safer to keep them too busy to think.”⁷¹ This is, no doubt, an important insight that the sense of busyness, fatigue, and low wages attempt to keep the dishwasher “trapped by a routine which makes thought impossible,”⁷² even if Orwell’s conclusion about union formation feels more rhetorical than empirical.⁷³ Orwell’s further description of the dishwasher as “servile and without art”⁷⁴ succinctly captures the aesthetic distinction which grounds Culinary Man’s descriptive statement of self and from which springs the sharp difference in conferred value and results in the division of labor between chef and dishwasher.

Orwell concludes his meditation with an extended sociological reflection on the overall conditions and political implications which follow from the figure (and life) of the dish washer. Answering his own inquiry regarding the reasoning for the dishwashing position’s very existence, Orwell offers that “it does not follow that he is doing anything useful; he may be only supplying a luxury which, very often, is not a luxury.”⁷⁵ Mixing a Marxian account of material production with aesthetic criticism, Orwell expounds that

where is the *real* need of big hotels and smart restaurants? They are supposed to provide luxury, but in reality, they provide only a cheap, shoddy imitation of it...Some restaurants are better than others, but it is impossible to get as good a meal in a restaurant as one can get, for the same expense, in a private house.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Ibid. 117

⁷¹ Ibid. 120

⁷² Ibid. 117

⁷³ I.e., as many labor histories reveal, attempting to organize workers and engage in collective action is often perilous, practically difficult, and vulnerable to violent opposition, sabotage, and undermining from the state, police/military, cultural/social apparatuses and more. Failure to reflect on the capacities of desire alone cannot explain the lack of more organized dishwashing union formation.

⁷⁴ Orwell, *Down and Out*, 117

⁷⁵ Ibid. 118

⁷⁶ Ibid. 119

This point presents an important critique, which unsurprisingly very rarely comes under discussion within Culinary Man's field of discourse. Indeed, questioning the social need for the indulgent set of luxuries which the haute restaurant provides (for the most part, at the expense of its workers) would likely undermine the entire project of fine dining. Further, Orwell's note about the private sphere featuring better gastronomic offerings is provocative as well and potentially provides a crucial disruption of Culinary Man's public/private distinction and the gendered implications it holds for attributing value. Orwell's questioning of the social utility of the plongeur provides a useful political critique of the broader organization of labor in society,⁷⁷ though this insight also clarifies the assemblage of production pace, authority structure, and the expectation of constant busyness as a disciplinary formation within the kitchen.

While Orwell attaches a great deal of economic significance to the plight of the dishwasher (in that, it exists to provide luxuries for the bourgeois class), beneath the level of political economy, it is clear that expectations of hyper efficiency for the dishwasher are more about control, power, and discipline than they are about producing social goods. This point can be inferred partly because the expectation of busyness is a constant and universal one which is not always predicated on productive labor—it is a perpetual expectation that the individual be busy regardless of whether there is work to do. Gary Fine adds that “[cooks] become upset when they see the washers take breaks and often request that these workers do *something*, even if unrelated to their jobs.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ In this sense, Orwell's argument anticipates critiques of capitalist rationality from figures like Marcuse, Dewey, and the like.

⁷⁸ Fine, *Kitchens*, 96

David Graeber, whose theory of Bullshit Jobs (those occupations that are so pointless and unnecessary that even the employee cannot justify their existence⁷⁹), expands this argument as he recounts his own experiences as a dishwasher. Graeber recounts a time in which, after working hard to clean all the dishes efficiently and quickly during the peak (“rush”) moments of service, he and his fellow dishwashers took a moment of rest. Upon discovering this, the manager erupted: “I don’t care if there are no more dishes coming in right now, you’re on my time! You can goof around on your own time. Get back to work!”⁸⁰ When Graeber inquired as to what exactly they should be doing, absent any dishes to wash, the manager responded by tasking Graeber to scour baseboards which had already been recently cleaned. The insight, of course, is not only that the manager’s directives do not serve a social purpose, as Orwell denotes, but furthermore, even if one justifies the existence of dining spaces, Graeber’s tasks do not even seem to provide utility within the scope of the restaurant.

Moving beneath a technical, commonsensical, and perhaps naïve conception of dishwashing work as a practice of labor that while unpleasant, does provide something important through its rhythms of noble toil, Graeber reflects that “being forced to pretend to work, we discovered, was the most absolute indignity—because it was impossible to pretend it was anything but what it was: pure degradation, a sheer exercise of the boss’s power for its own sake.”⁸¹ Pete Jordan, similarly makes mention of the notorious “time to lean, time to clean” mantra which Jordan, acutely characterizing it as a mere justification for busywork and

⁷⁹ David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 3

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 93

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 93

revaluating kitchen norms for his own counter-ethos, reformulates as “If I’ve got time to lean, I’ve got time to sit on my ass.”⁸²

If one accepts that the dishwashing position exists as the most degraded, devalued, and menial base for the production of luxury for a select group of others, then the social function and political implications of a certain discourse of symbolic gestures of exhalation might come into view. By this, I mean that there is a tendency within kitchen discussions to repeat the truism that the dishwasher is the most important position within the restaurant. Eric Ripert contributes an example of this discourse by noting that “They’re [dishwashers] doing the most difficult job in the house, and they’re often the least recognized in the industry.”⁸³ Jordan recounts receiving this point of instruction from a fellow dishwasher early on in his education: “Dishwashers are the least-respected restaurant workers,” he told me, “yet the most important.”⁸⁴ There is indeed something fundamentally correct about the fact that dishwashers perform a highly necessary function within the restaurant’s production operations (in fact, this is the key to Jordan’s recognition of the “secret” labor power of the position).

However, by considering this discourse critically (and without dismissing the actual importance of dishwashers or belittling those who perform the job), it might be noted that this line of articulation functions, in effect, as an empty and largely symbolic form of consolation which likely helps to keep dishwashers within the fold of Culinary Man’s field of subjectivity. Malcolm X, one of the more politically astute (former) dishwashers on record, offers a useful point of insight related to this discussion as he recounts actualizing a desire to travel to New York by taking a job as a “fourth cook” within the small kitchen of a railroad car: “Fourth cook, I

⁸² Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 90

⁸³ Eric Ripert, *On the Line*, (New York, NY: Artisan Books, 2008), 29

⁸⁴ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 53

knew, was just a glorified name for a dishwasher, but it wouldn't be my first time, and just as long as I traveled where I wanted, it didn't make any difference to me.”⁸⁵

This passage offers another example of translating dishwashing into a capacity for mobility which otherwise might be difficult or obstructed (and Jordan does indeed take direct inspiration from Malcolm X⁸⁶), though perhaps more important here is the acute observation of the way in which the given descriptive statement (“fourth cook”) obscures the actual work/role of washing dishes, highlights the normative assumption that cooking is a more respectable/valuable activity, and by granting a fairly meaningless title, constitutes an attempt to pacify the sense of alienation which might otherwise emerge from the dish pit. At my own first dishwashing position within a fine dining restaurant, I remember being “coached” by a very enthusiastic, though highly inept—during this conversation, he set the triple sinks for pot washing up in reverse order, so that if one followed his system, pots would be first sanitized, then dipped into plain water, and finally, dropped into dirty, soapy liquid—manager that, if anyone inquired about my line of work, I should just report that I “help out in the kitchen.”⁸⁷

While I am not sure that this phrasing is any less degrading than “admitting” that I worked as a dishwasher, it is certainly instructive in disclosing the technology of description which helps to constitute kitchen subjectivity while obfuscating the actual social relations within it. If the dishwasher was truly valued as one of the most important positions, certainly there would be no hesitation to say the name of the position explicitly. More importantly, if dishwashers were actually valued to the extent that the repeated clichés suggest, then we might

⁸⁵ Malcolm X, Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1964.), 74

⁸⁶ Jordan, while discussing Malcom X's dishwashing tales, notes “Aah traveling while dishing. Or was it dishing while traveling? Either way, I wanted to do it too. Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 334.

⁸⁷ [last name], Mark. 2010. This conversation happened in a small fine dining restaurant committed to a “locavolist” image, if not so much in practice.

expect the associated wages, respect, and the capacity for decision-making (among other features of occupational status) to reflect this much more.

Gender, Genre, Race

Orwell offers a conclusion which, while succinct and direct, I argue is compromised by analytic distortions related to positionality. Orwell notes: “to sum up. A Plongeur is a slave. And a wasted slave doing stupid and unnecessary work.”⁸⁸ While Orwell’s political-economic critiques astutely identify the capitalist social relations which constitute large elements of dishwasher subjectivity, his commentary is severely undercut by a white supremacist epistemology which, while certainly indexed by the casual metaphoric language of slavery, becomes even more explicit in the closing notes of Orwell’s defense of the dishwasher’s dignity. Orwell offers that: “Fear of the mob is a superstitious fear. It is based on the idea that there is some mysterious, fundamental difference between rich and poor, as though they were two different races, like negroes and white men.”⁸⁹ Orwell’s racial essentialism fits well into the descriptive statements of Man that Wynter traces as part of her critique in which binary oppositions lock racial difference into a schema of absolute alterity. Orwell’s preference for Marxian inspired class analysis at the clear expense of a politics of antiracism is further undercut, from the perspective of an archipelagic ethos, by a set of patriarchal assumptions about gender as well, as is explored below.

To restate a central point, the contemporary situation of the dishwasher is, recalling Jayaraman’s note about white dishwashers in major cities, overdetermined by race. This fact reflects the translation of white supremacist assumptions into the division of labor and the

⁸⁸ Orwell, *Down and Out*, 121

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 121

institutional distribution of value, power, and agency. It is crucial to also note that the dishwashing position has strong and deeply held connections to patriarchal assumptions about labor as well—namely, that washing dishes falls under the domain of women’s responsibilities within the private sphere under the “traditional” gendered division of labor.

One can infer that this gendered coding of the activity of washing dishes itself has a lot to do with the specific composition of the kitchen’s hierarchy of tasks. In other words, it would not be all that difficult to imagine a different culinary world in which the dishwasher was the kitchen’s leader, barking commands from a dish pit out at chefs and cooks on the line—this is no more arbitrary or “unnatural” than the present situation. This scene would be virtually impossible to picture within patriarchal orders of reasoning, however, as the thorough coding of unpopular domestic chores as “women’s work”⁹⁰ so deeply saturates the apportioning of value and the division of labor. It can also be inferred that some of the overt emphasis on the filthy, physically demanding, and intensive qualities of the dishwasher is often presented in a distinctly masculinist style so as to mediate the always already “feminized” character of the work whose traces of signification transfer into the public sphere iteration of washing dishes. Orwell contributes one such notable example while making another explicit claim of essentialist difference and doubling down on Man’s gendered devaluation of work. Orwell writes:

[dishwashing] has not a trace of skill or interest; the sort of job that would always be done by women if women were strong enough...And yet, the *plongeurs*, low as they are, also have a kind of pride. It is the pride of the drudge—the man who is equal to no matter what quality of work. At that level, the mere power to go on working like an ox is about the only virtue attainable.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Caroline Kitchener, “Doing Dishes is the Worst.” *The Atlantic.com* (April 3, 2018).

⁹¹ Orwell, *Down and Out*, 77

Objectionable as much of this passage is, Orwell's notes here give some insight into the puzzling question of how culinary workers can continue to show up to jobs which exploit them. It would seem that, beyond the mere transactional qualities of labor, wages, and time, work offers kitchen subjects an affective dimension, and it is in drawing out the gendered dimensions of this experience that Orwell's description is useful. On this telling, a worker can actually feel pride in putting in long hours of repetitive work for poverty wages because, through discursive reinforcement, it allows one to *feel* like a man—perhaps even a “Man?”

Though Orwell is one of his heroes, Jordan's text breaks somewhat with the strict essentialism of *Down and Out*, even though it still results in a similarly gendered image of the dishwasher. Jordan, while describing another dishwasher whose appearance struck him as suspect, narrates: “In her late twenties, overweight and clad in sweats, she looked more like a babysitter or a Dairy Queen cashier than a pearl diver [dishwasher]. It wasn't merely because she was female—I knew plenty of great dish gals. But there was definitely something off about her.”⁹²

Jordan's narrative tries to reassure the reader that his assessment is not grounded in overtly sexist lines of reasoning (a low ethical bar to clear), though the sentiment reinforces many of Culinary Man's gendered assumptions. The mention of the dishwasher in question as (what Jordan perceives as) “overweight” likely indexes the disproportional scrutiny levied upon women's appearance in patriarchal society, neoliberal notions of the management of self, and deeply normative understandings of the body more broadly.⁹³ Further, Jordan's comments also

⁹² Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 100

⁹³ One could object that this charge reads too much into Jordan's statement, which could be intended as a value-neutral description, though Jordan repeats these themes in starker presentation later in the text with demeaning descriptions of South Carolinian customers as “fatties...pigs gorging their countrified slop...the last lard-ass...” Ibid. 346

recall the gendered division of the private/public spheres through its negative association of the woman with the (devalued) domestic work of childcare.

That this type of degraded work can be so easily paired with fast food also reveals an important reflection of Culinary Man's reification of the fine dining site as the paramount of professional gastronomical experience—the “lower” orders might as well be part of the private sphere. Finally, Jordan's rejection of Orwell's explicit disavowal of the existence of non-male dishwashers is undercut by its recourse to the descriptive statement of “dish gals” which not only constitutes the imbueing of gender into a previously gender-neutral descriptive category (the dishwasher) but additionally, infantilizes someone who Jordan himself characterizes as “in her late twenties.”

Jordan and Orwell share another notable discursive theme in that each reiterates a preoccupation with the ways in which working as a dishwasher can impede participation in the heteronormative institution of marriage. Frustrated romance is a reoccurring theme throughout Jordan's narrative and, for the most part, this occurrence is related back to struggles issuing from dishwashing work itself and not, say, from Jordan's constant and sporadic travel, evasion of commitment, and avoidance of responsibility. The reference to Bukowski's question of “what woman chooses to live with a dishwasher?”⁹⁴ resurfaces throughout Jordan's text, and Orwell also critically reiterates several times that the life of the plongeur precludes marriage,⁹⁵ or “if he marries, his wife must work too.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Ibid. 47

⁹⁵ Orwell, *Down and Out*, 89

⁹⁶ Ibid. 117

Without wanting to dismiss the truth in these reflections—that is, that the low wages, long hours, and nontraditional scheduling of the dishwasher’s job do indeed make social relationships, particularly romantic ones, difficult to cultivate—there is still something worth considering in the way in which these statements feed into a broader discourse of the “good life” which revolves around heterosexual coupling, a gendered division of labor centering a male “breadwinner” (also a major theme of Wynter’s *Man*⁹⁷), and a fusing of capitalist imperatives with masculinist modes of desiring. The point here is not that Orwell and Jordan are necessarily morally blameworthy for observing with frustration the (again, very real) barriers to extra-kitchen social life, but that the centered features of this discourse (at the expense of others) contribute to a broader overrepresentation of Man as a hegemonic desiring project. This further helps to constitute the figure of the dishwasher as a heteronormatively male agent. I, too, am a contributor to this discourse—a fellow dishwasher named Bryan and I used to routinely make up silly songs to pass the time at work and one such chorus connects heterosexual desire with culinary labor as it remarks: “She’s number one on my wish list, but I spend too much time in the dish pit.”⁹⁸

In sum, while Orwell and Jordan, respectively, offer genuinely useful descriptions and analyses of the practices, affects, and experiences of working professionally as a dishwasher, they are limited in various ways by their inability to step outside of a white, male, and normative epistemological framework. There are certainly objections one can make on ethical grounds (particularly of several of Orwell’s passages), though analytically, these perspectival sources are also fraught in their inability to account for a wider set of experiences, an imperative which is

⁹⁷ Scott, “The Re-Enchantment of Humanism...”, 157

⁹⁸ [last name], Bryan, Fallon, Jordan. 2010-2011? “Untitled Dish Song.” Roanoke, Virginia.

particularly crucial for analysis of contemporary fine dining. Orwell's essentialist disavowal of women holding the capacity to perform dishwashing labor is thoroughly discredited by the existence of many thousands of female identifying dishwashers in the United States, a group whose minority demographic status within the occupation is currently trending upwards.⁹⁹

While there is much diagnostic information to be gleaned from Orwell's and Jordan's narratives (both from their primary accounts as well as from analyzing the forms of discourse which these two extremely popular texts offer), an analysis of Culinary Man's field of subjectivity will remain limited to the extent that it stays solely within the phenomenological field of white male dishwashers. For this reason—and despite the challenges associated with doing so within my own project—I recommend a perceptual switch toward consideration of dishwashers who reside outside of this normative matrix of identities. In conclusion, I would like to engage in a limited discussion of one such anecdotal example of a non-white, non-male dishwasher. Jordan's and Orwell's texts suggest that Man's overrepresentation operates even at the more marginal level of the dishwasher and, given such, we need to seek out and enable space for a more heterogenous set of narratives from below the brigade.

Alejandra

By tracing the narratives offered by Orwell and Jordan above, I have tried to work through the descriptive uses and epistemological limits which emerge from both texts, respectively, for the purposes of considering the dishwasher as the lowest site on Culinary Man's brigade hierarchy. In this stratified role, I argue that the dishwasher is socialized and disciplined into Culinary Man's field of normative subjectivity through a repetitive cycle of practices and

⁹⁹ Data USA Demographics: Dishwashers. 2019. www.datausa.io/profile/soc/dishwashers#demographics.

discourses which are oriented toward the glorification and preservation of white male authority and mastery.

I also suggest that there are two dominant trajectories for dishwashers within the fine dining kitchen. The first is the “steppingstone” model, which exists as a starting point for those who will become Culinary Man. This trajectory is, unsurprisingly, dominated (though not exclusively) by white men, and additionally, it functions discursively to uphold the progressive narrative thrust toward Culinary Man as a teleological point (though this point is taken up in later chapters pertaining more specifically to the brigade). The second trajectory is much closer to Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s notion of “the savage slot,” which Trouillot describes as a “pre-established compartment within a wider symbolic field which helps to constitute the west.”¹⁰⁰ In this sense, I argue that the dishwashing position occupies a signifying space which is coded with devalued and negative associations with forms of genre deviance (relative to Culinary Man as a normative center) notably including race, gender, and nationality.

Trouillot’s contention maps well onto Wynter’s framework, as both theorists offer compelling arguments which analytically fuse the historical and material expressions of coloniality with genealogical accounts of the emergence and development of narrative elaborations of Europe/The West. Trouillot’s claim similarly identifies discursive tendencies toward linearity, teleology, notions of progress, and mono-universalist concepts of truth,¹⁰¹ all of which are major elements of the story which Culinary Man tells about himself. Analogous to the historical account Trouillot offers, the dishwasher often plays the role of the savage which helps construct, through its subjugated relationality, Culinary Man as a civilized, masterful, and

¹⁰⁰ Michel- Rolph Trouillot “Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness.” *Global Transformations*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 9

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 13

legitimated figure of authority. As the subjugated other, the dishwasher can sometimes be progressively “civilized” (i.e., disciplined into normative conduct and constitution) and brought further up into the brigade’s hierarchy. Some amount of this occurring is useful—perhaps even necessary—for maintaining Culinary Man’s hegemony and preserving a certain meritocratic imagery, as it suggests that it is indeed possible to pull oneself up by the kitchen clogs.

Additionally, the incorporation of a few elite minorities into the upper ranks of Culinary Man reduces some of the critical pressure on Culinary Man to diversify. For the majority of those who wash dishes, however, the dish pit functions as a permanent site of work which upholds a division of labor which is continuous with a historically constituted arrangement of society in the aristocratic image of white supremacist, hetero-normative, patriarchal Man. The two trajectories ultimately both help uphold and cohere around this shared point of normativity (Culinary Man), though a brief parsing of their respective characteristics might be of use.

The first trajectory is the one which eventually leads to an actualization of a path of becoming-Culinary Man. In this narrative, the dish pit is merely the first stop on the road to greatness. Chefs like Thomas Keller, Michael Schlow, and Daniel Boulud enthusiastically report having washed dishes in previous career stages,¹⁰² and for these and other white male chefs, the dish pit is indeed a steppingstone to greater opportunity. Bourdain recounts: “it was from these humble beginnings that I began my strange climb to chefdom. Taking that one job as a dishwasher at the Dreadnaught pushed me down the path I still walk today.”¹⁰³ For this genre of culinary worker, the dish pit offers an initiation into the practical operations, normalized modes

¹⁰² Tom Sietsema, “At the Heart of Every Restaurant.” *The Washington Post.com*. August 7, 2017.

¹⁰³ Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, 20

of conduct, and disciplinary rules of the kitchen, and this socialization provides the groundwork for further development of culinary subjectivity.

For instance, while washing dishes, one learns to move efficiently, repetitively, and without much hesitation, thought, or question. While “later” stages within the brigade offer different forms of disciplinary practice and discourse, they build upon and complement those nascent forms of subjectivity cultivated within the dish pit. While there are certainly exceptions, this path is overwhelmingly dominated by the white men who will eventually go on to become Culinary Man, though it is also worth noting that certain traits (culinary school experience, previous training or connections, nepotism, etc.) allow for some kitchen workers to skip over the dish pit entirely and begin at the lower levels of the brigade line. For many others, particularly racialized immigrants from Mexico, Central, and South America, the white man’s point of humble beginning more closely resembles a terminal position.

For those who hold embodied and identarian characteristics (race, gender, nationality, and so on) which mark them as the most deviant with respect to Culinary Man’s white, male, normative center, the dish pit is, generally speaking, a permanent site of toil. One of the largest practical impediments which prevents racialized workers from outside of the United States from progressing beyond the “unskilled” arena of the dish pit is often justificatory recourse to the “language barrier.” The neutral phrasing of this term suggests an unfortunate circumstance in which adequate forms of communication—the type which would make cooperative work possible—are simply not present. Thus, inevitably, those who do not speak English cannot move up the ladder. It is additionally not uncommon for immigrants without documentation to take low rung kitchen work, given the lack of viable alternatives and the restaurant’s general tendency not to ask too many questions if it stands to benefit.

A more structural view of this situation might emphasize the degree to which global, political, and economic forces encourage (or force) immigration into the United States, while criminalizing those who take the great risk of moving across the border. Upon arrival, vulnerable immigrants are folded into menial labor within the restaurant where those in managerial positions—which continue to be largely comprised of white men—do not speak languages other than English. In this way, an additional limit to occupational advancement is built into an already established (racialized) division of labor, and for those without citizenship, the threat of deportation and criminal prosecution further looms to discourage worker advocacy, much less militancy.

The particular situation of the undocumented and racialized dishwasher is something which I want to be careful not to generalize about or stereotype, though I conclude by privileging a description of one such worker because the accumulated layers of stratification, exploitation, and domination which target her also provide a unique epistemological vantage point for analysis. As such, Wynter's style of standpoint theory directs us to center these sites of subjugated knowledges, affects, and experiences, particularly if we are to reach for a more comprehensive understanding of Culinary Man's hegemony. Jordan and Orwell both offer useful depictions of this process of disciplinary normalization, though the embodied privileges attached to each effectively prevents them from considering these politically relevant features of professional dishwashers, to say nothing of the gap in lived experience.

My own experiential framework, while resonant—I've washed a lot of dishes and for longer than many other cooks—is similarly limited by privileges related to race, gender, citizenship status, and relative class position. For this reason, I argue that we need a fuller exploration of the criminalized, racialized, and gendered contours of the field of dishwashing

subjectivity—and it is a heterogeneous field, even though I conclude with only one genre from it—including the affective, phenomenological, and social-political dimensions as experienced and theorized from this vantage point. While I call for further attention to this domain of human experience, particularly given the overrepresentation of white male commentary within the marginal field of dishwashing narratives, analytically I cannot really offer these things. In following an archipelagic approach of seeking counter-narratives to Culinary Man, I am compelled by Venus E. Evans-Winter’s ethical formulation that “no human being (or in our case researcher) can justify their right to tell someone else’s story. There seems to be more magic in telling one’s own story as it takes place alongside other characters in their stories.”¹⁰⁴

In 2011, I began a job as a dishwasher at a small, expensive, and well reputed fine dining restaurant in Roanoke, Virginia, where my brother was a server. True to the models of fine dining (even in Southwest Virginia), pay was low, the hours were long and physically taxing, and the small kitchen’s affective atmosphere—run by a talented though tyrannical young chef who had recently returned from working high end restaurants in Boston—was abusive, disciplinary, and routinely unpleasant. While I did not enjoy working in the dish pit there, the very small geography of the kitchen did provide a very close view of the brigade’s operations. The cooks—all white men—were seemingly in perpetual fear of the head chef’s mean spirited disciplinary gaze and, similarly, were in a near constant state of competition, frustration, and surveillance of one another. The restaurant was generally quite busy and so the kitchen was almost always embroiled in hurried, intensive, and stressful affects. As such, while I worked as

¹⁰⁴ Venus E. Evans Winter, *Black Feminism in Qualitative Inquiry: A Mosaic for Writing Our Daughter’s Body*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 105

the only dishwasher during the week, on the weekends, a second worker was required to join me toward the back of the tiny kitchen in the even more cramped quarters of the dish pit.

In a point of confirmation of some of Pete Jordan's narrative as well as Bourdain's diagnosis of dishwashers as transient, there was indeed a revolving door of workers who failed to be persuaded to stay in the low paying job where one is consistently yelled at while scrubbing the discarded plates of bourgeois customers in a wet, bleach stained, 3x3 pit. I got along with and enjoyed the company of many of these short time dishwashers and never resented the moments when they inevitably found better employment or failed to show up, though eventually a Honduran woman named Alejandra came into the position after a tall, quiet, white American man (named "Korean Will" by the kitchen for his inability to ever stop talking about his visits to and interest in South Korea) failed to show up to a shift and Alejandra, summoned as a favor by a Honduran cook, Osmin (who worked with her at a different restaurant), agreed to fill in last minute.

For the next two years or so, I worked with Alejandra every weekend and we became good friends, largely by virtue of working so closely within a small space, in a horizontally structured department (no "head dishwashers"), and perhaps because of the fact that no one else *could* talk to her—she had very recently arrived in the United States and did not speak any English, the only language spoken by the kitchen—and no one else really *wanted* to talk to me. Amidst the competitive, hyper masculinist, and exclusive social environment of the kitchen, Alejandra was a genuinely kind person, unbothered and unimpressed by the aesthetic creations of the chef, and a cooperative, hardworking, and generous worker.

I experienced none of the petty squabbles about taking long "cigarette" breaks, avoiding the worst pots, or jockeying battles over "the good towels" with Alejandra that I had litigated

with some of her predecessors. Alejandra and I helped each other practice Spanish and English, respectively, shared and traded food—truth be told, she came out on the losing side of that exchange as her traditional Honduran fare, though modest, far outpaced the pieced together meals I scrambled to throw together each day before leaving for work—and offered each other social outlets and support which made the devalued and dirty labor much more tolerable. We worked together to shape the dish pit as a tiny enclave of solidarity within the angry sea of the kitchen, though the differences in our embodied positionalities remained stark limits with regard to more fully inhabiting one another's respective social worlds.

Like others who have traveled to work in the dish pits of the United States, Alejandra left a situation of dire poverty, few occupational opportunities, and a family back in Honduras. In many of our conversations, Alejandra proudly and cheerily (though often with a wistful trace) showed me pictures and told stories of her young daughter, whose growth and life back home was being supported by Alejandra's labor in the U.S. This was Alejandra's sole reason for working in restaurants, and this stood in stark contrast to the many of the other kitchen workers' affective attachments to haute cuisine, aspirations to win accolades, and ambitions to move up to better positions at restaurants of higher prestige.

Washing dishes, for Alejandra, was one way of fulfilling her familial responsibilities and enacting an ethic of care which had already led to her undertake great risk by traveling informally across the border. Alejandra worked a second dish job prior to coming to join me for evening shifts, and at the end of the exhausting nights, she would quickly dart down the block from the restaurant to catch the bus across town to get home.

Unlike the rest of the kitchen, Alejandra never partook in the afterwork drinking which took place at the restaurant's bar and/or in the crowded walk-in refrigerator. This was not out of

commitment to temperance, but because she did not have the extra time, money, or risk to expend on such a pursuit. This state of affairs—exhaustion from two menial, underpaid shifts in a dish pit, a sense of urgency to catch (what was generally) the last city bus of the evening, and the knowledge that a short night of sleep would bring her back once more to the kitchen early the next morning—produces an affective state which likely tells us much more than white, male dish commentators about the broader political implications, operations of power, and social positioning of the dishwasher as a position within Culinary Man's field of subjectivity. Plongeur morality, hardly a universal experience of the dishwasher, is indeed something of luxury and a privilege.

An archipelagic ethos requires an acknowledgment of the differences among but also an effort to constitute solidarities between workers, and as such, it is helpful to read issues of genre normativity, labor exploitation, and discipline/domination from the perspective of those whose stratified positionality provides unique analytic insight. This point is worth repeating, as there seems to be a real scarcity of phenomenological accounts of the dish pit from these kinds of stratified perspectives. Orwell and Jordan both provide accounts which issue from relatively lower class positions within affluent western countries, but by virtue of other forms of privilege, the dish pit is a temporary steppingstone for each.

Even Jordan, who so thoroughly rejects culinary ambition, uses his admittedly longer than most experiences in the dish pit to engage in travel, leisure, and adventure while figuring out what he really wants to do (not to mention, translating his story into a highly visible memoir, when no such book seems forthcoming for Alejandra). Orwell, too, moves on to other things after his stint washing dishes, but we are still in need of a reckoning with the racialized division of labor that traps some dishwashers in the position terminally.

When it came time to move one of us up to the position of prep cook, it seems to go without saying that I was selected over Alejandra. While I had worked there longer and thus was “next in line” for a job that came with slightly higher pay, better hours, and less filth, there is an inescapable sense in which a more insidious dynamic was at play. I was in no financial position to turn down the promotion, and of course, Alejandra was ecstatic at my stroke of “luck” (*Felicidades, Coloco!*), though a heavy feeling of guilt weighed on me as I traded buckets of chemical cleaning agents for bus tubs full of carrots, onions, and celery. Despite our going through the rhetorical motions of indicating that, surely, soon enough Alejandra’s time would come next, this was not to be the case. While I explored the distinct features of prep work which constitute it as a different, though complimentary assemblage of tasks, techniques, and discourses (which is explored in the next chapter), Alejandra continued to work in the dish pit, now with her own revolving cast of transitory companions. When I moved to line cooking positions, new (generally, white, male) prep cooks were hired on while Alejandra stayed for years in the same spot.

From the perspective of white, capitalist, managerial logic, this makes obvious sense—why replace Alejandra with someone less likely to work with the dutiful reliability, quiet temperament, and precarious intensities of a vulnerable worker with loved ones to care for and much to lose? While again Alejandra is a real person (though I have changed her name) who I know and love, her situation fits the ideal type of Wynter’s zero point of alterity with respect to constituting Culinary Man through negative, binary, and oppositional relations.

Again, the narrative accounts of white, male dishwashers can only tell us so much about the field of power, subjectivity, and relations which compose Culinary Man as a normative organizing force and an unquestioned teleological aim. In the context of Wynter’s argument that

Man's overrepresentation has colonized the category of the human in the image of a white, male, European prescriptive subjectivity, Fine's sociological description of the dishwashers as "functionally nonpersons"¹⁰⁵ succinctly captures the normative operations of genre within the kitchen. Thus, the dish pit performs an important set of functions with regard to maintaining this overrepresentation, and in further analyzing specific features of other sites (and levels) within the kitchen hierarchy, the nature of Culinary Man's hegemony becomes more clear. The next chapter continues this investigation by examining the rung above the dish pit, that of the prep cook.

¹⁰⁵ Fine, *Kitchens*, 98

Chapter 2. Everything in Place: The Prep Cook's Organizational Discipline

A discussion post featured in a social media group comprised of line cooks (and dedicated to culinary conversation) from November 21, 2021, asks: “Hey can someone explain the difference between a prep cook and a line cook?” The author clarifies that they are unfamiliar with the notion of a prep cook as, where they work, each line cooks simply does the work needed for service each night. Throughout the ensuing discussion, the author also elaborates that they work in a small establishment in Australia which exclusively offers dinner service and does a much smaller volume of sales than what is typical of many (even fine dining) restaurants. While the tone of the conversation quickly (and unsurprisingly) devolves into exchanges of machismo (more or less, high volume, haute cuisine Americans belittling the “tiny” country of Australia’s quaint fare vs. the author and allies scoffing at the idea of line cooks needing the help of additional bodies), the discussion and initial question are useful points of inquiry with regard to continuing the exploration of brigade subjectivity. This chapter seeks to discover the particular practices and unique characteristics which position the prep cook’s subjectivity in relation to Culinary Man’s field of governance.

Several of the descriptive statements offered in the above post’s discussion can help to initiate our investigation. One commenter hints at the intensive and precise practices of prep work which constitute culinary subjectivity, noting that: “ They don’t grasp either hyper meticulous prep where you need 15-20 elements per dish which simply cannot be done by a single cook, or high volume all day open kitchens...”¹ Certainly, as I argue as well, the standards

¹ Response to post in the Facebook group, “Life of a Line cook 2.0.” Nov, 21, 2021.

and specifications needed to meet the aesthetic expectations installed by haute cuisine are used to legitimate the expansion of the labor force required to meet those goals. In a similar vein, another commenter expands on the nature of this labor force by noting: “weird flex dude but ok a prep cook is a kid that you pay almost nothing, and he does as much prep for the line cooks who make it hot.”² Indeed, another response (and my favorite) simply writes: “Prep cooks make \$10 hr. Line cooks make \$10.25.”³

In this chapter, I seek to describe the kinds of training/socialization, disciplinary norms, and the division of labor which characterize the disciplinary stratification which is experienced at the level of the prep cook. Beginning with an exploration of “mise en place,” which is the philosophy of organization that shapes the kitchen (and begins to be developed at the level of the prep worker), I consider the implications of culinary modes of organizing space, structuring time, and practicing techniques. Next, I seek to clarify the role of bodies, both at the level of physical positioning as well as with regard to categories of social stratification. The chapter concludes with an anecdote intended to summarize and foreground the theme of Culinary Man’s disciplinary gaze, which will be further developed in the next chapter.

Mise en Place

Mise en place, a phrase whose French translation literally denotes “put in place,” is the primary organizing principle of the brigade and, as I argue, it is a logic which crucially undergirds the normative subjectivity types produced by Culinary Man. Typically, this system is first introduced to kitchen workers when they begin prep work, though it remains a continuous fixture of culinary practice at all ascending levels as well. In what follows, I seek to offer a brief

² Ibid, response.

³ Ibid

review of the major features, militaristic dimensions, and contemporary discourse around *mise en place* which can elucidate the central role which this notion plays as a subjectivity-forming philosophy.

Journalist Dan Charnas introduces a short article on *mise en place* by noting that “The system that makes kitchens go is called *mise-en-place*, or, literally, ‘put in place.’ It’s a French phrase that means to gather and arrange the ingredients and tools needed for cooking.”⁴ This succinct and formalistic definition provided by Charnas is certainly on target, although for my purposes, it is also of crucial importance to explore the political implications, dynamics of power, and placement of *people*, within the organizational logic of the brigade. I argue that the principle of *mise en place* acts as a crucial component in licensing the brigade’s hierarchical arrangement of governance as well as the kitchen’s division of labor. After a brief review of the disciplinary tendencies within Culinary Man’s normative deployment of *mise-en-place* as an organizational logic pertaining to tools, operations, and people, I seek to further outline the stratified ordering of bodies and to describe the surveillance regime which coheres around *mise en place* as the brigade’s underlying organizational logic.

Tools

At its most surface level explanation, *mise en place* offers the simple directive to gather and arrange all of the tools and items which will be required for culinary production. Generally, cooks do this task immediately upon arriving at work each day and thus, *mise en place* becomes a standard routine. As part of its commonsense, normative *mise en place* dictates that the same

⁴ Dan Charnas, “For a More Ordered Life, Organize Like a Chef.” *NPR*. Aug 11, 2014, npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/08/11/338850091/for-a-more-ordered-life-organize-like-a-chef

arrangement of materials and tools (and the one which is deemed as a best practice to be most efficient) should be repeated each time. Grant Achatz recounts being trained to set up *mise en place* at Thomas Keller's restaurant, The French Laundry—widely renowned within haute cuisine discourses—by noting that

There was only one way to do something—his way. The bain-marie was in the same spot every time, and the spoon and palette knife handle always faced the same way. The *mise en place* rail was set up in the same order every day at the exact same time. The section ran like a machine because it was consistent and almost mechanical. ‘This is the way Chef likes it. Do it this way’ was the only explanation every given.⁵

Achatz's narration reflects Wynter's arguments that Man's overrepresentation functions centrally to impose one proper mode of conduct at the expense of all others. For Wynter, Man represents “himself” as *the* human, rather than one of many variants or genres. Through *mise en place*, a similar phenomenon occurs as haute cuisine practices are constructed, through disciplinary repetition, as the sole (legitimate) mode of producing food correctly. The arrangement of equipment in a manner which maximizes efficient use sits in harmony with the military model of keeping one's weapons, tools, and materials (including the self) “always ready.”⁶ This theme also finds resonance in the French expression for culinary tools, “*batterie de cuisine*,” or “kitchen artillery.”

Achatz's quote above also illustrates that the practices which become codified as normative “best practices” stem explicitly from Culinary Man's presumed authority, knowledge, and mastery. Crucially, *mise en place* offers a strategy of spatial organization which arranges bodies in relation to materials (and one another) in a manner which subtly shapes conduct in

⁵ Grant Achatz, *Life On the Line: A Chef's Story of Chasing Greatness, Facing Death, And Redefining the Way We Eat*. (New York, NY: Random House, 2012), 82.

⁶ Various branches and companies of the military utilize this slogan, sometimes in the Latin form, *Semper Paratus*, as is the case with the United States Coast Guard and National Guard.

ways which yield productive, docile, and routinized dispositions. This theme (explored in greater depth below) is a crucial element of the brigade's disciplinary functioning.

Additionally, the structure of command and the precise micromanagement of very fine details constitute important ways in which Culinary Man disciplines the conduct of normative subjects. Differently put, the prescription for “proper” spatial management offered by *mise en place* is a direct extension of Culinary Man's ostensibly superior knowledge and so acts as a mode of disciplinary governance. Through repetition, the ordering of *mise en place* rises to the level of an unarticulated—because at a certain point, it need not be described explicitly any longer—presupposition about the best way to organize space. Importantly, this normative arrangement cannot tolerate (or even make sense of) alternative or “delinquent” arrangements, modes of conduct, or styles of thinking, as any departure from the norm—even seemingly insignificant or negligible ones—constitutes an interruption of repetition and the threat of difference. As a minor illustration of this phenomena, I can personally recall having had managing chefs survey and then rearrange my tools while working—even during busy dinner services. Controlling space (and by extension, bodies) in this way constitutes a central component of *mise en place* as a disciplinary technology.

Apart from “merely” expressing Culinary Man's hegemonic governance, the *mise en place* system is also quite clearly a demonstration of the normative productivist sensibilities which drive fine dining operations. The purpose of carefully arranging and organizing tools and materials is to streamline tasks and to maximize efficiency. Thus, a strong neoliberal sensibility sits at the heart of *mise en place*'s organizational logic. In this vein, a telling account of *mise en place* as an economizing modality is provided by Chef Michael Pardus, instructor at the Culinary Institute of America. Pardus, appearing as a guest on the podcast of culinary author, Michael

Ruhlman, discusses *mise en place* at length and extols both the productive as well as protective virtues it offers. Pardus warns that

if you don't have everything in place, then you're necessarily going to have a break in your pace or your flow...that's going to interrupt that one sequence, but you repeat those interruptions over the course of an evening service several times or more and you don't have a cohesive flow, you don't have calm, you don't have focused attention, you have something that may border on chaos...⁷

Within Pardus's account, it is clear that *mise en place* plays the role of keeping chaos at bay so that production can continue unabated. Pardus expands upon these reflections a few minutes later by noting that "it [*mise en place*] is also psyche...structure sets you free."⁸ Apart from merely offering a system of physical organization, Pardus presents *mise en place* as a doctrine which provides psychological comfort and practical safety against the catastrophic uncertainties of disorganization. On Pardus's telling, *mise en place* even provides freedom by way of submission to structure. Importantly, this genre of freedom is undergirded by rigid and repetitive organization, stratifying hierarchy, and an imperative toward productivism.

Pardus finishes his interview with a parting anecdote about cooking in the dark, which Ruhlman describes as "a perfect description of the effectiveness of the philosophy of *mise*."⁹ As Pardus notes, most commercial kitchens operate using gas as an energy source and consequently, they can continue to cook even if the power were to go out. Pardus describes chefs who keep headlamps on hand for just such circumstances and thus, "for everyone else it's a chaotic mess, for you it's like 'yep, planned this'...and things just went on like they were supposed to."¹⁰ This story is revealing in that it outlines the normative commitment to work that even a power

⁷ Michael Ruhlman, "Mise en Place." *From Scratch with Michael Ruhlman* (Podcast, Nov 27, 2019), 14min, 30sec.

⁸ Ibid. 16min.

⁹ Ibid. 23 min.

¹⁰ Ibid. 25 min.

outage—which, as an aside, might potentially bring other associated health/regulatory, accessibility, and safety concerns for restaurant operation which do not seem to appear in Pardus’s calculations—cannot interfere with.

Pardus further comments on the practical aspects of cooking by headlamp by noting that “everything is in place, you don’t need it to be fully illuminated, but you do need to see what’s immediately in front of you...if you stick out your hand at a right angle, that’s where the salt and pepper always is.”¹¹ This note again reinforces the rigid necessity of consistent and relational positioning of bodies and materials for the purpose of Culinary Man’s mastery and organization of the chaotic. Pardus’s illustration underscores the spatial strategy (which is explored more deeply below) which undergirds the controlled economy of motions, gestures, and bodily movements which constitutes a crucial element of the brigade’s disciplinary normativity.¹² Additionally, the description of cooks working with restricted vision under dim light and only “needing” to pay attention to what is directly required in order to keep production going provides apt metaphoric imagery, more broadly, for Culinary Man’s normative mode of subjectivity.

While *mise en place* imparts a central concern for assembling tools and curating space into environments which are conducive to productivity, clearly there is more going on beyond mere physical organization. Charnas aptly sums up the salvationist textures (protection against chaos), productivist labor ethic, as well as the transformative and disciplinary subjectivity effects of *mise en place* as he writes: “but for many culinary professionals, the phrase connotes something deeper. Some cooks call it their religion. It helps them coordinate vast amounts of

¹¹ Ibid. 25 min

¹² Again, the phrasing of “controlled economy” is not meant to describe a repressive apparatus which grinds subjects into compliance. Rather, the sense of control mobilized here invokes a notion of the hegemonic arrangement(s) which emerges from a heterogenous (and mostly decentralized, in a sense) arrangement of normative practices, discourses, and sets of relations, which subjects generally opt into voluntarily.

labor and material and transforms the lives of its practitioners through focus and self-discipline.”¹³

Mise Time

Having one’s tools in order, while important, is certainly only one of several components which are necessary for culinary production. As such, mise en place also offers significant discursive focus on modes of sequencing operations and organizing time. The sense of temporality offered by mise en place is similarly a productivist one that is grounded in measures of efficiency and it pursues this directive by means of a reductionist approach to sequencing operations and the precise planning of time. In briefly exploring these dimensions of mise en place, I hope to further highlight the disciplinary virtues which it espouses.

In basic terms, mise en place directs one to elaborate how tasks will be accomplished by explicitly listing the specific order and timing for each step. Charnas, who first became interested in the concept of mise en place while working in the music industry, has subsequently turned toward exploring how mise en place can be applied to occupational and personal contexts which lay outside of the culinary world,¹⁴ and much of Charnas’s engagement centers on the organization of time. Charnas, using mise en place as a lens, generally divides activities into two temporal categories which include intensive work and process work.¹⁵ Intensive work is that which is carried out physically and directly—chopping an onion serves as an example of this “hands on” mode of labor.¹⁶ Process work involves other activities which a task requires, but are largely either delegative or prefigurative—turning on an oven or sending an email.¹⁷ This

¹³ Dan Charnas, “Organizing Like a Chef Makes for Good Habits.” *NPR*. Jan 2, 2015.

¹⁴ Charnas has published two books on the subject; *Work Clean* (2016), and *Everything in its Place* (2017).

¹⁵ Dan Charnas, *Work Clean: What Great Chefs Can Teach Us About Organization*, (New York, NY: Rodale, 2016), 106

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 108

division of tasks also underwrites the kitchen's division of labor in that much of the executive chef's process work entails organizing the allocation of tasks to subordinates.

Charnas highlights this dual relationship with time and contends that a successful *mise en place* must organize these two forms of activity with specific planning in order to optimize productivity. In an appearance on the same episode (as Pardus) of Ruhlman's podcast, Charnas notes: "The miracle of process time is that you don't have to have your hands on in order to be efficient, but you do have to start it."¹⁸ This note again indexes something of a quasi-theological or magical sense of faith and/or awe in the doctrine of *mise en place* (i.e. miracles), but more importantly, it offers a descriptive glimpse of the normative role of precise planning and the clear categorization of activity which *mise en place* time requires. Of course, this approach to temporality also reifies Culinary Man's superior knowledge by conferring authority on those who can masterfully organize time in the proper (normative) way.

Michael Pardus is once again a helpful guide on this theme, as he provides a succinct though comprehensive vision of *mise en place* in action which combines the sequencing of events, an efficient use of time (both process and intensive), and the assembly of physical materials. Pardus states:

Essentially this timeline is a sequence of events that makes sense, that you should be able to condense into bullet points. Im going to enter the kitchen at 7am and the first thing I'm going to do is to put a pot of water on to boil, because I know I'm going to have to blanch some green beans. While the water is coming to boil I'm going to clean the green beans, and get some ice water, and get a colander. And so when the water boils, I won't have to stand there and wait for water to boil, I can blanch the green beans. I won't have to run for ice water when they finish because the ice water is already there. Then I can move on to the next thing in my sequence, because I've laid it all out.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ruhlman, "Mise en Place," 38 min

¹⁹ Ibid. 11 min.

Through the descriptive statements provided by both Charnas and Pardus, it seems clear that *mise en place* is intended as a totalizing philosophy whose application spans the entirety of the kitchen's bodies, relations, and practices. When properly applied, *mise en place* maximizes efficiency by means of comprehensive planning, timing, and arrangement. At the heart of this organizational logic is also a reductionist tendency to clear away all that does not immediately serve the culinary mission. This certainly includes the kinds of "excess" activities or events which might obstruct or slow down the productive imperatives of the kitchen. However, any form of deviation constitutes a threat against the normative order (which, again is predicated on seamless repetition) and must be warded off.

Pardus clarifies this "decluttering" dimension of culinary normativity as he offers an additional outline of *mise en place* as a reading practice. When engaging a recipe, Pardus directs his culinary students to read with efficiency. Pardus offers:

I can clear away all of the clutter and break it down into its component parts and then look at the components and see which sequence of components seems the most logical and stress free...when you're reading a recipe, it's dense with text. The information that you need is often surrounded by a lot of other superfluous verbiage that is part of the narrative story, but not essential to the preparations of the dish. So you have to read through the method and take out the important parts and then put those on your timeline in bullet points.²⁰

The reading method espoused by Pardus underlines the utilitarian dimensions of *mise en place* as a practical methodology which assembles productivity alongside disciplinary repetition. This fusion denotes a point of continuity with the militaristic origins of the culinary brigade. In this vein, Charnas contributes an interesting "origin" story for *mise en place* which places it within an evolutionary narrative of best fit:

there are only 2 professions really, that spend a lot of time on this [teaching how to work], and that's the military and the culinary—and of course, the military and culinary world have, ya know, certain urgencies in common... If we you work for a software

²⁰ Ibid. 20 mins.

company, we're not checking the minute hand of the clock, we're looking at the calendar. We didn't need to evolve *mise en place* in journalism or software, because we didn't have those senses of urgency. But because we didn't have the need to do it, we didn't evolve this very nuanced system...²¹

Charnas's account is revealing in the naturalizing treatment it offers *mise en place*, which, on this telling, was a necessary innovation stemming from the plain fact that the culinary world is one of certain kinds of urgencies. These urgencies, however, should be more explicitly named as the pressures, expectations, and norms of restaurant production—all of which are socially installed features of cooking. Additionally, the above passage is useful in that it contributes an explicit reference to the linkages between the military model and Culinary Man's modes of production. A consideration of this sense of resonance also highlights the way in which *mise en place*, as an evolutionary pedagogy of "how to work," reflects the colonial civilizing mission.²² Charnas's neat and uncomplicated evolutionary account of *mise en place* also resonates with the naturalizing teleology of colonial temporality which reified white, male Europeans as progressive, inventive, historical actors and which relegated their racialized "others" as barbarians stuck behind in time.²³

Also of note is the explicit manner in which Pardus, Ruhlman, and Charnas all enthusiastically enlist *mise en place* as an organizational philosophy for application outside of the kitchen. Charnas, of course, has written extensively for non-culinary audiences in which he

²¹ Ruhlman, "Mise en Place": 43 mins.

²² Andrew Zimmerman's *Alabama in Africa* offers a useful history of the relationship between racialized education/socialization and manual labor under colonial regimes. Much of Zimmerman's account reveals the extent to which Black Americans and Africans were perceived as requiring instruction on "how to work" and that colonial pedagogy sought to provide this; "Education would train 'Negroes' to realize their supposedly unique potential as docile and productive workers." Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T Washington, The German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 45

²³ This theme of white, Eurocentric, and colonial approaches to temporality is succinctly expressed by Brittney Cooper in a talk for TED. Brittney Cooper, "The Racial Politics of Time." *TED.com*. 2016.

delivers the ‘good word’ of *mise en place* as a general organizational technique. Within corporate settings, Charnas talks about his development of a “daily *mise*” practice, in which office workers are expected to take half an hour to organize workspaces, “clean” out inboxes, and so on.²⁴ While the fit of this application is clear enough, it is interesting that Charnas finds influence in explicitly culinary schema of *mise en place*, rather than drawing directly from the military’s seemingly more foundational (or at least, influential) organizational system of productive discipline. Perhaps the aesthetic dimensions of culinary work provide a more attractive model for Charnas, who also reflects that: “I became intrigued in *mise-en-place* not because I was interested in cooking, but because as an outsider, I saw in that system something beautiful and elegant that transcended kitchen work.”²⁵

One of the most important facets of *mise en place*, for Charnas, is the etymological linkage between the French “*mise*” and the Latin word for “commitment,” and thus, for Charnas, *mise en place* offers an ethic of responsibility entailing a “commitment to planning and working your plan.”²⁶ There is a deep admiration of the culinary work ethic, for Charnas, in which “[cooks] are bound by a code in which you’re responsible for everything, you’re responsible to the people around you, you’re responsible, all of you, to keep that goddamn floor clean, you’re all going to pick up a broom, you’re all going to keep your station clean.”²⁷

It is instructive that Charnas emphasizes cleaning as the central mode of carrying out responsibility and that he centers following authority (i.e. bound by a code) in his descriptive statement of *mise en place*’s ethical dimensions. Certainly, Charnas’s application of this ethic

²⁴ Charnas, *Work Clean*,44.

²⁵ *Ibid.* ix

²⁶ Ruhlman, “*Mise en Place*,” 31min.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 28min.

toward corporate ends offers an explicit example of the deeply neoliberal quality of *mise en place* as an economizing technology.²⁸ Indeed, one important feature of contemporary neoliberalism identified by Wendy Brown is the way in which “teamwork, responsabilization, and stakeholder consensus replace individual interest; the shift...to a discourse featuring more explicitly governed, ‘responsibilized’ and managed subjects.”²⁹

In addition to the crafting of subjectivity with strong attachments to responsibility, Brown also characterizes contemporary neoliberalism through its ability to travel from its foundational—or at least primary—terrain (economics/policy) and to expand into different spheres of life. One can observe a similar move in the translation of *mise en place* from kitchen technology into a more generally applicable mode of conduct for life. In illustration of this phenomenon, Ruhlman expounds on his own enthusiastic incorporation of *mise en place* in even some of the most minor details of daily life. Ruhlman notes:

“I see *mise en place* everywhere. You start seeing *mise en place* in your bathroom, where your toothbrush is, putting everything in the same place all the time...when you apply that to every facet of your life, whether it’s your desk, or where you relax, or wherever you work...the better *mise en place*, the more time and energy we have”³⁰

Ruhlman’s note makes clear the totalizing applications of *mise en place* as a method for ordering all of one’s life, and while Ruhlman delivers this note with a sunny disposition, it is not difficult to imagine how habituation into *mise en place* can also produce frustrations. Elaborating

²⁸ The claim here being a fairly modest and descriptive one which observes points of resonance between *mise en place* and neoliberal directives. By drawing attention to these areas of continuity, I seek to locate contemporary interest in *mise en place* within a certain political context, rather than offer a origin story or causal account.

²⁹ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2015), 71

³⁰ Ruhlman, “*Mise en Place*,” 40mins.

on this theme of a life ordered by *mise en place*, Ruhlman provides some insight into the potential affective ramifications of adopting these habits which are perhaps, less desirable:

it extended to one's life outside that kitchen. It changed how I packed for the trip—I tried to diminish the number of times I moved from closet to bureau to suitcase...I didn't go from bedroom to living room, stop before I got there, and go back to the bedroom because I *forgot* something, and if I did, it made me mad.³¹

There is little question that *mise en place* could provide helpful strategies and habits for organization, but Ruhlman's change in emotional disposition provoked by the raised stakes of *mise en place*—to economize everything, or else—offers a glimpse of the tendencies toward compulsion present in *mise* subjectivity. As culinary subjects become more deeply socialized, the expansion of this mode of conduct is difficult to regulate. In this vein, chef Ari Bokovza notes:

We spent so many hours here that the way we are at work starts to translate into the way we are at home. You wish that you could switch it off, and you hope that you can. But, I mean, if you ask my girl how is Ari at home, she'll tell you, he's a fucking nut job. He can't sit still.³²

Bokovza underscores the interpersonal tensions which might arise as a result of the production of kitchen subjectivity, though we can also imagine the fate of other forms of social relations (namely, the political subjectivities required for archipelagic solidarity and organizing) which might be altered or effaced through becoming subsumed under the rigid operating directions and authoritative governance of *mise en place*. Thus, the possibilities for democratic political mobilization seem constrained by *mise en place*'s implicit tendencies toward reduction and totalization in a manner similar to the broader situation Brown describes which features

³¹ Michael Ruhlman, *The Making of a Chef*. (New York, NY: St Martin's Griffin., 1997), 103

³² Charnas, Dan. "Organizing Like a Chef,"

hegemonic neoliberalism as a “peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms.”³³ This theme of Culinary Man’s sensibilities encroaching outside of the fine dining context and into the general population is worth noting and will be explored more directly in later chapters.

In sum, I have tried to articulate the sense in which *mise en place*—the organizing logic for prep work as well as the brigade more broadly—offers an important blueprint for the molding of culinary subjectivity. Through its totalizing imperatives to constantly organize, work efficiently, and to move through a precisely planned and timed sequence of actions, *mise en place* imprints an ethos of docile productivity into culinary subjects. While there are some indications of the forms of neuroticism potentially stoked by adopting *mise en place* as a lifestyle, importantly, much more of the broader discourse emphasizes the positive virtues, protective qualities, and calming affects—for instance, Dwayne Lipuma refers to *mise en place* as a “zen-like thing”³⁴—which the system offers its practitioners. Thus, *mise en place* provides a clear example of hegemonic normativity at work in that subjects generally consent willingly to engage in forms of self-discipline that uphold the routines, rhythms, and practices prescribed by Culinary Man.

While so far I have tried to show that the traditional concerns of organizing materials/tools, operations, and time constitute function as modes of disciplinary regularization, it is crucial for my account also to explore the sense in which people and bodies have specified places in Culinary Man’s ordering system. There are two distinct, though entangled, senses of this theme which I seek to outline. Firstly, there is the manner in which all bodies in the kitchen

³³ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 17

³⁴ Charnas, Dan. “Organizing Like a Chef”

are directed to comport in specific ways as part of Culinary Man's disciplinary system. Beyond this, and secondly, however, there is an important sense in which certain "deviant" bodies (which fall further away from Culinary Man's normative center) are targeted, sorted, and stratified more explicitly. In the next section, I argue that *mise en place* (and Culinary Man more broadly) relies on a sharply stratified division of labor which is deeply racialized, gendered, and normalized to favor white European men.

People in Place: Disciplining Bodies

In this section, I seek to explore two major modes by which Culinary Man's organizational logic tends to situate bodies in place. The first sense entails the positioning of bodies in such ways as to optimize disciplinary control (in the Foucauldian sense) and the second involves the brigade's hierarchical ordering of positions and the overdetermined role of race, gender, and other forms of genre in organizing stratification.

Culinary subjectivity stipulates a variety of precise movements, positionings, and compartments which the normative body should engage in while working. While often couched in the language of efficiency, I argue that these prescriptions more fundamentally aim to establish a form of control through the regulation of bodies. A helpful place to begin is with the image of bodies which stand while working. Grant Achatz offers a helpful illustration of this point as he recalls arriving in Hawaii to work a special event; "The four of us arrived in the kitchen to find the resort kitchen team sitting on stools while prepping. We exchanged glances, confirming our mutual derision for such heresy."³⁵ Achatz's recourse to the notion of heresy is interesting in that it offers an additional descriptive point of continuity with the general

³⁵ Achatz, *Life on the Line*, 80

descriptive statement of *mise en place* in quasi-theological terms. More importantly, however, the sense of disdain for sitting while working indexes the particular forms of control, image of normativity, and workplace “common sense” imparted by Culinary Man. What about this scene marks it as an offense against ‘proper’ cooking?

I posed this question (with open ended phrasing) in several online social media groups devoted to culinary industry communications, advice, recipe sharing, etc.³⁶ Among the answers I received, many offered some version of the notion that standing is required in order to maximize productive activity,³⁷ given that sudden, rapid, and precise movements may be needed at any moment. Others discussed safety concerns (chairs would be “in the way” etc.) and/or argued that many prep tasks simply require a standing posture.³⁸

Even if one assumes the virtues of a productivist logic, there seems to be no major reason why one could not do efficient work while seated. Some readjustment may be necessary for those more used to carrying out prep work while standing, but there is certainly no inherent barrier to performing tasks in different ways—those with different ranges of ability than the normative expectations and assumptions make this point clear. For a more well-known example, chef Paul Prudhomme was known to utilize an electric wheelchair while working in the kitchen. Indeed, a significant number of the responses gleaned had no issue with sitting for those with different physical capacities/abilities, advanced age, injuries, or pregnancy etc. Interestingly,

³⁶ What are your thoughts on sitting while prepping?” posted in the facebook group, “A Chef’s Life” on Jan. 15· 2022.

³⁷ Responses of this variety include: “not at all. It makes you slower,” “it’s just not efficient in my opinion. You work faster standing up...if you can’t physically do the job, find something else.” “Nope, not in my kitchen. Less productive and dangerous.” Ibid.

³⁸ “How’d you cut using knives properly while sat down?” “I would question the posture and ability to prep everything correctly...work benches are designed to be standing, most jobs are designed for standing, can’t get the correct pressure on a knife, blending a hot soup, rolling pasta etc. while seated.” Ibid.

many of these commenters could still not accept for others (“normal,” “able,” “young,” etc.) to sit while doing prep work. This stance is revealing in that it seems to admit that the work can be done adequately from a seated position. But aside from a few deserving exceptions, it still should not be.

Many responses signaled a commitment to efficiency, but were fine with any arrangement of the body, so long as the work was done well— “I don’t care whether they sit, stand, lie down, roll over, or whatever.”³⁹ A small but important minority of respondents, however, defended the right to sit without qualification and crucially, did so explicitly in the context of reevaluating/critiquing workplace norms. One such response reads:

Old school mentality: no friggen way!

Reality: the job is hard, good workers are hard to come by, let’s stop sacrificing our bodies and good employees by holding on to unrealistic expectations of what the industry used to consider acceptable. Drinking yourself to death and doing lines after service used to be normalized too, but hey, things change.⁴⁰

This contribution is useful for directing us to think of Achatz’s reflection (and the subsequent question of sitting while working) in the context of hardened (though perhaps changing) industry norms, rather than merely as an offhand observation. Within Wynter’s theorizations, discursive acts (like the above note) which offer deviations from hegemonic knowledge are a crucial element of epistemological change. For Wynter, at a certain point, Man’s descriptive statements cannot sustain themselves in the face of debunking, upending, or critical challenges, which levy empirical reality against Man’s body of descriptive statements.⁴¹

³⁹ Jan 15, 2022. “Chef’s Life” Group. *Facebook*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* “Chef’s Life”

⁴¹ For more substantive accounts of Wynter’s theory of epistemic change, see Padgett Henry, *Caliban’s Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*, (London and New Yor: Routledge, 2000) and Denise Da Silva, “Before

In the note above, this dynamic seems also to be at play against Culinary Man (and its “old school” roots in European forms) in a similar fashion, and thus it potentially offers an important challenge to culinary hegemony. Of course, alternative and critical counterstatements to Man do not, in and of themselves, operate to redistribute power—Wynter clearly articulates that “it is not enough for us to marry our ideas together.”⁴² However, epistemological production is a crucial condition of possibility for initiating challenges to Man’s overrepresentation.

Returning to Achatz’s declaration of heresy, the workers in question may in fact be doing bulk quantities of materials (rather than sequencing and juggling multiple cooking operations at once), which can easily be done while seated, and/or they may also have different sets of physical abilities. Furthermore, a central purpose of *mise en place* is to organize space in such perfect and efficient ways so that very little movement is required. Dwayne Lipuma, instructor at the CIA, illustrates this point (even as he imagines a standing worker) by commenting that “Every component of one single dish is in one single corner so their hand literally moves inches...they [cooks] always have one foot pivoted, like a basketball player.”⁴³ Lipuma’s note underscores the posture of constant readiness which, much like the military model from which it is derived, composes Culinary Man’s normative notion of the cook.

In this way, the disciplinary organization of space directed by *mise en place* is perhaps in conflict with the normative expectation of standing while working. Assuming that the resort cooks in Achatz’s story have prepared an adequate *mise en place*, there should be no great need for a wide and dynamic range of motion. In any case, from Achatz’s description and narrative,

Man: Sylvia Wynter’s Rewriting of the Modern Episteme” in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

⁴² Sylvia Wynter, “After the New Class: James, *Les Dammes*, and the Autonomy of Human cognition.” Paper presented at Wellesley College, 1991, In Henry, *Caliban’s Reason*, 136

⁴³ Charnas, Dan. “Organizing Like a Chef Makes for Good Habits,” *NPR*

none of these situational variables are known (and according to the text, considered), which, again, suggests that the issue stems from the mere appearance of sitting rather than a more legitimate, fundamentally held of reasoning. Put differently, it seems that the heresy emanates in the violation of Culinary Man's preferred *image* of work, which is entangled with masculinist affective tones, projects of disciplinary control, and ableist normativity.

On January 21, 2021, New York Chef, Camille Lindsley, posted a request on the crowdsourcing page, GoFundMe, for support in opening a new restaurant which Lindsley describes as “a community driven tasting menu restaurant in NYC created by queer women, for everyone.” Lindsley's description also included that the restaurant (“HAGS”) holds the central imperative of spurring “radical change in the restaurant industry.”⁴⁴ The remainder of the post lists ten additional points underscoring the kinds of novel features which Lindsley and her collaborators wish to usher into the industry. These include items such as “pay what you can Sundays,” art and community events, and enthusiastic accommodations for dietary restrictions (“your needs will never be an inconvenience for us”).⁴⁵ Among the list, the fundraiser also offers an interesting point pertaining to Achatz's heretical memories of Hawaii. It notes:

Don't be alarmed to see our staff sitting down. **Taking good care of you means taking good care of ourselves.** We believe too little has been done to humanize restaurant workers, a fact that's been laid bare with the advent of Covid-19. We are on a quest to take excellent care of our staff. That includes break time, a living wage, a healthy work/life balance, and an emotionally sustainable environment. This also means that HAGS must be a safe space for our staff; So NO RACISM, NO HOMOPHOBIA, NO TRANSPHOBIA, NO ABLISM, NO AGISM, NO MISOGYNY, **NO HATE of any kind will be permitted in our dining room. EVER.** Not sorry about it.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Lindsley Camille, “HAGS NYCC Fundraiser,” *GoFundMe*. (gofundme.com/f/hags-nyc-fundraiser), Jan 14, 2021.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

As the above note implies, the Covid-19 pandemic has indeed spurred conversations about longstanding issues of wellness among restaurant workers, including elements of genre based prejudice (racism, homophobia, transphobia and so on). Notably, this sense of care for workers explicitly mentions the imagery of seated workers and, while it not completely clear whether this applies to breaks (which are also often unavailable in many restaurant contexts) or sitting while working as well, there is a sense of consideration not generally offered on this issue and which speaks directly to Achatz's expression of derision.

The explicit inclusion of ablism as an intolerable form of treatment of workers underscores this point by filling in, more generally, the sense in which the normative image of the culinary worker is almost universally an "able bodied" one.⁴⁷ Furthermore, it is important that the above point is broached in terms of visibility (i.e. "don't be surprised to *see* our staff sitting down"), as again, Culinary Man's aversion to seated workers seems at times to be more concerned with the image of work than it is with empirical matters of productivity and efficiency.⁴⁸ For instance, Kwame Onwuachi describes his early days of working prep for Thomas Keller's New York restaurant, Per Se, with an illustration of what he calls "the ideal form of a kitchen."⁴⁹ Onwuachi goes on to describe

a symphony of gleaming stainless steel hardware and immaculate white plastic working surfaces...at each pristine station...a cook stood with his or her head bowed over their *mise en place*. Sleeves smartly rolled up, towel neatly tucked in their apron strings, they were as silent and focused as I had ever seen chefs be.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ There are a few notable exceptions to this, including the aforementioned Paul Proudhomme and Eduardo Garcia, who lost his left hand in an electrical accident.

⁴⁸ Though all of these elements assemble within the normative expectations of the cook promoted by Culinary Man.

⁴⁹ Kwame Onwuachi, *Notes from a Young Black Chef: A Memoir*, (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), 181

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Several points within Onwuachi's descriptive statement are worth noting, beginning with the notion of "the ideal form" of culinary production. This language resonates with forms of western philosophical essentialism (Platonism, most explicitly) which inhabit much of the intellectual structures of Wynter's *Man*. Keller's kitchen is not just a certain kind of culinary location (even a great one), but instead, it is discursively rendered as the spatial pinnacle of cooking itself. Further, Onwuachi's commentary indexes several of the themes already explored above, including sequenced organization (which the language of symphony gestures toward), meticulous cleaning, and a silent, focused workplace which, as it happens, is also devoid of elements which might eventually encourage political organization (namely, conversation). Importantly, this ideal image of the culinary workspace features workers standing with heads bent over their work. In addition to the issue at hand (of physical ability and/or the question of sitting), the depiction of focused heads bowed in silence also conjures (albeit perhaps only implicitly), again, the religious imagery of a devotional scene.

In addition to requiring that workers stand, disciplinary culinary work demands the very precise positioning, conduct, and movement of the body in other ways as well—namely, in the range of codified techniques which are presented in hegemonic terms (which allow no alternatives) as well. Prep work offers instruction and socialization for cooks as it introduces them to the "proper" techniques for common culinary operations. Given the nature of the work (i.e. bulk/large quantities and extended hours of prep tasks), prep cooks practice these techniques repeatedly for the extent of their working days.

A major facet of Culinary Man's disciplinary project begins when cooks are introduced to the very specific techniques required to carry out prep tasks, and these operations are normalized through endless repetition. Amy Trubek additionally underscores how the notion of

European (white) superiority is reified by the specifically French quality of the techniques which become codified as best practices, as she notes:

students must master the fundamentals of stock preparation and learn the five mother sauces of French haute cuisine and their many derivations...In ‘Knife Skills’ class they learn to hold the French chef’s knife and perfect the transformation of raw vegetables into precise mirepoix, brunoise, julienne, and bâtonnet...⁵¹

Trubek further describes the precise requirements of the “set of rules and techniques” for preparing food dictated by the French tradition, giving an example as she narrates the requirements for a proper “Macedoine” cut: “1. Cut the vegetables into convenient sized lengths. 2. Cut the lengths into 2cm slices. 3. Cut the slices into 2cm strips. 4. Cut the strips into 2 cm squares.”⁵² Trubek emphasizes that the very precise measurements are important for the purposes of cooking time—uniformity in size allows for a consistent cooking process⁵³—though the quantified precision (as well as lawlike necessity which is captured well by Trubek’s language of rules) allows for conditions of heightened scrutiny and, subsequently, disciplinary power, in the Foucauldian sense. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault offers the insight that exercising power over the body occurs effectively (within his study/scope, at least) when levied at a smaller scale. Foucault’s description of the molecular quality of power, which resonates greatly with the disciplinary functions of *mise en place*, describes power as operating through “exercising upon it[the body] a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself—movements, gestures, attitudes, and rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Amy Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 1

⁵² Ibid. 20

⁵³ Ibid. 21

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prisons*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1977[1995]), 137

Achatz offers a useful story that illustrates the manner in which the very specific movements, measurements, and techniques required by haute technique translate into disciplinary power through the enacting of a normalizing gaze. As a young cook, Achatz describes meeting for the first time an older worker (named Josh) at the French Laundry while carrying out prep work. Achatz writes:

Josh immediately looked down at my board, poked his fingers into a pile of carrot brunoise and pulled out a single piece from the hundred that was cut on a slight angle to form an inconsequentially uneven cube, ‘Kevin, you had better watch this guy. His knife skills aren’t so good.’...I looked at the pile of carrots, dumbfounded. Kevin could see me thinking ‘What the hell?’ and decided to encourage me. ‘They’re fine, they look good. He’s just trying to intimidate you.’⁵⁵

This anecdote usefully highlights again, the normative presence of French technique within fine dining spaces (brunoise) while providing a lucid illustration of disciplinary judgement in action. Notably, in this instance, it is not even necessary for the head chef (i.e. Culinary Man), Thomas Keller, himself to exercise the gaze directly, as the cooks below him are sufficiently socialized to discipline their fellow workers. While Kevin’s actions to reassure Achatz provide a promising performance of solidarity, Josh’s examination seems to be more representative of the norm within the kitchen. Achatz expounds on the adversarial social climate depicted above: “The cooks weren’t interested in helping me out or making friends. They weren’t vicious, they just lived by the standard set by chef Keller and everything else was superfluous and meaningless.”⁵⁶ In this way, Culinary Man’s central virtues, goals, and methods achieve the level of commonsense (or “auto-institute,” in Wynter’s terms) through discursive

⁵⁵ Achatz, *Life on the Line*, 63

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 73

reinforcement, repetition of practices, and normalizing surveillance, while everything “non-essential” to these aims is effaced.

French Chef Eric Ripert offers another illustration of the singular and hegemonic character which Culinary Man’s normative techniques achieve within the fine dining space. Ripert narrates the “proper” onion dice, which, parallel to Trubek’s description, involves very precise methodology: “even slices lengthwise across a halved onion just up to (but not through) the stem end, flipping it on its side and repeating the exact same way, then laying it flat again and running the knife perpendicular to the other cuts.”⁵⁷ Importantly, he describes the manner in which, through repetition and singular focus, “the movements became second nature.”⁵⁸ Culinary Man’s disciplinary project aspires to become so thoroughly installed within kitchen subjects that it becomes an automatic process. Indeed, Kwame Onwuachi similarly adds that “what makes a professional chef is that he or she has had technique imprinted onto them with the permanence of a tattoo and that they have withstood the pain of the process.”⁵⁹ In addition to the meticulous program of controlled movement and bodily positioning, there is a second sense in which Culinary Man’s organizational logic puts bodies in place according to a rigid hierarchy which is stratified along genre lines.

⁵⁷ Eric Ripert, *32 Yolks: From My Mother’s Table to Working the Line*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2017), 101

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Onwuachi, *Notes*, 176

Strata in Place

Prep cooks occupy the second lowest position in the kitchen's hierarchy, although unlike the dishwashers (and by virtue of prep work's closer proximity to food production, rather than clean up), they are often more directly in the fold of Culinary Man's disciplinary subjectivity. While dishwashers might generally be left alone (so long as the dishes are flowing), prep cooks are more frequently subject to taking on tasks (with slightly "higher stakes") and directives from all other members of the brigade. Achatz, recalling his time as a prep cook, illustrates this subordinate positionality: "we spent weeks of dragging ourselves out of bed at 5:00A.M. to bang out a long list of menial and petty prep tasks that were passed down to us from the chefs de partie. It felt cruel and as a result of their own laziness."⁶⁰ Indeed, while line cooks are typically only responsible for the prep work for their given station, prep cooks have a more general scope and thus, they are subject to a wide range of tasks (including those directly handed down by line cooks, per Achatz's note). Furthermore, Achatz describes that "every day, once the PM cooks came in, we would end up balancing our cutting boards on stacked-up milk crates. After all, we were *just* commis, and the *chefs de partie* needed the prime real estate in the kitchen."⁶¹

The above description makes it clear that the kitchen's hierarchy does not just denote a division of titles and labor, but also takes on a certain geographical quality. That is, each line cook has a defined spatial territory (a station) which they wield some authority over—and, per Achatz's imagery of stacked milk crates, this has practical consequences too. The symbolically lowered place of the prep cook corresponds to the dispossession of physical place as well. Of course, the line cook's sphere of control is delimited by Culinary Man's ultimate authority, who

⁶⁰ Achatz, *Life on the Line*, 73

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 74

rules as sovereign over the entirety of the kitchen's terrain. Thus, it is perhaps more appropriate to think of this arrangement as analogous to a feudal situation, with the executive chef as the monarch and the line cooks something akin to property-managing lords.

However, a similar form of relative autonomy as that discussed in the previous chapter with regard to dishwashers, emerges for prep cooks as a result of having no permanent/respected spatial claims within the kitchen. Outside of the immediate physical gaze of Culinary Man, brief moments of freedom become possible down in the basements and marginal corners where prep cooks work in ways which are resonant with what Katherine McKittrick calls "the last place they thought of."⁶² Jacques Pepin offers an example of the sense of possibility which emerges from a stratified vantage point as he describes stealing and eating fruit along with the other prep cooks when the executive chef was not in the room. Of course, given that the chef was aware that the young cooks would potentially pilfer, Pepin notes:

when he left the room for a few minutes, we were instructed to whistle loudly so that he could be certain we were not swallowing anything while he was gone. Of course, two of us whistled while the third stuffed his mouth with fruit as quickly as he could. In a good democratic manner, we took turns whistling and eating the forbidden fruits, even though we knew that we would endure Chef's wrath if caught.⁶³

Pepin's note is revealing in several ways, beginning with the insight that the lowered rank of prep cook both relegates Pepin and his counterparts to the more laborious task of peeling and cutting fruit, yet also places them in the position to exercise some measure of agency in the form

⁶² McKittrick's account, developed in the context of racial liberation, histories of plantation violence, and Black Feminist agency, corresponds to a different political and geographical situation (and one with significantly higher stakes) but still provides a lucid theoretical demonstration of the negotiation between freedom, precarity, and visibility which is quite influential to my account of prep space. Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 62

⁶³ Pepin, *The Apprentice*, 55

of stealing/eating. Additionally, this anecdote offers a good reminder of the incomplete quality of discipline in practice and highlights a democratic form of resistance which might emerge from below to challenge Culinary Man's power. Pepin's concluding reflection does, however, guard against romanticizing too greatly the space of possibility which arises from strata—harsh punishment looms and may still strike at any point.

Even accounting for the measures of freedom above, the prep station is largely defined by domination, subjection to authority, and (almost always) a lower wage, though there are sometimes exceptions to this. Perhaps for these reasons, Achatz, in his reflections on working as a prep cook, recalls a sense of anxiety about being “left behind as an eternal prep cook”⁶⁴ and articulates his desire to move up to line cooking, noting that:

I wanted a life on the line. I wanted to burn my forearms on the oven door and dig myself out of a giant blackhole of tickets every night at seven. I wanted to feel the adrenaline. I wanted to be great.⁶⁵

Achatz's note recalls the theme of aspirational desire which was briefly probed in the last chapter (and will be explored more deeply in the next) and underscores the sense in which the position of the prep cook is also ultimately just a steppingstone (for Culinary Man) on the path toward glory (and, as Achatz offers, greatness). In a manner which is also parallel to the situation of the dish pit, white men (particularly with culinary school backgrounds, like Achatz) are less likely to become trapped as “eternal prep cooks,” though of course it does happen. Just as it does within the broader society, race plays an overdetermined role with regard to carving out the “proper place” for bodies within the kitchen, and one which far exceeds the stratification of

⁶⁴ Achatz, *Life*, 75

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 75

occupational coding (though, again, these logics typically coincide). Onwuachi shares an instructive story from his time as the head chef and part owner of the restaurant, The Shaw Bijou, which experienced a very public failure and subsequent closing. Onwuachi's restaurant underwent immediate backlash due to its extremely high-priced tasting menu and Onwuachi cites his youth and race as distinct factors for the resistance toward what otherwise is a common feature of fine dining. Under pressure from fellow investors, Onwuachi delivered a public statement while cutting prices. Reflecting on this episode and the racialized contours of place, Onwuachi writes: "Did we make mistakes? Of course we did. I did. Did I think I needed to publicly humble myself, trot out my apology like a captured runaway slave promise that I had learned my lesson and that, yes suh, *I knew my place?* No..."⁶⁶(emphasis added)

Onwuachi's reflection reminds us that even after achieving the level of head chef, the racialized dimensions of Culinary Man's central descriptive statement act as strong normative barriers to the advancement of non-white men. Pepin also remarks on the stratifying dynamic of place at the level of the prep cook, and notably flags it as a distinctly (though not exclusively) American one. Pepin remarks:

...in the United States, where the emphasis is on specialization. Today, the idea is to take someone, often an immigrant from latin America, and train him or her to do one specific task, and that's it. The person may know nothing else about cooking, but nobody will be able to touch him or her at that job, be it turning a carrot or grilling a hanger steak.⁶⁷

Pepin provides a helpful description of the sense of alienation which often characterizes prep work (and, as Pepin intimates, on the line, for that matter) and notably, Pepin's account

⁶⁶ Onwuachi, *Notes*: 258

⁶⁷ Pepin, *Apprentice*, 90

poses this problem in epistemological terms. That is, the imagery of racialized workers being given terminal positions within the division of labor also entails a limit on the amount of knowledge (“the person may know nothing else about cooking”) they are allowed to accumulate within the kitchen. Culinary Man’s disciplinary rule requires and largely operates through the conservation of the imagery of white male mastery by monopolizing access to knowledge—although of course, Culinary Man’s particular hegemonic rationality also determines what “counts” as knowledge in the first place. Also crucial within Pepin’s account is the explicitly national and racialized terms which characterize the subjects relegated to the repetition of single, menial tasks.

While perhaps not quite as explicitly or widely racialized as the dish pit, similar dynamics apply to both the prep and line positions (or, in other words, all the positions subordinate to the chef and sous chef) as well. Sociologist Eli Reville Yano Wilson provides a lucid description of the division between white governance and “brown collar” laborers within a Los Angeles restaurant which he studied: “Under the watchful eye of the restaurant’s white male chefs, the vast majority of line cooks, prep cooks, dishwashers, bussers, and food runners, and cleaners are first- and second-generation Latino Men.”⁶⁸ Chef Aaron Sanchez offers an additional illustration of this dynamic (and its prevalence in fine dining) as he recalls the out of the ordinary scenery of New York City’s “Patria,” an unusually diverse (particularly for the 1990’s when Sanchez worked there) fine dining restaurant specializing in Latin American food. Sanchez writes:

In my experience up until then, Latinos were the dudes washing dishes or working the graveyard shift cleaning house. They were *not* the garde manger, the sous, or the executive, and certainly not the owners. Their names weren’t on the menus or the signs; they were never in the

⁶⁸ Wilson, *Front of the House Back of the House*, 50

papers... That's not to say that the industry instantly adopted this new paradigm. It's been decades since my days at Patria and I think we're only now seeing major progress in immigrant representation at the highest levels of food business.⁶⁹

Sanchez's emphasis on the exceptional quality of Patria's diversity highlights the oversized role of race in ordering the division of labor within fine dining and speaks to the continuity of racialized stratification in the contemporary context as well. This representational dynamic is gendered too, as while the higher level positions in the kitchen were indeed filled with chefs and cooks from Puerto Rico, Guyana, Mexico, and Cuba, Patria's brigade, like most in fine dining, was still dominated by men.⁷⁰ This point does not seem lost on Sanchez, who does also note that "we had a lot of Latina women at Patria too,"⁷¹ although this celebration of diversity is perhaps undercut by the fact that the two women who are mentioned both occupy seemingly subordinate positions in prep work and pastry production.

The pastry station (which is often primarily a prep job, though it sometimes involves line work as well) is important to reflect on, as it is one of the few kitchen positions in which women are visible (i.e., most nominees for pastry accolades are women) and where they constitute a demographic majority.⁷² This dynamic also speaks to the presence of other kinds of terminal positions which are organized by genre, although this one is more fundamentally coded by gender rather than primarily by race. Food reporter Maura Judkis notes that "Some in the industry have called the pastry station the 'pink ghetto' or 'pink dungeon'— a place where

⁶⁹ Aaron Sanchez, *Where I Come From: Life Lessons from a Latino Chef*, (New York: Abrahams Press, 2019), 97

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 92-93

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 96

⁷² Deborah A Harris, Patti Giuffre, *Taking the Heat: Women Chefs and Gender Inequality in the Professional Kitchen*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 2015), 3

women can thrive, but never really leave.”⁷³ Associations with pastry cooking as non-masculine work drive the gendered construction which, subsequently, is expressed demographically. April Bloomfield captures this trope well as she recounts turning down a pastry job while explaining that “I already had this perception that pastry was a woman’s job, and I had my eye on the prize, and the prize was sauté and grill.”⁷⁴ Indeed, these stations seem to be more frequently coded as masculine work, particularly the grill. Meat consumption and masculinity have a longstanding representational pairing, and this symbolic valuation corresponds to the attribution of economic value as well in that meat commodities in the restaurant typically cost (and are sold for) more than other items. Chef Jaqueline Lombard adds a similar anecdote: “When I got my first job they did make me do pastry one day a week, because that was a girl’s job. They thought that I would be more comfortable there. They said ‘Are you sure you don’t want to do pastry all the time?’”⁷⁵

Within Culinary Man’s logic, the kitchen line is articulated as a masculine space full of knives, fire, yelling, and so on—recall Achatz’s longing description of burns, adrenaline, greatness, etc. Lombard’s passage above recounts this dynamic as presented in terms of comfort, though this rhetorical strategy seems to function as a more subtle way of putting deviant bodies “in place,” while suggesting a sense of benevolent accommodation that potentially helps build consent for hegemony in a manner which may be more effective than straightforward coercion. Prep work then, is not just a terminal space for racialized bodies to labor in service of white male

⁷³ Maura Judkins, “Women dominate pastry chef jobs. So why is Netflix’s new ‘Chef’s Table’ season dominated by men?” *The Washington Post.com*, March 20, 2018. The descriptor of “pink ghetto” should perhaps be explored beyond the main point here and probed for potential historical and racial implications.

⁷⁴, Kristen Bellstron, “Career Advice from Chef April Bloomfield: No Crying in the Kitchen.” *Forbes.com*, April 20, 2015.

⁷⁵ Joe Keohane, “The Horrors, Degredations, and Ass Kicking Triumphs of NYC’s Female Chefs.” *Thrillist.com*. April 16, 2015.

mastery. It is also the place where an explicitly gendered coding of work relegates women to produce stereotypically feminine food products out of sight.

Justo Thomas

Turning to a reflection on Justo Thomas, a prep cook for Ripert's Le Bernardin restaurant, can help demonstrate how several of the major elements of *mise en place* mentioned above come together within Culinary Man's normative kitchen. In his 2010 work *Medium Raw*, Bourdain devotes a chapter to a glowing study of Justo Thomas. While Thomas is somewhat of an exceptional case (in that he works at Le Bernardin and has achieved an unusual level of visibility for a prep cook), an analysis of the discourse provided both by and about him offers a useful demonstration of several of the themes broached above, including *mise en place* temporality, racialization in the division of labor, protection and mastery, and hegemonic affect. It also provides a glimpse into Culinary Man's relationship to nature.

Bourdain's text begins with a note that seemingly confirms the racialized quality of the kitchen's division of labor, while also expanding it to illustrate the continuity of this hierarchy outside of the culinary sphere. Bourdain writes:

Spanish is the language of the early morning in Manhattan...that's who's up and working this time of morning and who owns this part of the day: the doormen from the nearby apartment buildings, the porters, the nannies on the way to work, the construction guys sent out on a coffee run, the dishwashers and early arriving restaurant help...It's seven a.m. in the chilly, white-tiled bowels of Le Bernardin in New York City, where the language is also Spanish, and Justo Thomas is looking at seven hundred pounds of fish.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Anthony Bourdain, *Medium Raw: A Bloody Valentine to the World of Food and the People Who Cook*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins. 2010), 233

Bourdain’s vivid account offers several notable descriptive textures—the linguistic symbol of race, the early morning temporality, the lower level physical space (and “bowels” may connote more than just the basement level of the building), and the bulk quantity of work—which converge at the stratified location of the prep cook.

Next, Bourdain underscores the pedigree of Le Bernardin for any unfamiliar readers, as he recites the top tier accolades which Chef Ripert and company have received (Michelin stars, four star reviews, Zagat honors, and so on). Indeed, Bourdain highlights that Le Bernardin is “the best by any measure of assessing such things. Which means they don’t cut fish at Le Bernardin like other restaurants...Expectations for a hunk of protein are...higher.”⁷⁷ This is an interesting point of emphasis as it reifies the prestige, authority, and knowledge of the major evaluative institutions within Culinary Man’s world, but it also demonstrates how the pressure which these institutions impart on the more visible chefs (who are the ones who receive credit and/or blame for winning and losing such awards) is passed down the chain of command to those at the bottom of the hierarchy. Bourdain continues:

It’s not just that one man will cut seven hundred pounds of fish today, and a thousand pounds on Friday, and do the same, more or less, every day, day after day. But that every single portion *must* be perfect. He is well aware of what’s at stake. ‘ Every piece. It’s the chef’s *name*’ he says.⁷⁸

The culinary economy of labor is neatly captured by this illustration of Thomas, a Dominican man, arriving at work early in the morning to carry out an immense amount of menial labor in a way which explicitly follows standards designed to serve the project of the white

⁷⁷ Ibid. 234

⁷⁸ Ibid. 237

executive chef's pursuit of glory, reputational prestige, and aesthetic vision. In a similar vein, Kwame Onwuachi contributes another clarifying descriptive statement as he matter-of-factly notes that: "Like the military, the kitchen is set up to function as one brain with many hands. The chef is the brain and the cooks are the body."⁷⁹ This sense of "culinary Cartesianism" reprises similarly racialized divisions of mind and body present in the western philosophical tradition and which Wynter critiques extensively within her work.⁸⁰

Prep cooks like Justo Thomas, under Culinary Man's operating system, are intended to contribute bodily labor in service of the 'mind of the chef,' and his superior aesthetic knowledge and vision. This sense of vision is itself, of course, also gendered, as Deborah A. Harris and Patti Giuffre demonstrate through a comparative sociological review of the discursive modes by which different kinds of chefs are celebrated and evaluated in food media. Harris and Giuffre offer that "women are rarely discussed as having a vision that they then portray in their food. Their motivations are simpler and about creating dishes with a pleasing taste."⁸¹

Returning to Bourdain's narration, Thomas must provide the highest level of prep labor in order to meet the expectations and standards levied by the prestigious status (and accolades) conferred upon Le Bernardin. In order to do so, Thomas unsurprisingly embodies a hyper efficient mastery of the mise en place system by economizing his movements and time, while sequencing very precise operations. Thomas is described as committing "no wasted motion"⁸² as he perfectly structures every task (even down to pressing the button to summon the elevator, so as not to waste even one minute waiting⁸³) in the most efficient manner as he performs high

⁷⁹ Onwuachi, *Notes*, 187

⁸⁰ Wynter, "Unsettling...", 281

⁸¹ Harris, Giuffre, *Taking the Heat*, 55

⁸² Bourdain, *Medium Raw*, 236

⁸³ *Ibid.* 239

quality work, fabricating identical products which are uniform in shape and size,⁸⁴ just as Trubek's note regarding proper *mise en place* above describes.

Bourdain's description also importantly suggests that the mastery of nature seems to be another important theme within Culinary Man's normative project, and certainly one which indexes both colonial⁸⁵ and masculinist themes.⁸⁶ This theme also resonates well with Wynter's genealogy which describes Man as the "lord and possessor of nature."⁸⁷ As part of Culinary Man's hegemonic presentation, cooking is often depicted as a kind of rugged activity which transforms raw (and even undesirable) elements into sublime gastronomical creations. For example, Achatz describes Thomas Keller's "passionate" approach to preparing tripe, a task which Achatz describes as "not enchanting—the goal is to clean the lining of a bovine stomach,"⁸⁸—as well as time consuming. Waking early in the morning for days in a row, Keller and Achatz repeatedly soaked and scrubbed the tripe. Achatz writes: "I think the point of all this tedious work was to transform something that by definition is poor, worthless, or offensive."

This activity too offers an exercise in precise, disciplinary repetition:

the cleaned and polished tripe was packed carefully into *brassier* layers of carrot, onion and celery—or mire poix—that were added in alternating, specific order...we repeated this process three times. Five days after the trip arrived it was finished. Every

⁸⁴ Ibid. 239

⁸⁵ For one illustration of this theme, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 22

⁸⁶ The association of women with nature and/or chaos is a long running metaphor in the western philosophical canon. Carole Merchant's *The Death of Nature* offers a lucid overview of this theme more broadly. For my purposes, it is useful to observe Merchant's note that: "Central to the organic theory was the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a kind beneficent female...but another opposing image of nature as female, especially prevalent: wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts and general chaos." Carole Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, (New York, NY: Harper One, 1976[1990]) 2. Genevieve Lloyd also helpfully underscores the gendered binary between (male) rationality and (female) emotions which correspond with a Man vs. Nature theme. Genevieve Lloyd, "Rationality" in *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. Ed. Alison M Jaggar, and Iris Marion Young, (New York, NY: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 165.

⁸⁷ Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation." *Savacou*, Issue 5(1971), 99

⁸⁸ Achatz, *Life*, 76

step along the way chef Keller was there demonstrating, watching, correcting, and guiding. He literally stood over my shoulder...Chef Keller was not just teaching me, he was protecting the tripe. He wanted that worthless piece of cow to complete its transformation perfectly.

In Achatz's anecdote, the specific process of mise and preparation is imprinted into the culinary subject (Achatz) through repetition alongside the surveilling and corrective gaze of the chef. This process reflects the repetitive practices used to "tame nature" which work by repetition to condition behavioral modifications that come to supersede "wild" instinct. Importantly, the tedious labor in service of Keller's aesthetic vision and pursuit of a "perfect" transformation occurs explicitly by way of mastering "worthless" nature which then imbues it with value. Harris and Giuffre highlight the way in which this image of cooking enacts something of a masculinist act of appropriation too, noting that:

this style of cooking is often presented as a macho act by men chefs who aren't afraid to eat what some may label "gross" ingredients in their food. But this type of cooking is nothing new as mothers and grandmothers have been relying on offal and other animals parts as a way of stretching their food further for centuries.⁸⁹

Indeed, "worthless" nature only becomes valuable once imbued with white, male, creative labor, and this descriptive statement further secures cooking as a masculinist activity and, thus, one that is appropriate for Culinary Man to perform. While the celebration of white agency in relation to nature perhaps reflects a point of continuity with previous colonial theories of labor and property which justified expropriation of indigenous lands,⁹⁰ there is also something

⁸⁹ Harris, Giuffre, *Taking the Heat*, 40

⁹⁰ With regard to Culinary Man's value producing application of mastery toward nature, via the prep cook's body, John Locke's theory of property provides a good example of the notion that nature can be mastered by (European Man's) creative activity, which adds value to it (and produces a legitimate claim upon the land) once "he has mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature has placed it in..." Notably, this theory justifies indigenous expropriation through its

telling in the celebration of “gross” or undesirable eating when white men perform it, given that there exist deeply racialized tropes which weaponize similar, though negatively exoticized, imagery of food consumption in service of white supremacy.⁹¹

The prep cook, then, is often tasked with the menial aspects of this racialized and gendered mission of conquering nature, though this labor is captured by Culinary Man’s representational regime. Retuning to Thomas, a similar dynamic is also at play when he prepares skate, and, particularly in the case of Le Bernardin, a more explicitly capitalist logic becomes visible. As Bourdain writes “most fish—like skate wing—naturally taper off and narrow at the outer edges toward the tail. Which is fine for moving through the water. Not so good for even cooking.”⁹² Thomas’s task, then, is to translate the elements which naturally aid in animal movement into a uniform substance which is more fit for food production, and more importantly, commodity sale, otherwise: “They [customers] see a piece of fish that does *not* look like you could charge 39\$ for it.”⁹³ To ensure the continued sale of luxury consumption, Thomas must prevail over the situation in which “nature being what it is, no two fish are exactly the same, and the optimal size is not always available. It’s up to Justo to make do.”⁹⁴

inability to see indigenous land occupancy and management as legitimate. See John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. In. *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*, Edited by Steven Cahn, (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011 [1689]) 321. For further discussion, see also Charles Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism*, (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2017), 31

⁹¹ For instance, the Orientalist tropes regarding the use of certain animals for food which are not widely considered fit for eating in the west (such as those commonly held as pets) and the racialized presentation of the Covid-19 pandemic’s purported origins in the consumption of bats. For discussion on the use of racialized food tropes against Black Americans, see also Psyche Williams-Forsen, *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, & Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006)

⁹² Bourdain, *Medium Raw*, 242

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 247

Importantly, Thomas repeats these same procedures at work each time he performs them: “He is a man set in his habits. He has organized his time and his space the way he likes them. He has a routine, a certain way he likes to do things. And he never deviates.”⁹⁵ Of note certainly is the additional demonstration of disciplinary practices normalized through repetition, but it is also significant that Bourdain’s description retains the language of preference—he *likes* to do things this way. Achieving a favorable affective dimension within its subjects is an important theme in *mise en place* more broadly (recall Dwayne Lipuma’s likening of *mise en place* to a zen practice), and certainly this contributes to the production of consent for the disciplinary project.

Thomas also demonstrates a sense of relative autonomy which is often less available as one moves up the hierarchy. Bourdain notes: “And at Le Bernardin, unlike almost every other job in the restaurant industry, ‘I work by myself.’ In fact, Justo Thomas enjoys a degree of autonomy unheard of by his peers.”⁹⁶ Certainly, Thomas offers about as perfect an embodiment of productivity as one could realistically imagine—he pulls the tiny (and notoriously difficult to find and handle) bones from fish in literal seconds,⁹⁷ and he cleans a twenty-five pound halibut in eight minutes,⁹⁸ for example. But a good disciplinary subject must also be docile. Happy workers are unlikely to revolt against the system as they don’t *feel* the need to do so, and the ideal culinary brigade certainly requires a virtually unanimous level of lockstep participation.

In another passage, Bourdain similarly highlights the sense of commitment to the mission displayed such that Thomas explicitly prioritizes protecting the fish over himself. Bourdain writes: “He says the distraction of music might cause him to cut himself, an outcome not so

⁹⁵ Ibid. 236

⁹⁶ Ibid. 235

⁹⁷ Ibid. 245

⁹⁸ Ibid. 238

terrible for him, he suggests—but bad for the product: ‘I don’t want to get blood on the fish. I don’t play around. I work fast because I work relaxed. I got nothing else on my mind.’”⁹⁹ In this description, Thomas’s bodily injury is remarkably insignificant compared to the possibility of spoiling the commodity and a total concentration on the mission seeks to prevent this. Elsewhere, Thomas similarly describes wrapping the fish tightly so that “that way if I fall down, nothing’s gonna happen to the fish.”¹⁰⁰ The subordinated brigade’s physical toil in service of the chef’s vision also involves, if necessary, incurring bodily injury in order to protect Culinary Man’s aesthetic creations. This theme of sacrifice harmonizes both the militaristic and theological dimensions of the brigade’s normative expectations.

Bourdain also writes that the commitment to perfection is “at that level of fine dining—is The System, where every server, every cook has to look at every little detail as having the potential to bring down the temple.”¹⁰¹ This description once again recalls the discursive positioning of *mise en place* as a protective umbrella against the threat of chaos, a responsibility which one must commit to. And by engaging the language of the temple, Bourdain here also recites the religious undertones of culinary subjectivity explored above.

Indeed, Adam Plitt, sous-chef at Le Bernardin, underscores the interlocking systems of authority, organization, and labor division as he comments: “The one thing that keeps the kitchen from disintegrating into chaos is teamwork. Also, we use the French brigade system. It’s like the chef is God. The chef says, so you do.”¹⁰² If the chef is God, then prep cooks seem positioned as the humble servants who carry out the divine commands to produce efficiently, follow orders

⁹⁹ Ibid. 244

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 245

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 238

¹⁰² Ripert, *On the Line*, 38

without hesitation, and organize space while sequencing time. Put differently, divine command directs them to follow the doctrine of *mise en place* so as to become good subjects in the image of Culinary Man. The next section foregrounds a closer examination of the regulatory dynamics of Culinary Man's disciplinary gaze (which will be explored further and in different intensive configurations in the next chapter) by concluding with an anecdote about workplace subterfuge which, while perhaps initially appearing as somewhat frivolous, can offer clarity with regards to kitchen surveillance, power, and norms.

The Golden Beets

Culinary Man's disciplinary project reaches a significantly more concentrated degree of intensity at the level of the line cook, who, while also subject to the same set of normative practices, organizational procedures, and modes of comportment, is generally more directly engaged by and in closer physical proximity to the chef's gaze. The prep cook, however, is not immune to or protected from the disciplinary gaze. The normative insistence on specific techniques and methods (almost always inherited from the French tradition) as best practices offers a mode of organization and control by which the chef can still conduct a disembodied (and panoptic) form of surveillance which occurs by way of the inspection.

Grant Achatz's story of a fellow line cook chastising his knife skills by singling out of one imperfect piece of brunoised carrot offers a good illustration of this mechanism. Even when the chef cannot be physically present (such as down in the basements and other far removed spaces where prep work is often carried out) to cast a gaze, prepped items themselves are reviewed to ensure that they meet Culinary Man's standards—uniformity of size, shape, “proper” technique, and so on.

Additionally, it is not uncommon for kitchens to require prepped items to not only be labeled with the correct date, but also to be adorned with the cook's signature. This practice offers an easy way of surveilling the work of a given cook, and the clear containers (generally called "Cambros" in reference to the dominant manufacturing company), which are most typically used to store food, also provide the visibility needed for more streamlined practices of review. And this surveillance can potentially occur at any time and thus takes on a clear panoptic dimension.

Storage spaces become, under Culinary Man's procedural and surveying practices, scenes characterized by neatly ordered, legible, and visible materials which are arranged for easy observation. Importantly, the written, dated, signature links the worker to the finished product within a disciplinary relationship of responsibility that normalizes surveillance. In this way, Culinary Man's walk-in coolers bear resemblance to Foucault's description of certain aspects of the procedures carried out in response to the plagues of 17th century Europe. Foucault similarly describes the central role of written reports within the methods of surveillance that were developed to contain the spread of disease, noting that "the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the center and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure."¹⁰³

Culinary Man is analogous to Foucault's continuous figure of authority which forms kitchen subjects (through direct and indirect processes observation) within a state of "permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."¹⁰⁴ However, there are inevitably

¹⁰³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 197

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 201

cracks in Culinary Man's system such as in the case of labels which are forgotten, fall off, or become smudged. Personally, I used to greatly enjoy playing the trick of forging and/or switching labels, though admittedly this was done less as a principled stand against disciplinary normativity and significantly more so for the purposes of causing mischief and enjoying the scenes of confusion (and/or false accusation) which might, with any luck, ensue.

As a young prep cook at the same small fine dining restaurant mentioned in the last chapter, I was frequently tasked with cleaning and peeling large trays of roasted beets. While generally speaking, it is certainly a menial task, this operation was made a bit more arduous by the chef's insistence that, in the interest of maintaining as "natural" a shape as possible, the beets were to be peeled by rubbing a side towel gently over them, rather than using a peeler. This specification interestingly complicates the theme explored above with regard to dominating nature as it suggests that controlling organic elements also sometimes involves mimicking some sense of (still quite fabricated and curated) naturalistic purity as a part of food presentation. Relatedly, this chef also directed his line cooks to finish plates by dropping garnishes (he was particularly fond of edible flowers—nasturtiums, marigolds etc.) from above so that they might land randomly, again, mimicking food as it might appear in some mythic, elegant, and idyllic state of nature.

In any event, peeling beets by hand was laborious, though generally it is a manageable task, provided that they had been roasted properly and/or arrived at the restaurant in a good state. If these conditions weren't met—and there are several, fairly minute, environmental, and operational factors which can seemingly cause this process to go wrong, including an improper amount of oil, too low of an oven temperature, wrong amount of cooking time, and so on—the

skin could cling tightly to the beets and the job would become excruciatingly difficult and time consuming.

One day, I was cleaning and attempting to peel a case of golden beets from a local farm which were both expensive and, after arriving at the restaurant, improperly roasted by a line cook, likely in a hurry. Even the name, “golden beets,” conveys a sense of haute royalty. But on this day, I was truly mutilating them as I struggled to remove the skins while huge sections of the “meat” tore off in chunks. When I had finished, far from appearing pristine and natural, the beets looked as if they had been run over by a lawn mower.

As I ascended the stairs from the prep basement up to the walk-in cooler, which sat directly behind the restaurant and adjacent to the parking lot, I felt with each step, a mounting sense of dread at knowing what was coming. As a twenty-ish year old prep cook (and one unpracticed in the technical operations of fine dining), I was pretty used to being yelled at, but chef *really* liked beets, and so this episode was likely to be much worse than usual. It would not matter that I did not personally roast the beets and that whoever did had surely set me up for failure. Reflecting on this facet of the beets highlights that, apart from the disciplinary tendencies I have tried to outline, there are, of course, actually existing practical dimensions of *mise en place*—perhaps the application of better technique on the part of the cook could have saved me from this predicament.

In any event, when I reached the outside of the restaurant, instead of pulling open the heavy metal doors of the walk-in cooler, I kept walking to the edge of the parking lot and emptied the entire container of beets directly into the dumpster, looking around to make sure no one was outside to witness the disposal. I finished my prep shift and, as usual, emptied the

kitchen's trashcan into the dumpster, adding an additional layer of protection as I buried the maimed beets even further before heading home while the line cooks began dinner service.

The next day, upon arriving to work, I was immediately met with an inquisition about the status of the golden beets—evidently, their mysterious disappearance had thrown a wrench into the previous night's service and had caused a bit of last minute scrambling in search of a replacement. Having known that this interrogation was coming, I spent my morning walk to work preparing myself, practicing the subtle facial cues of (feigned) surprise, and rehearsing my lines. I had left them in the walk-in yesterday after peeling them—this was the story which I stuck to in the face of bewilderment and suspicion, even going so far as to enter the walk-in with the chef and to point at an empty place on the shelves where I claimed to have left the beets. Without any hard evidence (and there was at least some possibility that chef would have checked the trash bags and perhaps even climbed into the dumpster—or more likely, sent an underling in his place—if he had thought to do so), the matter merely passed by as one more of one of life's unexplained mysteries—Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, and the Golden Beets—though the beets themselves, now beginning to decompose in the dumpster, would find vicarious revenge through my co-workers for years to come.

The Cohen brothers' 1998 film, *The Big Lebowski*, has solidified an abiding cultural legacy among a not insignificant body of followers, in part through the enduring quotability of many of the humorous lines which compose its offbeat script. At the very least, this was what I found to be the case while working with a kitchen full of white American men in their mid-thirties. One of the earliest scenes in the movie, which centers on a case of mistaken identity,

involves two henchman-types harassing Jeff Bridge's amiable protagonist, "The Dude," and repeating over and over: "Where is the money, Lebowski?"¹⁰⁵

For at least two years after the golden beets fiasco, cooks and chefs would turn toward me and demand: "where are the beets, Lebowski?!" in thick (and bad) Germanic accents.¹⁰⁶ In addition, stories emerged which humorously theorized that I had taken the beets home or that I had surreptitiously sold them on "the black market." Eventually, as workers moved on (including the chef), and while I moved into other positions, the joke died out, though surely it was replaced by a new one inspired by someone else's discrepancy, oversight, or mistake. From an inexperienced cook asking which way to cut the hamburger buns (horizontally or vertically) to "reverse straining" stocks (saving the bones and so on while pouring out the stock itself) or the colossal mess created by attempting to store hot fryer oil into a plastic bucket ("put that anywhere")—these are the kinds of errors which often lived on for years as punchlines on continuous repeat.

Aside from demonstrating the really long shelf life of jokes (no matter how stale) which often characterize the kitchen's repetitive affects, the saga of the golden beets is a useful, if somewhat farcical, illustration of the culinary surveillance regime. The tiniest details are essential components of the assembly process which, through the precisely regimented labor of variously stratified bodies, serves the exacting aesthetic vision and iron governance of Culinary Man. Kitchen workers must know their place and carry out the corresponding duties exactly as specified. And while the chef constitutes the central gaze, the entire brigade takes part in

¹⁰⁵ Ethan Cohen, Joel Cohen, *The Big Lebowski*. Working Title Films, (London, UK, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ This was intended to mimic the accents of the film's secondary antagonists, German nihilists and musicians, played by Peter Stormare, Torsten Voges, and Flea. In actuality, the "where's the money" line was delivered by Los Angeles native, Mark Pellegrino, whose character speaks with an American accent.

exercising disciplinary correction and surveillance, both internally and toward one another. The anecdote of the golden beets illustrates not only that the project of disciplinary normativity is taken up by the entire brigade, but also that enforcement is frequently expressed in ways which are fun, humorous, or even enjoyable. Culinary Man's power crucially operates in this manner by producing subjects which actively undertake the corrective gaze (without the requirement of the chef's tyrannical, aggressive, or repressive behavior) and are affectively rewarded for it.

While the jokes and accents got repetitive very quickly (for me, at least), these particular kinds of events, discourses, and stories function to forge endearing affective bonds within the kitchen, and they yoke culinary subjects together within the context of the brigade's disciplinary project. The next chapter explores more of the kitchen's disciplinary apparatus from the perspective of the line cook, which is characterized by many of the same normative elements that direct the activities of prep cooks. But novel intensities, rhythms, and duties cohere into a distinctive form of subjectivity too.

Chapter 3. Line Cooks: The Phenomenology of Culinary Soldiers

This chapter examines the affective attachments, social relations, and intensities which sustain the connection between culinary subjects and the brigade at the level of the line cook. Although a sense of continuity extends throughout the brigade's field of subjectivity, the line cook's particular experiences, descriptive statements, and (relatively) higher position on the brigade's ladder mark this position as distinct from the dishwasher and prep cook, respectively, as explored in previous chapters. The dominant sensibilities produced at this level of subjectivity more closely resemble those of the soldier, and an entanglement of masculinist tones, militaristic discourses, and collective affects helps to sustain the normative formation of line cooks as culinary soldiers. Prior to delving into this specific construction of subjectivity, it is useful to outline the notion of affect which guides the analysis below.

Sylvia Wynter's Affect Theory

While Wynter generally approaches the internal life of subjects with the language of consciousness (as opposed to an explicit deployment of "affect" terminology, though she does this occasionally as well), her Fanonian engagement with and elaboration of the concept of "sociogeny," explored in greater detail below, bears much in common with certain other popular theories of affect.¹ For instance, the commonly used Deleuzian notion of affect as related to Spinozist "capacity," while distinct in certain ways from Wynter's more cognition-centered framework, shares significant some overlap with Wynterian sociogeny.² The connections

¹ Wynter draws influence from the work of Frantz Fanon, particularly texts of Fanon's which explore the psychological and affective dimensions of colonial racism. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1952[2008])

² This note refers to the popularity of the notion of affectivity, which is utilized by the French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, particularly within his collaborative work with Felix Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari develop this emphasis

between these two approaches, particularly as they relate to Foucauldian discipline, are also explored in more detail below in a section on the brigade's collective affects. Generally speaking, these conceptual approaches are useful to highlight the particular dimensions of vocational experience which define the line cook position as well as sustain the brigade's hegemony.

Wynter's account of affectivity unsurprisingly unfolds in relation to her theory of Man's overrepresentation. Thus, an emphasis on what Michalinos Zembylas, following Wynter, calls "the coloniality of affect" highlights the phenomenological implications of experiencing life through subordinate subject positions.³ Wynter notes that "the subjective experience of what it is like to *be* human, had however, been carried out within the semantic field of the matrixed Judeo-Christian Narrative that remains foundational, if in new terms, to the contemporary culture of the west."⁴ Differently put, Man's overrepresentation encompasses the everyday domain of subjective experience. Crucially, Man's affective economy excludes those rendered deviant from full personhood, while still subjecting them to live under a hegemonic definition of "what it is like to be/not be human...which was, however, gradually imposed on the rest of the peoples of the world."⁵ Wynter's notion of phenomenological coloniality also bears much in common with

on one's capacities to affect (and be affected) as a key element within their central notion of the "assemblage." See, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). The sense of affectivity within Deleuze and Guattari's work bears strong influence from the work of 17th century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza. See Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics*. Translated by Edwin Curley, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1996 [1677]) .

³ Michalinos, Zembylas, "Sylvia Wynter, racialized affects, and minor feelings: unsettling the coloniality of the affects in curriculum and pedagogy." *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, (UK: Taylor & Francis, 2021).

⁴ Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, The Puzzle of Conscious Experience, of "Identity" and What it's Like to be Black," *National Identity and Sociopolitical Change: Latin America Between Marginalization and Integration*. Edited by Mercedes Durán-Cogan, and Antonio, Moriana-Gómez, (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

⁵ Ibid. 11

Stuart Hall's notion of hegemony (which is also quite resonant with Foucauldian approaches⁶) in that, for Hall, a dominant discourse achieves hegemonic support once subjects begin to experience events in the world as "lived in *its* terms."⁷ This notion of discourse prefiguring or capturing experience is a useful lens through which to examine the brigade given that, as explored below, a militarized, productivist, and disciplinary affect structures Culinary Man's modes of discussing (and thus, experiencing) events, intensities, and rhythms of work in such a way that subjects continue to consentingly comport themselves according to the brigade. Indeed, for Wynter, affective experience is always socially mediated (and not merely individually experienced) in such a way that one's range of emotional behaviors is modulated by a "skillful injection" of Man's disciplinary socialization.⁸

Additionally, the relationship between discourse and affect may vary greatly based on very precise contextual components within a given social milieu. As Wynter notes: "...[subjects] can be transformed into that of a mode of subjectivity-specific, not only to a historical time and place, but also to a specific cultural constellation: to its system of meaning."⁹ Thus, while overarching social locations or world-historical contexts will undoubtedly be present within the composition of subjects, the particular practices, discourses, and immediate modes of affective experience deployed by the brigade are, under this frame of analysis, extremely important to the

⁶ Hall's theorizations often use the language of "ideology," which has, at times, been presented in opposition to notions of discourse. Generally speaking, in practice, this divide often indexes polemical distance between Marxian and Post-structuralist theoretical camps, though Hall acknowledges a sense of similarity with and friendliness toward Foucauldian models of approach. Hall notes: "...but the combination of regime of truth plus normalization/regulation/surveillance is not all that far from notions of dominance in ideology that I'm trying to work with. So maybe Foucault's point is really a polemical, not an analytic one, contesting one particular way of understanding those terms, within a much more linear kind of base/superstructure model. I think the movement from the old base/superstructure paradigm into the domain of the discursive is a very positive one." Stuart Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall by Larry Grossberg and Others" *Stuart Hall Essential Essays Vol. 1*. Edited by David Morley, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019 [1986]), 227

⁷ Ibid, Hall "The Great Moving Right Show", 384

⁸ Wynter, "Toward the Sociogenic," 11

⁹ Ibid. 13

constitution of subjectivity.¹⁰ In addition to an emphasis on specificity, for Wynter, subjects are importantly constituted (and understand themselves) in relation to others within the various social constellations in which they are embedded. For my purposes, this approach suggests that the brigade is an important locus of shared affect.¹¹

Wynter's engagement with affectivity is a useful framing through which to approach the relationship between the circulation of culinary discourse and the composition of kitchen subjects. This approach, alongside Foucault's framework, which is also of interest/influence for Wynter, underscores the point that Culinary Man's overrepresented governance within the kitchen functions primarily as a hegemonic installation which secures consent, rather than as a repressive force of domination. This affective dimension, as explored below, becomes more acute and effective within the relatively higher brigade position of the line cooks. Differently put, being a line cook *feels* a certain way, and this modality of experience works in various ways to help to attach subjects to the brigade. Again, these ways of experiencing the brigade/restaurant are heavily modulated by the presence of discourses which "inject" certain sensibilities in such ways as to guide subjects toward living out kitchen experiences in hegemonic affective terms. In the next section, an initial engagement with descriptions of kitchen experience provided by Bourdain offers a more specific elaboration of the kind of affects, narratives, and discourses which compose hegemonic culinary phenomenology.

¹⁰ Wynter's insistence on the precise elements of subjectivity formation and affect in this context mirror Foucault's interest in particular disciplinary practices.

¹¹ Wynter follows Fanon's relational phenomenological descriptions within *Black Skin/White Masks* to highlight the various ways in which Man's hierarchical ordering system imposes itself on the ways in which different subject positions interact with one another.

Bourdain's Kitchen Affect

While famous as a chef, Bourdain helpfully also often provides useful narratives from the perspective of the cook within the brigade. Beginning with the description of the work itself (and, in some sense, the normative notion of how one should feel about it), Bourdain offers a useful description of the painful physical and mental affects which characterize culinary work. The introductory paragraph of an essay entitled “The Cook’s Companions” elaborates on this theme in blunt specificity. Bourdain writes:

Cooking Professionally Hurts. I’m not just talking about the aching feet, the tormented back muscles, the burns and cuts; I mean also the spiritual pain, the disappointment and self-doubt that comes with being a cog in a large and ever-whirring machine, the crushing sense of futility one feels when working in an operation that is clearly doomed, or the feeling of isolation and frustration one experiences after a seventeen hour day peeling shrimp and tournéeing vegetables in a less than hygienic prep kitchen... We know what it’s like to work all day and all night, finally tumbling exhausted into bed, still reeking of salmon and garlic. We have, all of us, made careful observation of the hierarchy around us, wondered, in moments of extremis, why, for instance, the boss just bought himself a new Porsche Turbo when yesterday he said that checks would be late this week—and sorry, but we need to cut overtime.¹²

Of particular interest is the vantage point from which Bourdain offers these reflections which is, notably, the perspective of prep and line cooks. By combining these two positions together within the narrative, Bourdain underlines an important sense of continuity across these often bifurcated layers of the brigade. In addition to mentioning the prep kitchen, Bourdain’s references to “grill marks on our wrists, pink and faded lines where knives nicked flesh, [and] the telltale hump of yellowing callous at the base of the index finger of our knife hands”¹³ fasten the “we” of Bourdain’s reflections squarely to the level of the working cook, rather than that of the governing chef. Additionally, this perspective enables Bourdain to articulate the experience of

¹² Anthony Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2007), 95

¹³ *Ibid.*

being a subordinate, such as when he references “enduring the tirades of a despotic and unhinged chef.”¹⁴ As a cook, on Bourdain’s telling, one can expect to be tired and in pain, poor and dispossessed, and stratified within the brigade. Bourdain recounts these facts alongside his gripping psychic account of what this all *feels* like. Descriptions of calloused hands disclose the repetitive practices which discipline through replication.

Due to these exhaustive and demanding qualities of “the life,”¹⁵ a term which underscores the totalizing and supra-occupational textures of culinary work, Bourdain only advises it for young people, with “young” defined fairly specifically. Bourdain notes:

If you’re thirty-two years old and considering a career in professional kitchens? If you’re wondering if perhaps you are too old?... Yes, you are too old... By the time you get out of culinary school—at thirty-four—even if you’re fucking Escoffier—you will have precious few useful years left.... At thirty-four, you will immediately be “Grandpa” or “Grandma” to the other—inevitably much, much younger, faster-moving, more physically fit—cooks in residence... The chef—also probably much younger—will view you with suspicion, as experience has taught him that older cooks are dangerously set in their ways, resistant to instructions from their juniors, generally slower, more likely to complain, get injured, call in sick, and come with inconvenient baggage like “normal” family lives and responsibilities outside of the kitchen.

Bourdain’s warning can be usefully read for what it reveals about the normative image of the cook under Culinary Man’s logic. To begin, the good cook will be young, able-bodied, and able to move quickly. This description reprises several of the explorations of *mise-en-place* normativity encountered in the previous chapter, and it resonates with the more general mission of disciplinary productivity within the brigade.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Anthony Bourdain, “So You Wanna Be a Chef” *Medium Raw: A Bloody Valentine to the World of Food and the People Who Cook*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins.. 2010.), 50

Crucially, Bourdain's pivot to the perspective of the suspicious chef highlights the social fact that the normative culinary subject must be governable in particular ways. Namely, good cooks must, to reiterate again themes from the previous chapter, move with speed, work through sickness and injury without complaint, and remain devoted to the kitchen as a totalizing priority. This secondary layer of description ("the chef, also much younger, will view you with suspicion...") suggests that one's age is not a barrier to culinary work solely because of the enervating and physical nature of the work, but also because younger workers can be more vulnerable to control and/or suggestable toward hegemonic discipline. In a passage which underscores these textures as constitutive of the normative line cook, Bourdain bluntly notes: "Look at the crews of any really high-end restaurants and you'll see a group of mostly whippet-thin, under-rested young pups with dark circles under their eyes: they look like escapees from a Japanese prison camp—and are *expected to perform like the Green Berets* (emphasis added)."¹⁶ Also of importance is Bourdain's "Green Beret"¹⁷ reference which reiterates the brigade's military basis while also indexing the dynamic between expectation and performance. This explication fits well within a Wynterian-Foucauldian framework in which, briefly put, discourse proliferates normative models of conduct which subjects come to enact. As Wynter's affective emphasis also highlights, this performance engages a certain "feeling of" or set of qualitative experiences and intensities, which become "auto-instituted" through disciplinary repetition (and the continued production of discourse).

¹⁶ Ibid. 53

¹⁷ The particularity of referencing a "Special Forces" branch of the military, rather than using the imagery of the "regular army" seems to be an important dimension of the fine dining cook's descriptive statement as well. Marco Pierre White makes a similar point of reference: "taking a job at Harveys was like joining the SAS. We were a small unit of hard nuts." Marco Pierre White, *The Devil in the Kitchen: Sex, Pain, Madness, and the Making of a Great Chef*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2007), 127.

At the level of the line cook, the affective experience of being part of the brigade begins to do a lot more work with regard to constituting consent for Culinary Man's hegemony. While, as explored in previous chapters, lower levels of the brigade's hierarchy are initiated into the disciplinary logic of Culinary Man, the particular intensities and rhythms of the line cook (and participating in dinner service) involve a different affective experience which is, notably, saturated with militaristic, masculinist, and collective textures. Beginning with the brigade's militarism, each of these three dimensions is explored below. The major claim is that all of these notes cohere within a field of activity (line cooking), and it is experienced by kitchen subjects within Culinary Man's normative, disciplinary, and hegemonic terms, and not, for instance, as extractive exploitation or as repressive domination.

Militaristic Affect

Bourdain's note about the Green Berets indexes the broader militarism which undergirds the fine dining brigade, although elsewhere he offers a more explicit narration of this theme's affective implications. In one of the most direct explorations of the militaristic framings of line service, Bourdain writes: "at times like these, under fire, in battlefield conditions, the kitchen reverts to what it has always been since Escoffier's time: *a brigade*, a paramilitary unit, in which everyone knows what they have to do and how to do it."¹⁸

Bourdain's narration above does well to dramatize the sense of urgency which is typically installed into descriptions of restaurant production: rather than incoming tickets signaling customer choices, it is incoming artillery fire as the restaurant becomes a battlefield, service becomes combat, and cooks become soldiers. Bourdain continues the description and

¹⁸ Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits*, 7

underscores the link between command structure and labor hierarchy, noting that: “Officers make fast and necessarily irrevocable decisions.”¹⁹ This sense of battlefield urgency produces the conditions under which authoritative commands are legitimated: “There’s no time to dither, to waffle, to ponder, to empathize when there’s incoming fire threatening to bring the whole kitchen and the dining room crashing down. Move forward! Take that hill!”²⁰ This passage is instructive in further emphasizing the degree to which the brigade form is not divested of the (simulated) emotional content of its militaristic origins, and thus the military imagery is not merely a rhetorical or metaphorical device.

Bourdain’s imagery of brigade members who know “what they have to do”²¹ and perform it without thought (there is no time anyway) contributes a vivid illustration of the manner in which line cook subjectivity, and its embrace of battlefield affect, normalizes unquestioned obedience. Bourdain’s narration is also useful in highlighting the brigade’s division of labor whereby each culinary soldier is tasked with specific duties according to respective positions within the brigade’s hierarchy. As explored in previous chapters, those on the lowest rungs perform the most menial, physically taxing, and repetitive work while those at the top of the brigade perform the tasks which are conferred with higher value and considered to require a superior skill set and base of knowledge.

In an interview featured in Eli Reville Yano Wilson’s *Front of the House, Back of the House*, a line cook named Manny offers a description of the kind of affective experience which follows from participating in the brigade’s militarism. Manny notes: “[one learns] Different

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

feelings...Feeling don't really exist in the back of the house. You have to leave your feelings at home. Like a soldier going to war...it's either kill or be killed...it's get it done, get it done."²²

Additionally, writer Bill Buford, whose book, *Heat*, chronicles his experiences apprenticing and working as a line cook under Mario Batali, similarly comments on the manner in which the kitchen's hierarchical division of labor circumscribes brigade conduct, particularly critical commentary. Buford, describing a fellow cook, recalls: "At Babbo [Batali's restaurant], Memo had grown resentful. He'd taken to criticizing the food openly, which in the military hierarchy of the kitchen, was a profound taboo."²³ As with the actual military, the culinary brigade is characterized by a strong sense of masculinist performance, norms, and conduct. As the following quote from Bourdain demonstrates, the militarized and hierarchical division of labor also corresponds to a masculinized sense of self, which is experienced in competitive terms vis-à-vis others. Bourdain discusses the aspiration of reaching the line cook's status as a "pirate elite, an ass kicking, throat-slitting stud who could lord it over the salad men and fry cooks and prep drones."²⁴

Masculinist Affect

Bourdain is also a helpful guide to understanding the masculinist affects which largely define descriptions and experiences of line cooking. While Bourdain at times issued critiques of the patriarchal dimensions of the male-dominated field of cooking, particularly in his later

²² Wilson, *Front of the House Back of the House*, 121.

²³ Bill Buford, *Heat: An Amateur's Adventures As Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice To A Dante-Quoting Butcher In Tuscany*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2006), 113

²⁴ Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, 31. While here Bourdain uses the imagery of "pirates" to convey a certain libertine aesthetic and/or feeling, it is worth noting that the hierarchy of ranks within pirate organizations typically bears strong resemblance to military structures (captain, quarter master, sailor, etc.), albeit there are significant differences between militaries and pirate crews (governance structures, relationship to state authority, etc.). "Drones" too might take on a different set of connotations if read within contemporary military frameworks, though this is very unlikely to be part of Bourdain's initial intent.

work,²⁵ several of his discussions of culinary work underscore the normative masculinist textures within the kitchen. Of course, this theme resonates strongly with the militaristic characteristics as well.

One of Bourdain's more explicit descriptions of the patriarchal textures imbued into line cooking describes the socially inscribed metrics which are of value within the kitchen's masculinist culture as privileging: "Studliness on the line—meaning number of dinners served each night, amount of pain and heat endured, total number of waitresses screwed, cocktails consumed without visible effect. These were stats we understood and appreciated."²⁶

Bourdain further elaborates on the normative kitchen's celebrated virtues in an essay called "A Commencement Address Nobody Asked For." In this text, Bourdain takes on the role of a blunt truth teller (a frequent vantage point of his writing) while seeking to offer a dose of reality for those aspiring to cook professionally. Expounding upon the "cult of pain" which, evidently, is cooking, Bourdain translates the physical nature of the work as well as the generally subordinate status of cooks (as a profession of menial laborers) into a point of pride. Bourdain writes:

...but we are tougher, meaner, stronger, more reliable, and well aware of the fact that we can do something with our hands, our senses, the accumulated wisdom of thousands of meals served, that *they* can't. When you're tired after a hard day in the kitchen, and some manicured stockbroker is taking up too much room on the subway, you have no problem telling the stupid prick to shove over. You deserve it! He doesn't."²⁷

²⁵ For example, see Anthony Bourdain. "Interview with Trevor Noah." *The Daily Show*. Comedy Central, (New York, Jan 17, 2018)

²⁶ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 26

²⁷ *Ibid.* 19

The attributes which Bourdain describes as valuable (toughness, strength, meanness) index the masculinist themes of traditional normative gender roles, and this description negatively anchors the masculinity of the kitchen against the feminized description of the space-taking stockbroker. Perhaps aware of these textures, Bourdain continues: “Does this sound macho? It isn’t. Men, women, anyone who works in a professional kitchen should *feel* the same way [emphasis added].”²⁸ This qualification perhaps puts forth a more inclusive social politic than certain other similar articulations,²⁹ or at least it suggests an intention to do so. However, this note mostly amounts to inviting select women (professional culinarians) into the sphere of masculinist affect, rather than deviating from or opening space for alternatives to it. Gabrielle Hamilton articulates a feminized expression of brigade militarism by noting that women cooks must demonstrate toughness during service, or, as she puts it, “you’ve got to get your GI Jane on.”³⁰

In the same essay, Bourdain offers a vivid description of the repetitive and menial tasks associated with low level brigade work, and it highlights another element of the militarized subjectivity building dimensions of culinary affect. Bourdain writes: “The very real need for dreary, repetitive functions like squid cleaning serves a secondary purpose in weeding out the goofballs, the people who thought they wanted to be in *The Life*, but don’t really understand or

²⁸ Ibid. 19

²⁹ See, for instance, Marco Pierre White’s comments that “The real positive with men is that men can absorb pressure better, that’s the main difference, because they are not as emotional, and they don’t take things personally...Look at the size of some of the pans you are carrying. Can you imagine you’re a lady in the kitchen and saying: ‘Will you carry that pan for me?’” Marco Pierre White, Interview with Niamh Horan. *The Irish Independent*, August 25, 2019, or Gordon Ramsay’s comments that women are a “nightmare in the workplace, always taking time off because of morning sickness and women’s trouble.” Gordon Ramsay, *Roasting in Hell’s Kitchen*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 192. Ramsay denies that he endorses sexism and claims that these comments should not be taken seriously, adding “actually, I still can’t quite believe I really did say this.” Ibid.

³⁰ Gabrielle Hamilton, *Blood, Bones & Butter*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2012), 150

want that level of commitment.”³¹ Again, Bourdain’s usage of “The Life” underscores the totalizing quality of culinary subjectivity. This passage also narrates the eliminatory function of the “entry level” positions in the brigade which serve as something of a “boot camp” for training line cook soldiers.

Like the military, there is also a certain emotional disposition which one must have the ability to embody. In a note which reflects Manny’s similar statements above, Bourdain writes:

if some of the budding culinarians feel that they are not, for instance, comfortable with being spoken to harshly, or dismissed with an expletive in a moment of extremis, then they usually lack the basic character traits needed for a long, successful run in this greatest of all businesses. Much is made of the emotional volatility, even the apparent cruelty, of some of our better-known culinary warriors. And to the casual observer, the torrent of profanity likely to come the way of an inadequately prepared poissonier can seem terrifying and offensive.³²

Just as within the military, line cooks are expected to be capable of withstanding harsh treatment from superiors. Bourdain’s description of the mercurial affectivity of “culinary warriors” highlights the assembly of militaristic and masculinist intensities within the normative conduct of the brigade. However, Bourdain is quick to offer his own ethos which holds that such terse conduct should only be deployed instrumentally insofar as it serves the culinary mission or, as he puts it, “there *is* a line not to be crossed. Bullying for its own sake, for the sheer pleasure of exerting power over other, weaker cooks or employees, is shameful.”³³ Bourdain’s normative stance against authoritarian cruelty is a useful intervention, although it may not go far enough in appreciating the power relations and implications which emerge from the normative expectations for emotional conduct within the brigade.

³¹ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 20

³² *Ibid.* 21

³³ *Ibid.*

On this point, line cook and podcaster, Katy Osuna, offers a crucial exploration of this theme. The first season of Osuna's podcast, *Copper and Heat*, explores the brigade from the perspective Osuna's (and others') experiences as a woman working as a line cook at a Michelin starred restaurant. In episode 3, "Strength," Osuna discusses the normative expectations for kitchen subjects with several other line cooks at Manresa, the Michelin starred restaurant where Osuna works. Several pieces of discourse found in these conversations, as discussed below, illustrate normalizing performances of masculinity, which set ranges of affective expectation for culinary subjects. A line cook named Fred offers that:

As a cook you have to be able to move on from your mistakes, and I think with that comes, not being sensitive. You need to be able to take it and move on, and get over it...how many times are you called a pussy or something for being upset in the corner? Like, get your shit together. Get back on the line. Stop being a girl about it.³⁴

Fred's descriptive statement exemplifies familiar patriarchal epithets and tropes which negatively associate emotions, feelings, and sensitivity with women and/or femininity. As various feminist theorists have noted, this dualistic understanding of "traditional" gender roles has material implications as well.³⁵ In addition, the quote above underscores the masculinist notion of productive resilience present within the brigade's dominant mode of conduct. In other words, the expectation that kitchen subjects will adopt a disposition which eschews sensitivity functions, at least in part, so that they may get back to work. Kwame Onwuachi provides a

³⁴ Katy Osuna. "Episode 3: Strength." *Copper and Heat Podcast*, (2018), 16:13.

³⁵ Angela Davis writes: "Love and interpersonal relations in general are needs which cease to demand at least minimal fulfillment only when human beings have long since ceased to be human. In capitalist society, the woman has a special mission of being both reservoir and receptacle for a whole range of human emotions otherwise banished from society. This mission is directly related to her confinement, in labor, to the production of use-values." Angela Davis, "Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation." In *The Black Feminist Reader*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, [1977]2000), 165

similar description of the affective “masks” which culinary subjects wear within the kitchen in order to adopt a tough, focused, and emotionless disposition. Onwuachi writes:

...a blank face, no emotion, but at the same time, not backing down. I had my Per Se game face on, a face I now donned automatically every day when leaving the locker room to approach the kitchen. And as the rest of the kitchen turned toward me, I noticed maybe for the first time that they were all hiding behind similar masks³⁶

Onwuachi’s description of masking in order to function within the brigade’s affective regime bears strong resonance with the creative work of Wynter, who uses a similar imagery of the “masquerade of Man”³⁷ to illustrate her broader critique of Man’s overrepresentation. Onwuachi, like Wynter, understands both the normative regime of Man (and what kind of disposition must be adopted within it), but he also seems to view the common thread between members of the brigade who are all performing hegemonic affect by “hiding behind similar masks.” Later, while narrating his time at a different restaurant, Onwuachi usefully points to the potential openings toward more cooperative conduct which can emerge when kitchen subjects do not have to wear the same masks. Onwuachi recalls that “Everyone I encountered in the kitchen was friendly. There was none of the ‘game face’ posturing of Per Se.”³⁸ Onwuachi’s insight suggests an important connection between affective disposition and the ways in which brigade members understand themselves in relation to one another. A key feature of brigade affect is the way in which it both atomizes subjects while it also holds them in collective relation to one another. This dynamic between individuation and group formation is explored next.

³⁶ Onwuachi, *Notes*, 197

³⁷ Sylvia Wynter, “Maskarade” In.) *Mixed Company: Three Early Jamaican Plays*, edited by Yvonne Brewster, (London, UK: Oberon Books, [1970]2012),121

³⁸ Onwuachi, *Notes*, 204

Individualist Subjectivity

Christopher, another cook at Manresa whom Osuna interviews, offers a lucid image of atomized kitchen subjectivity as he notes:

it's like a dog eat dog kind of world. You show no weakness...there's definitely a lack of empathy. It's not an environment that really welcomes it cuz' everyone has this certain goal. Things are supposed to run a certain way, like, you're supposed to put your other shit aside, no matter what you're going through. That's kinda like the vibe you get, right? People just have to like suck it up, and push through it, and deal with it on their own...let's say like, you go through this shit, and you do it on your own and you fucking deal with it, and then someone else goes through something else, you never really expected any empathy, you never worked for it, you never like asked for a day off, you just fucking pushed through it so you expect nothing less of the person next to you. You know, why show them empathy even though you should show them understanding for what they're going through, but the fact that you did that, you pushed through it, you like showed up and gave it your all or whatever, no matter what was happening, you kinda expect the same of your peers. It's pretty fucked up because it shouldn't be that way.³⁹

Christopher's comments highlight a normative expectation of rugged individualist notions of strength and further demonstrate that the performance of the kitchen's emotional code contributes to the production of individualist subjects who see each other as inconveniences and/or competitors. Expanding on this theme, Eric Ripert, recalling his time as a line cook, writes: "Some chefs survived by taking credit for others' work. I strove to be one of the most laid-back in the group, but even I could be extremely selfish about my comfort in the kitchen. I began to look out only for myself..."⁴⁰

Notably, Christopher's discussion highlights the comingling of affect and normalized discipline as he references the "vibe" one gets while working in the kitchen. Hegemonic expectations do not necessarily (or always) need to be directly or explicitly articulated to subjects

³⁹ Osuna, *Copper and Heat*, 16: 27

⁴⁰ Ripert, *32 Yolks*, 216

in order for them to become normalized. The brigade achieves a tight level of discipline partly through its ability to maintain a common affective disposition. Any deviation from this norm represents a threat to the stability of Culinary Man's regime, thus the enforcement of brigade stoicism maintains the production of kitchen subjects while warding off the potential transmission of deviant affect.⁴¹

Jeremy Gilbert highlights Foucault's insight that disciplinarity achieves a "largely homogenizing effect, while also treating each member of a population as an individual rather than a member of a community or group."⁴² This assessment feels apt to the elaboration offered by the line cooks above of an individualist code of conduct which still upholds and reinforces the continuity of the brigade's regime of collective subjectivity.⁴³ Mitch, a Chef de Cuisine at Manresa, offers an additional discussion of individualistic sensibilities while also recalling the gendered textures within the brigade's ethos by noting that:

at the end of the day, the people who are the most cold and heartless are the ones who will rise...if you're not working it out, then see you later, like, get out of here. Men will do that at the drop of a hat. They don't care. Yes, what makes me look better, what makes me rise? I'm gonna do that, I don't give a shit. But yeah, the women I've worked with have generally just cared more about the people they work with. The women I've seen be most successful in kitchens, are the ones that become like, they don't care about anyone else, it's about the job they're doing at the time, and the exact same thing with men⁴⁴

⁴¹ This protective maintenance of hegemonic affect is resonant with Wynter's sociogenic theorizations. On the topic of affective spread, see also Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014). Additionally, the rapper, Slug, provides a related illustration of managerial anxiety about workplace affect as he notes: "And they don't want me in a bad mood/ Afraid that it'll spread, and everyone will catch an attitude/They got 'em all singing the same tune/Thinking I should go and start a fire in the break room." Atmosphere. "The Best Day." *To All My Friends, Blood Makes the Blade Holy: The Atmosphere EP*, (Minneapolis, MN: Rhymesayers Entertainment, 2010)

⁴² Jeremy Gilbert, *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism*, (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2014),160.

⁴³ Put differently, these comments and descriptions illustrate that kitchen subjects are both interpellated into the brigade's collective mission yet also atomized as individuals competing within it.

⁴⁴ Osuna, *Copper and Heat*, 17:36

Mitch's description interestingly relates to Bourdain's defense of the kitchen ethos against potential charges of machismo ("does this sound macho? It isn't. Men, women, anyone...") based on the criteria's occupational, rather than gender specific, logic. Clearly, women can indeed perform the roles ordered by dominant culinary subjectivity and, per Mitch's comments, they are also sometimes rewarded with access to positions of authority when (and seemingly only if) they do so. Bourdain's theorizations minimize the role of gender within the power dynamics of the kitchen, and this outlook seems to be grounded in an understanding of the kitchen as an occupational space which, by virtue of its productivist commitments, is largely immune to the kinds of social investments of individual attributes (such as gender) which circulate in the broader society. On this point, Bourdain writes: "Male, female, gay, straight, legal, illegal, country of origin—who cares? You can either cook or you can't...The restaurant kitchen may be the last, glorious meritocracy—where anybody with the skills and heart is welcomed."⁴⁵ These social and/or identity markers do in fact translate into differential professional outcomes. The mentality that they do not, however, forms an interesting part of the culinary worldview which disregards concerns over the power dynamics of identity within the kitchen.

While it should be noted that, in later commentaries, Bourdain offers a reappraisal of this outlooks as naïve and insufficient,⁴⁶ this description of the kitchen as a meritocracy presents a narrow frame of analysis which obfuscates the wide field of difference between and among differently positioned culinary subjects. It would also be difficult to account for the wide demographic overrepresentation of white men, particularly within positions of authority if the

⁴⁵ Bourdain, *Medium Raw*, 54

⁴⁶ For one example of this, see Bourdain's 2017 interview in *Slate*. Issac Chotiner, "Anthony Bourdain Wonders What He Could Have Done." *Slate.com*, Oct. 24, 2017.

kitchen did indeed exist as a pure space of egalitarian meritocracy. It seems more apt to note that Culinary Man continues to sit at the normative center of the kitchen, thus rendering accounts of meritocracy suspect. However, by assuming the affective intensities, discourses, and conduct of Culinary Man, certain minoritized individuals can occasionally gain closer proximity to the normative center, provided they are able to perform hegemonic conduct and affect. As Revelle Wilson, engaging the politics of gender within the masculinist kitchen, summarizes: “Women, or perhaps more accurately, femininity, threatens a core source of occupational pride for these male cooks.”⁴⁷

In some sense, Bourdain’s comments anticipate (even though they remain distinct from) growing notions of social inclusion that bear some resemblance to Nancy Fraser’s notion of “progressive neoliberalism,” which, like Bourdain’s descriptive statement, eschews explicit articulations of social prejudice in favor of a model of assimilationist incorporation. Fraser’s progressive neoliberalism incorporates extractive norms and practices alongside “liberal meritocratic politics of recognition.”⁴⁸ There seems to have been a movement away from Bourdain’s narration of ambivalence about identitarian markers toward a superficial engagement with them (along the lines of neoliberal models of diversity), but still within an otherwise similar framework. A later chapter will explore the changing dynamics of culinary subjectivity, in light of more recent progressive social discourses, as well as the creative strategies of capture which are utilized by Culinary Man to maintain hegemony. For this section, it is sufficient to note that collectively enforced, though still individualizing, ideological assumptions like those mentioned above help to structure the brigade as a disciplinary space.

⁴⁷ Wilson, *Front of House, Back of House*, 121

⁴⁸ Nancy Fraser, *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born*, (London and New York: Verso, 2019) , 12

Joyful Affect

While the arguments above examined several normative affects circulated in the kitchen which help to discipline workers, it is also important to appreciate the brigade's proliferation of enjoyable and collective experiences which help to solidify consent for Culinary Man's hegemonic project. The experiences of subjugation, regularized tasks, and enervation work well to discipline subjects and to organize them into a militaristic formation, but happier affects help to make the kitchen feel that it can provide a version of "the good life" for its subjects in a way which balances out the high level of pressure and demands. Bourdain captures this mixed quality of paired affects in his proclamation that "The restaurant business, after all, is the greatest business in the world. Cooking is noble toil. And fun."⁴⁹ Experiencing toil *as* a fun activity (or at least feeling these two in relation to one another) can be a key affect which supports the brigade's productive mission. Osuna again provides a helpful narrative of the feeling of achievement which can be provided by the brigade's productive activity. Osuna narrates:

One of the best things about being a cook is the sense of accomplishment you feel after you've really fucking nailed it. Those shiny moments of victory hold you over. I so vividly remember the first time chef told me good job at the end of a dinner service...I'm not weak. I feel almost powerful. I withstood all the shit, and I am kicking ass⁵⁰

Osuna's description captures the feelings of victory which can emanate from a "successful" dinner service. Again, feelings of an enlarged capacity characterize this sense of victorious affect, and this narration nicely indexes masculinist (strength, power, "kicking ass") and militaristic (victory in battle) themes explored above as well. It is also worth highlighting the dynamic between the individualist framework espoused by the image of a rugged individual who withstands challenges and the collective unit of the brigade, which frames the pressures and

⁴⁹ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 130

⁵⁰ Osuna. "Strength," 6:00.

expectations for individual cooks to do well.⁵¹ Wynter's emphasis on the proliferation of affect which is shaped by Man provides a helpful lens as well, given that Osuna's victorious affect runs, to a significant degree, through the authority-knowledge of Culinary Man—it is, after all, the congratulatory words of the chef (and the absence of his castigation) which mark the moment as successful. Another cook named Fred, who serves as an interlocutor for Osuna, offers a parallel account: “Me and him killed it. We literally had one of the best services together, and it was an incredible feeling. It's where you realize...maybe all the shit you're taking, all the stuff you're learning, all the preciseness and meticulousness—maybe it's all worth it.”⁵² Fred's account offers one illustration of how the disciplinary training (borne out in references to meticulousness and precision) and exciting emotions can exist in a complementary relation in order to sustain one's participation in the brigade.⁵³

Apart from the feelings of triumph and accomplishment which can be won at the end of a good kitchen service, several of Osuna's interviewees recounted how much they enjoyed the challenging intensities, difficult moments, and stressful rhythms of the work as well. A line cook, Kaitlin, offers: “That like, stress and chaos is, really kind of invigorating. In a sick, twisted way, I enjoy the rush of like being in the weeds sometimes.”⁵⁴ In a similar note, a retired Marco Pierre White once wistfully noted that he “missed the adrenaline of the kitchen and the joy of serving great food.”⁵⁵ Unlike other forms of physical and/or menial labor which might more commonly

⁵¹ Prior to this piece of dialogue, Osuna describes a difficult period of struggling to learn her station's tasks in the kitchen in which she lost twenty pounds due to stress. The pressure to not let the rest of the kitchen down (and the experiences of being “chewed out”) act as an important motivator to do well in service. Osuna summarizes: “I had been on a new station for a few weeks and was feeling really shitty.” Ibid. 5m.

⁵² Ibid. 14m

⁵³ Fred prefaces this account by noting that, prior to the night in question, he was beginning to question the choice to work in fine dining and/or to continue to take on the stress, challenges, and subordination of the kitchen. Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 11m.

⁵⁵ White, *The Devil in the Kitchen*, xi. This theme is a common one in White's narrations as he also mentions an “addiction to work and adrenaline” (Ibid. 106), and also remarks that “after leaving the kitchen, I lost I was hooked

be experienced as something akin to “pure drudgery,” the kitchen does indeed provide a form of labor which is often characterized by fast-paced, fun, and exciting intensities, even when stressful. Wynter’s theory of affect, which involves a heavy emphasis on analytic philosophies of cognition, relatedly draws on addiction science scholarship to form an understanding of an internal, neurobiological punishment/reward system—still always culturally mediated—which helps to institute social discourse into physiological experience.⁵⁶ While Wynter’s engagement with the neurobiological is not intended to take on a reductionist approach, it may still give pause to those who might be wary of overly behaviorist, deterministic, or positivistic textures.⁵⁷ Still, Wynter’s theorization does provide a helpful basis for thinking through the implications of the neurochemical inputs within the kitchen’s affective economy. Namely, line cooking does provide rushes of adrenaline to culinary subjects on a regular basis and that this dimension of the work contributes to a form of subjectivity which is both productive (the quick pace of service is key in

on the adrenaline of service and it was extremely hard to kick the habit...the structure of my life had vanished” direction”(Ibid.226).

⁵⁶ Wynter’s principle of sociogeny draws heavily from models of analytic philosophy (David Chalmers and Thomas Nagel are most present in her framework) and she does take cognition/consciousness as central terms, though often critically engaging materialist philosophies of mind. Wynter also turns to scholarly work on the science of addiction (Avram Goldstein is a principle reference here) which inform her theorization of the phenomenon in which “in the case of the human species, the sociogenetic principle, as the information-encoding organizational principle of each culture’s criterion of the reward and punishment pathway; doing so in the terms needed to institute the human subjects as a culture-specific and thereby verbally defined, if physiologically implemented, mode of being and “sense of self.” Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle...,”28

⁵⁷ Some of Wynter’s language and framings do at times perhaps connote a deterministic account of the relationship between discourse, affect, and subjectivity. For instance, Wynter writes: “that is, insights into the laws which govern the realm of lived, subjective experience, human and non-human: which govern, therefore, the interrelated phenomena of identity, mind and/or consciousness” (Ibid.3). Terms such as “laws” and “govern” might, for some at least, suggest too totalizing or straightforward a relationship. On this point, Alexander Weheliye defends Wynter’s approach by noting that “Wynter’s description of the autopoiesis of the human stretches Fanon’s concept of sociogeny by grounding it in an, albeit false or artificial, physiological reality. In other words, Wynter summons neurobiology not in order to take refuge in a prelapsarian field anterior to the registers of culture and ideology, but to provide a transdisciplinary global approach to the study of human life that explains how sociogenic phenomena, particularly race, becomes anchored in ontogenic flesh.” Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 27. On the other hand, Weheliye also discloses that “I’m yet unsure of how far I’m willing to trail Wynter’s pioneering inroads into the territory of the neurobiological” Ibid. 29

providing this “rush” sense of adrenaline and excitement) and docile (subjects generally enjoy this feeling rather than feeling oppressed by it).

This insight about the affective experiences of individuals within kitchen production is further expanded by an understanding of how the brigade’s structure enlarges the capacities of its participants, albeit in a manner which serves Culinary Man’s overarching mission. In shifting toward this sense of “collective affect” (explored further below), we might also modulate the concept of affect toward a slightly different conceptual tradition, broadly informed by Spinozist and Deleuzian definitions, and which speak more in terms of “power/capacity,” even though this approach remains largely consistent with Wynter’s framework.⁵⁸

Collective Affect

Prior to delving further into the collective dimensions of culinary affect, it is worthwhile to briefly contextualize and define the term “affect” in terms of this second, broader tradition. Baruch Spinoza defines the notion of affect in his central work, *Ethics*, as “the affections of the body whereby the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished...”⁵⁹ Spinoza’s understanding of power (as capacity i.e. “the power to”) involves a descriptive ethic in which human flourishing follows from combining with other bodies (broadly defined), which will

⁵⁸ Again, while Wynter’s linguistic approach to the concept of affect tends more toward the consciousness paradigms found within the “Philosophy of Mind” literature, the capacity approach is consistent with and never too far from Wynter’s theorizations. The following quote demonstrates this by bringing together the notion of auto-institution with a broader, collective experience of diminished capacity/power (even using the French “impuissance”): “It is therefore with the recognition of the functioning of the laws of human auto-institution, that is, of the cognitive and representational role of storytelling that enables humans to produce and reproduce our social orders, that we shall have the capacity to address effectively the negative Janus-faced outcomes, not only now of our Third/Fourth World’s post-colonial *impuissance*, but also *as-a-species* our present collective *impuissance*. Sylvia Wynter, “Preface” in *We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk About a Little Culture: Decolonizing Essays, 1967-1984*. Edited by Demetrius Eudell, (London, UK: Peepal Tree Press, 2022), 15

⁵⁹ Spinoza, “*The Ethics*,” 70

enlarge one's ability to interact with the world (as well as avoiding those bodies which diminish it), or, differently put, to affect and be affected. Much contemporary literature on affect draws from a similar formulation, though it often draws from Deleuze and Guattari's similar usage within their work, *A Thousand Plateaus*.⁶⁰

The central claim in this section is that, alongside the disciplinary formation of subjects described throughout this dissertation, Culinary Man's hegemony offers a structure which provides line cooks with the affect of an augmented capacity to act in relation to other culinary soldiers. The brigade mobilizes its particular organization of tasks, bodies, and spaces in such ways that it becomes possible, particularly when each individual member remains highly disciplined and productively focused, to achieve high levels of collective output which are experienced as feelings of accomplishment, glory, and triumph.

Of course, the descriptions provided above about individual feelings of accomplishment must already be understood as enabled by the brigade and the restaurant context. Fred's satisfied declaration that "me and him killed it...we had one of the best services together" gestures toward this collective framework. Chef Roy Choi, while recounting his first experiences as a line cook working at Ripert's Le Bernardin, captures the brigade's collective capacity for joyful production as he describes a busy service: "The cooks harmoniously worked their stations...it was intense but serene. And beautiful. Everyone hitting his or her notes in perfect rhythm. A symphony, just as Eric has said."⁶¹ The harmonious interaction of bodies in space has as its precondition high

⁶⁰ Spinoza is a direct line of influence on the work of Gilles Deleuze, who produced two books on Spinoza's work; *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968) and *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy* (1970). The translator's preface to the English publication of *A Thousand Plateaus* by Brian Massumi describes affect as "a pre personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution of that body's capacity to act." Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.

⁶¹ Roy Choi, *L.A. Son: My Life, My City, My Food*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2013), 209

levels of organization, discipline, and repetition which, assembled within the brigade, yield certain effervescent experiences of collaboration and connection with others. Bourdain, in a note which resonates with Wynter's neurobiological emphasis, similarly opines: "few things are more beautiful to me than a bunch of thuggish, heavily-tattooed line cooks moving around each other like ballerinas on a busy Saturday night. Seeing two guys who'd just as soon cut each other's throats in their off hours moving in unison with grace and ease can be as uplifting as any chemical stimulant or organized religion."⁶²

Several cooks interviewed by Osuna articulated the ways that one's identity as a cook, again collectively shaped by the brigade, is formed through the intensities and challenges of culinary production. This is another important element of Culinary Man's hegemony, as individuals begin to understand themselves (as cooks) as a certain type of subject which is unlike the "normal" population. Quite often, this group identity is articulated in military terms, such as within the opening pages of Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*, which describe "the adversarial way we cooks tend to look at the civilians which fill our dining rooms."⁶³ Another of Osuna's interviewees, a line cook named Dylan, offers a similar reflection: "Cooking, I think that getting that stressed and being able to get through it makes you feel strong, makes you feel powerful to know that most people would have cracked under the pressure...I think cooks wear that as a

⁶² Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, 7

⁶³ Ibid. xiv. Apart from Bourdain, this is a fairly common theme in various kitchen discourses, though a few illustrations of this theme can be gleaned from discussions carried out within kitchen worker related Facebook groups. For example, in reference to a post which expresses frustration with specialty customer orders and promotes a "no modification" policy for restaurant orders, one commenter wrote: "Unionize against the Civilians." (February 21, 2022, "Life of a Line Cook 2.0, Facebook group). Another post details the difficulty which the poster encountered after leaving a line cook position to work in a grocery store and asks, "anyone else feel weird adjusting out of kitchen work?" One of the first responses plainly writes: "it's hard adjusting to civilian life after life in the trenches lol" (April 6, 2021). Another poster writes: "Just wanted to say how grateful I am to be a part of this page. The "civilians" around me, (family, friends, even my spouse) just don't get it sometimes. It's comforting to know, I'm not alone." (July 8, 2015, "A Chef's Life" Facebook group).

badge of honor and really love that side of it.”⁶⁴ Dylan’s emphasis on “power” can be read in the context of Spinozist affect to underscore the sense of augmentation one might feel within the kitchen.

Across these pieces of discourse, a constellation of militarized identity, masculinist renderings of toughness, and a set of positive feelings (pride, mutual recognition, accomplishment, and so on) cohere into a set of enjoyable, if also difficult, experiential intensities which reward (or at least provide the sense of reward) for culinary subjects affectively. This “affective wage” goes a long way toward sustaining consenting participation within the brigade. As Bourdain, musing on why some do and do not choose to work in commercial kitchens, succinctly notes: “maybe, like me, they just like it here.”⁶⁵

While the previous sections have outlined various dispositions, affective intensities, and dynamics which characterize the position of the line cook, most of the major interlocutors above (Osuna and many of her various interviewees, Bourdain, Buford, etc.) offer white (and for several, male) perspectives. As explored in previous chapters, this presents a limit with regard to gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the constitution of line cook subjectivity within Culinary Man’s brigade. Thus, it is useful to explore the reported experiences of line cooks who fall further away from the brigade’s normative center. The following two sections of this chapter seek to attend to this concern while further expanding on the exploration of line cook phenomenology.

⁶⁴ Osuna, *Copper and Heat*, 12:30

⁶⁵ Bourdain. *Kitchen Confidential*, 62

Culinary Optimism

A brief video produced by *Bon Appetit*, titled “What it’s like to be a line cook at a Top-Rated NYC restaurant,” explores the line cooking experiences of Nana Wilmot, a Black woman working in a fine dining brigade. Wilmot provides an invaluable set of descriptive statements which narrate the knotted affects of anxiety and aspiration, the political-economic dimensions of her life as a cook, and they offer an additional glimpse at the white, masculinist, militarism of the brigade from a more marginalized vantage point.

As a theoretical pairing with the video, the work of Lauren Berlant provides the apt concept of “cruel optimism,” which, as Berlant explains, “exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project.”⁶⁶ For Berlant, a key feature of optimistic relations is triggered “when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially.”⁶⁷ I argue, drawing from Wilmot’s reported experiences and feelings, that for most members of the brigade—particularly for “deviant” bodies relative to Man—the kitchen sustains a relationship and affect of cruel optimism in which progressive advancement is elaborated as an object of desire, while ultimately made unavailable. Cruel optimism adds an additional layer to the previously sketched out explorations of the racialized situation of the “steppingstone,” though the affective emphasis in Berlant’s concept resonates with several of Wilmot’s discussions below.

At the beginning of the video, Wilmot introduces the feeling of night service by emphasizing some of the appealing aesthetic and performative qualities of culinary work. Noting

⁶⁶ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, (Durham ,NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 1

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

that “it’s like showtime when you walk in there. The kitchen is lit, everything is beautiful.”⁶⁸ Again, this kind of discourse reminds us that, while kitchen work can be physically demanding, at times demeaning, and poorly compensated (which Wilmot also discusses), the brigade does also offer a chance to participate in an alluring performance which supplies at least some form of affective wage. Berlant discusses the shared quality of “affective atmospheres,” in which bodies are continuously responding to their settings within a collectively experienced spatial-temporal organization.⁶⁹ For many, Wilmot seemingly included, the impressive spectacle of the kitchen’s gleaming arrangement of pristinely organized equipment, creative products, and bodies within space—or, the outcome of a disciplinary project in the Foucauldian sense⁷⁰—provides a positive aesthetic attachment to the life of the brigade.

This affective offering is particularly important given the fact that actual wages for line cooks are notoriously low. Wilmot, who moved from Philadelphia to work in New York’s reputed culinary scene, notes: “I wanted to come up here and bust my ass, like I wanted to work. But it’s tough. We don’t get paid a lot. There are times, like with my roommate, when I’m like ‘I’m short. I got you next week.’”⁷¹ Working in New York, where living expenses are high, certainly complicates the economic life of the line cook, though it is also the case that New York (and other major cities) is endowed with a significantly higher culinary status (and, New York

⁶⁸ Nana Wilmot, “What it’s like to be a Line Cook at a Top-Rated NYC Restaurant.” *Bon Appetite.com* (March 2, 2018), 0:45.

⁶⁹ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 15

⁷⁰ Berlant’s project is additionally resonant with a Foucauldian understanding of normalization given Berlant’s desire to examine the affective implications for subjectivity which arise from “the ordinary,” rather than the “exceptional shock” of trauma and catastrophe. Ibid. 9-10

⁷¹ Ibid. 1:02. In an article in *Bon Appetite* by Amanda Shapiro which accompanies the video, Shapiro also notes: “Her monthly rent is \$870; her 30-day MetroCard is \$121. There’s also a gym membership she might cancel. She makes \$15 an hour, on the high end for a line cook. Nationally, the median hourly wage for line cooks is under \$12; 19 percent of them live in poverty. Taxes and health insurance come out of her paycheck weekly. She’s not sure how the math works out. “I just pull it together by the end of the month,” she says, “somehow.” Amanda Shapiro, “A Day in the Life of a Line Cook at One of NYC’s Fanciest Restaurants.” *Bon Appetite.com* (March 1, 2018).

relatedly, hosts many fine dining and institutionally acclaimed restaurants) than other locations—for instance, Bourdain referred to New York as “the culinary capital of America.”⁷² Philadelphia, Wilmot’s hometown, is itself not without sophisticated and respected fine dining establishments, though this reputation pales in comparison to New York, at least within the United States.

Thus, there exists a sense of pressure for aspiring cooks to move to expensive major cities where Culinary Man’s most celebrated and prestigious work takes place, despite the wide discrepancies between costs of living and kitchen wages. However, this pressure to move should not be thought of as primarily coercive or repressive (even though the underlying assumption of fine dining/major city superiority implicitly suggests negative implications toward other modes/spaces), as this geographic arrangement, operating at the level of desire, constructs relocation as a kind of exciting, upwardly mobile, and vocational pilgrimage. In reference to “Le Coucou,” the restaurant where she works, Wilmot confirms that “this is the kind of kitchen that I want to be in.”⁷³ The pressure and intensity of the service’s pace is clearly on display as Wilmot reiterates: “you’ve got to be ready, because the flow goes, and we get busy.”⁷⁴

In clips of Wilmot at work, the video depicts recognizable scenes of the brigade’s military affect as the chef yells out orders, cooking times, and operations, and the line cooks respond in unison: “oui!”⁷⁵ Also familiar is Wilmot’s reflection that

Some of the kitchens I've been in have been really tough, and they've been all male...and, you know, being a woman in this industry, you have to have thick skin...I've cried too many times to count in that kitchen. You don't see black women in fine dining. You don't see black women that much, which is crazy. You don't see black women that much

⁷² Anthony Bourdain, “Outer Boroughs.” *No Reservations*. Season 5, Episode 13, Travel Channel, September 7, 2009.

⁷³ Wilmot, “What it’s like”, 1:45

⁷⁴ Ibid. 2:50. Wilmot also reports to Shapiro that “The pace and pressure were more intense than anywhere she’d worked before” Ibid. Shapiro.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 2:30

in cooking that much at all. Every person that has ever taken a chance on me has been a white male. And you don't see yourself.⁷⁶

Wilmot's note underscores the white, male normativity which characterizes the brigade and Culinary Man, while also providing a view of that normativity from its outside. Read within the context of Wynter's theory of colonial affectivity, Wilmot's articulation offers a vital point of departure from Culinary Man's sensibilities,⁷⁷ although she also points to the types of conduct one must adhere to within the kitchen.⁷⁸

The video also offers an important view of the modes of desire and aspiration which are often prevalently entangled with culinary affect. At the beginning of the video, Wilmot offers: "cooking is a very humbling experience, like, on the end of it that I'm at. As a line cook, you just hope in the back of your mind that this will all pay off."⁷⁹ This statement, too, is resonant with Berlant's theory of cruel optimism which, as Berlant puts it, is often undergirded by a fantasy that subjects, and their various pursuits, might "add up to something."⁸⁰ Wilmot's expression of hopeful uncertainty offers an insight into strategies by which culinary workers might navigate the various difficulties of the work (low pay, long hours, demanding labor, etc.) while maintaining an attachment to it rooted in future hopes. Wilmot expresses the aspirational desire that toiling along at the line cook position will lead to better opportunities, namely, a series of

⁷⁶ Ibid. 3:30. Shapiro adds a note that "Wilmot is the only Black person in the kitchen. Nationally, 14 percent of line cooks are Black; only 9 percent of head chefs are Black" Ibid, Shapiro.

⁷⁷ Wynter's argument asserts that Man's overrepresentation occurs also at the intersection of discourse and lived experience in a way which tends toward totalizing normalization. Thus, Wilmot's expression from outside of Man's affective terms offers an important rupture of Man's affective coloniality, though of course Wynter is keen to note how ruptures are generally recaptured or coopted by the dominant order.

⁷⁸ Wilmot's reference to thick skin corroborates previously explored discourses on masculinist affect, such as the responses provided by Osuna's colleagues. Wilmot also adds that "I would say, I'm a different person inside and outside of the kitchen." Ibid. 3:25

⁷⁹ Ibid. 0:32

⁸⁰ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 2. It is worth noting that the "something" which subjects aspire for life to add up to is often heavily influenced by social expectations and, in Wynter's framework, Man's interests.

promotions, which ultimately will lead to Culinary Man. Wilmot states: “I do want to own my own restaurant one day.”⁸¹ On this point, however, there is an interesting discrepancy between the Wilmot who appears before the camera and the one captured in print by Amanda Shapiro’s accompanying article. Shapiro’s text reads:

If you asked me a couple years ago, I would’ve been like, ‘Yeah, I want to open my own restaurant,’” she says. “But the more you get into the industry, you see how competitive and stressful it is, and you’re like, ‘Do I really want that?’” Still, she dreams about what her maybe-someday restaurant might look like.⁸²

Wilmot’s mixed answer presents both a glimpse of the “traditional” model for becoming a chef—i.e., work one’s way up the brigade ladder—and as a thoughtful reevaluation (or a questioning, at the very least) of this widely assumed telos. Wilmot also seems well aware of the demographic odds which are stacked against her as a Black woman, and she articulates an anxiety, parallel to those voiced by Grant Achatz in the previous chapter, about not making it to the “next” stage.

Wilmot reflects: “At 31, I think I’m the oldest line cook. Most of the other thirty-somethings are all chefs.”⁸³ This fear recalls Bourdain’s assertion of the relatively short shelf life of a line cook and the “precious few useful years,” which evidently come after age 30. More urgently, the sharp deficit of Black head chefs vis-à-vis their white counterparts signals the line cook position’s inflection of the racialized “steppingstone vs terminal point” dynamic as well. Differently put, although many line cooks share the normative dream of working up the brigade’s ladder—and indeed, per Wilmot’s reflections, it would seem difficult to continue to reproduce one’s labor without the aspiration that it might lead to better things—the

⁸¹ Wilson, “What it’s like”, 3:51

⁸² Shapiro, Amanda. *Ibid.*

⁸³ Wilson, “What it’s like”, 3:51

overrepresentation of white men at the top assures that the majority of line cooks, particularly women and people of color, will remain, for the most part, as “mere” soldiers within the brigade.

The existence of large swaths of line cooks who will never become chefs, a “reserve army” of sorts, complicates Bourdain’s assertions about age, particularly given that, like other low wage occupations, many line cooks must continue to work well into their advanced adult years. Anecdotally, at my first line cook position, I was trained by two Black line cooks in their early and mid-forties, respectively, who showed me how to cook while the twenty-six year old (white) head chef constantly burnt pans and chewed dip while working.⁸⁴ As I write this, over a decade later, one of them still works the line at the same restaurant which, having featured a long line of white head chefs since, continues to pass them over for younger, white men. In addition to fears of permanent consignment to line cooking, Wilmot worries about how she might, as a woman, actualize her desires to have children and a family, noting:

It’s not like these men that I’m looking at...watching him [her head chef, Justin, who has several kids] ...can I replicate that as a woman? I don’t know if I could. I don’t know if I can get home to my husband at 3am. Maybe the next chef that I work for will be a female chef, just so I can see. Or, just be that woman, I don’t know. But I need to find that woman, who I can see...but, till then, trying to make it up as I go”⁸⁵

This passage’s articulation of trying to figure out how one might balance family life, particularly with regard to gendered expectations of care, alongside culinary work is a frequent theme within Deborah Harris and Patti Giuffre’s study (cited in the previous chapter) of women who work in the culinary field. As Harris and Giuffre note, “the most commonly cited cause for these women to leave professional kitchens was the incompatibility of restaurant work with

⁸⁴ Certainly, this description of the white chef is a partial and selective one, intended to demonstrate specific contradictions and/or tensions within the dynamic of the less experienced white man’s authority over more skilled Black cooks. This said, this less than flattering description is completely true as well.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

family lives.”⁸⁶ The long and sometimes unstable hours, alongside the lack of health benefits, make for a difficult negotiation of family life and work, though, as others interviewed by Harris and Giuffre narrate, the culture of expectations within the kitchen’s normative conduct also has an oversized impact on this tension. A woman named Ellen reports: “well, I had a second child. I got passed over for a promotion because I was having children and they felt like ‘well, you won’t be able to carry out your time in the way you should.’”⁸⁷ This distinctly gendered assemblage between the general social expectations of mothering⁸⁸ and the kitchen’s demand for a totalizing mode of commitment and/or availability undergirds the normative figure of the male cook. Further, these explorations illuminate the unexplored disciplinary normativity within Bourdain’s previously quoted description regarding the sense of wariness toward older cooks who are more likely to “come with inconvenient baggage like ‘normal’ family lives and responsibilities outside of the kitchen.” In light of all this, Wilmot’s uncertainty is clearly warranted and, in the absence within her life of current models to follow (a female chef with a family), Wilmot’s resignation to “make it up as I go” is an interesting note of possibility. Berlant’s work is organized around a similar theme, as it explores what subjects do when older genres of expectation (and the affects they encourage) begin to lose credibility.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Harris, Giuffre, *Taking the Heat*, 163

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 170

⁸⁸ In relation to fatherhood, the normative expectation of duties for mothering is significantly more demanding. While this has likely always been a theme within western parenting, Sharon Hays asserts an acceleration of this theme in recent decades with what she calls “intensive mothering,” or the expectation that mothers should be constantly engaged with their children. See Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998). Of course, Wilmot, as a Black woman, also contends with a racialized, as well as gendered, construction of motherhood. For a useful examination of this dynamic, see Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Black White and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Of particular note is Spiller’s engagement with the infamous Moynihan report’s claim that Black Americans had been “forced into a matriarchal structure” and the intersectionally racialized and gendered political implications which follow. *Ibid.* 204

⁸⁹ For example, Berlant points to the post-war expectation of a stable life illustrated by Fordism which wanes in the face of neoliberalism, among other crises.

The “improvisation of genre”⁹⁰ in spaces of interregnum provides potential openings for new models (or genres) of life, affect, and expectation to take hold. Much of this is resonant with Wynter’s theory of change, which occurs when hegemonic narratives are no longer viable in the face of empirical discovery, perspectival shifts, and the accumulation of counter descriptions. It is also resonant with Berlant’s work in recognizing the possibility which opens up when one narrative mode wanes as well as acknowledging that these ruptures are often quickly recuperated into the dominant framework. This tension between rupture and recapture within Culinary Man’s domain of operation and narration will be further explored later, although for now it is] sufficient to recognize the form of constrained, though imaginative, affective agency which Wilmot demonstrates from within the brigade. Additionally, the role of aspiration, concentration on the future, and the attachments sustained by optimism can provide crucial incentive toward sustaining one’s participation in the brigade.

While Wilmot’s expressions of her line cook experience help to explore certain dimensions of the life of culinary workers of color within the brigade, and particularly the challenges and obstacles they disproportionately face, ultimately Wilmot was eventually promoted within the brigade at Le Coucou, becoming the first Black woman to work on the meat station there. Still, even with this advancement, Wilmot consistently faced racialized and gendered challenges within the workplace. After an incident involving a white male sous-chef,⁹¹ Wilmot chose eventually to leave the restaurant as well as fine dining, and currently she operates

⁹⁰ Berlant, *Cruel*, 6

⁹¹ “Once, she said, a senior white co-worker shoulder-checked her multiple times as she passed him to put plates on the pass during a dinner shift. When she told him to stop, he yelled at her as the sous-chef and her fellow line cooks watched. Ultimately, she was reprimanded for not respecting his authority.” Korsha Wilson, “How High End Restaurants Have Failed Black Female Chefs,” *New York Times.com*, Jan 11, 2021. In addition to providing more recent engagement with Wilmot, Wilson’s article collects the experiences and statements of several other Black women who report similar issues, obstacles, and discriminatory treatment within the fine dining kitchen.

her own catering business. Overall, Wilmot's story offers a useful demonstration of how one might navigate the brigade's internal dynamics as well as the limits of this mode of negotiation which, to reiterate themes broached above and in previous chapters, underscores the deeply racialized division of labor and authority which structures the brigade. If indeed the kitchen is run as a military, its normative arrangement of authority flows from white generals down to soldiers of color, notably featuring, within the United States at least, significant numbers of immigrants from Mexico as well as Central and South American countries. The concluding section explores this dynamic a bit further while also taking seriously the spaces of escape, departure, and affective dissent that culinary workers of color perform in the face of Culinary Man's disciplinary hegemony.

White Generals, "Brown Collar" Soldiers

Eli Revelle Yano Wilson, as previously noted, offers an important account of the demographic existence and representational construction of line cooking as a "brown collar" job.⁹² He also speaks to the lack of upward mobility or promotion which typically occurs for Latinx culinary workers.⁹³ Bourdain offers interesting commentary which reflects this dynamic of white generals leading soldiers of color. Writing about "the Ecuadorians and Mexicans" who he typically hires, Bourdain writes:

chances are they've worked their way up from the bottom rung...a guy who's come up through the ranks...is likely to be more valuable and long-term than some bed wetting white boy...who thinks he actually knows a few things... you want loyalty from your line cooks. Somebody who wakes up with a scratchy throat and slight fever and thinks it's okay to call in sick is not what I'm looking for...this is still the army. Ultimately, I want a salute and a "Yes sir!" If I want an opinion from my line cooks, *I'll* provide one.⁹⁴

⁹² Wilson, *Front of House*, 45

⁹³ *Ibid.* 156

⁹⁴ Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, 57

Bourdain's descriptions usefully reiterate the normative qualities which are required of line cooks, namely, an ability to perform militarized productivity, while highlighting the fact that racialized subjects are perceived as better suited to these requirements. Bourdain contrasts the *valuable* Latinx cook with the white, American cook who Bourdain describes as "a lazy, undisciplined, and worst of all, high maintenance lot, annoyingly opinionated...and, as members of a privileged and wealthy population, unused to the kind of 'disrespect' a busy chef is inclined to dish out."⁹⁵ While Bourdain's comments likely stem from a place of admiration and advocacy, they do little more than reify the brigade's normative assumptions while also essentializing Latinx workers as better versions of the docile, useful, and disciplined body. Crucially, Bourdain's account misses the structural conditions, namely the class implications imposed by global capitalism's division of labor as well as the criminalized citizenship status experienced by many immigrant workers, which give non-American/non-white workers fewer alternatives than others within the kitchen.

Additionally, Bourdain's advocacy for "loyalty" as a normative trait for line cooks indexes another important theme within Wilson's work, not to mention recalling a militaristic sense of fealty. Wilson, while describing the uneven dynamics between a white chef, Morgan, and Rodrigo, a cook, narrates the ways in which a sense of loyalty translates into voluntary exploitation. Wilson writes: "Rodrigo interprets his relationship with Morgan as one of mutual respect, where he has been rewarded for this dedication—which only deepens his commitment to the job...sometimes, if his shift exceeds eight hours, Rodrigo voluntarily gets 'off the clock,'

⁹⁵ Ibid. 56

then goes back to finish his kitchen tasks on his own time.”⁹⁶ Another cook, Jon, describes a similar relation of loyalty to a different white chef named Jeremy, noting that “ he always wants to do things his way, not willing to listen to anybody else. I’ve been by his side for almost a decade, but what do I have to show for it? My name is nowhere in Jeremy’s restaurants.”⁹⁷ Bourdain’s description again seems to gloss over some of these important racialized power dynamics which structure normative brigade discipline.

Additionally, while white, American, cooks, particularly culinary school graduates, of the “know it all” variety are a recurring target for Bourdain, perhaps understandably so, there is also an interesting juxtaposition with the older normative model of the French chef. Bourdain, narrating the relative upward mobility of Mexican workers (specifically from Puebla), from dishwashers to cooks, writes: “When the French sous-chef appeared to be unable to work without a long, lingering, two-hour lunch with his socialist comrades in the front of the house and the chef had finally had enough of his clock-punching, lazy prima donna act, the Poblanos were ready.”⁹⁸ The figure of the “lazy” French socialist resonates differently than the whiny American, though both figures serve to construct the Mexican cook, perhaps in an essentialist trope, as masculinely tough, self-sacrificing, and productive.

Negatively invoking the politics of French workers, however, offers a distinctly American re-description of the brigade’s older traditions and this “update” of Culinary Man holds political implications. For instance, Jacques Pepin—a great influence on western cooking generally as well as on Bourdain specifically⁹⁹—recounts the importance of just such an

⁹⁶ Wilson, *Front of House*, 117

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 118

⁹⁸ Anthony Bourdain, *A Cook’s Tour* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2001), 201

⁹⁹ Bourdain declares: “I owe everything to Jacques Pepin.” Anthony Bourdain, “Forward” in Pepin, *The Apprentice*, xiv

extended lunch, recalling: “Like every other chef in greater Paris, I was at La Grille for a midday break...La Grille was a great democracy in our intensely hierarchical profession, filled with executive chefs, *chefs de partie*, *commis*, trainees, apprentices.”¹⁰⁰ Bourdain’s dismissal of the “socialist lunch” misses an appreciation for the minor rupture which it provided against the hierarchical productivity of the kitchen’s mission.

Currently, most line cooks do not take proper breaks to eat and are often lucky to find three minutes to quickly inhale room temperature food while standing over a trashcan.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, Bourdain’s celebration of the hardworking Mexican’s assimilation into the kitchen’s cult of productivity explicitly forecloses the kinds of alternative political arrangements which might make immigrant workers less structurally vulnerable to having to take up kitchen work and/or accept its present disciplinary and exploitative structure. Reaching back even further within the French culinary tradition, none other than Auguste Escoffier writes: “I feel that most socialist theories on the matter, even the most far-fetched, are basically indisputable and just.”¹⁰²

White cooks, within Bourdain’s account, are evidently more trouble, in part because they are less accustomed to the disrespect which one should just come to expect within the kitchen. Elsewhere, Bourdain expands on this theme, noting that: “[Mexican cooks] are used to being responsible for others. They are, more than likely, inured to regimes despotic, ludicrous, and hostile. They’ve known hardship—*real* hardship. The incongruities, contradictions, and petty injustices of the kitchen are nothing new compared to *la mordida*.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 84

¹⁰¹ For a recent example of this phenomenon, see Samantha Berlin, “Viral TikTok Shows Working Conditions for Restaurant Workers Hiding Behind Counter to Eat” *Newsweek.com*, Nov 15, 2021.

¹⁰² Auguste Escoffier, *Memoirs of My Life*. Translated by Lawrence Escoffier, (New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1997), 148

¹⁰³ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 44

Again, Bourdain's comments are intended to be complimentary of the fortitude which emerges from less privileged experiences. But, the sweeping statements risk reifying colonial assumptions in a manner which recalls Edward Said's interrogation of the trope of "Oriental despotism."¹⁰⁴ This theme, discussed by Said in the context of western presentations of various non-western (mostly Asian) cultures, runs parallel to Wynter's notion of overrepresentation in that it generally holds that non-Europeans lack the rational capacities to govern themselves fairly. Historically, this assumption has licensed colonial rule over people of color by white Europeans owing to their supposedly superior rationality. Bourdain's assertion that Latinx cooks are well suited for the kitchen because they come from similarly despotic environments risks reproducing this orientalist trope while explicitly naturalizing the kitchen as an inevitable space of hierarchical governance.

Bourdain does not generally advocate for the white ruler/brown subject dynamic within the kitchen, as he also critically takes stock of the racialized qualities of the brigade's hierarchy. Bourdain writes: "Lately, things have changed...a little...The strata of Latino labor has enlarged to include sauté, grill, and even sous-chef positions. But you don't see too many chefs of French or Italian or even "New American" restaurants with a last name like Hernandez or Perez or Garcia."¹⁰⁵ Diagnosing the lack of representation at the top of the brigade, Bourdain concludes: "It's...well...we *know* what it is, don't we? It's racism, pure and simple. I'd go on, more than happy to open the next can of worms—the 'How come I don't see many African Americans in good restaurant kitchens?' question—but I'll leave that to another, more reasoned advocate."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1979.),39

¹⁰⁵ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 45

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 45-46

Although Bourdain’s “punt” on the issue of Black chefs may leave something to be desired, this comment helps to underscore, again, the racialized dimension of the line cook position in a manner which deepens an appreciation of Wilmot’s anxieties expressed above. In sum, Bourdain’s descriptions in this passage illuminate the normatively subordinate role of racialized foot soldiers within Culinary Man’s brigade. However, as a concluding note to this chapter, it is worth remembering that the stratified position of marginalized culinary subjects can also yield minor spaces of creative possibility and/or resistance. While this theme should not be taken as a romantic rebuke of Culinary Man’s overwhelmingly dominant disciplinary regime, it remains important to appreciate the points of rupture within it.

Eli Wilson’s study of Latinx line cooks recounts an ongoing struggle over music, which reveals some of the spaces of possibility which subordinated cooks sometimes find in spaces of exclusion. Wilson narrates that, during the hours before service, the “core team” of cooks at Match, a Los Angeles restaurant, “blast bachata and cumbia on a small portable radio...as soon as Match opens to the public at 8:00am, all ‘kitchen music’ must be turned off.”¹⁰⁷ Wilson reads the hegemony of whiteness through the sharp distinction between kitchen and front of house music. He also describes a time when the kitchen forgot to turn off their music in time, which was met with a chef’s stern disciplinary command to do so.¹⁰⁸

As power so often invites resistance, Wilson writes: “all of this this just causes the kitchen radio at Match to be driven underground...the volume would be turned down, the physical radio stashed between two large bags of potatoes.”¹⁰⁹ There is a specific connection to Wynter’s work here since engaging with music offers an explicit strategy of modulating one’s

¹⁰⁷ Wilson, *Front of House, Back of House*, 112

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 113

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 113

collective affective experience in the kitchen in a way which lightly delimits Culinary Man's coloniality. The preservation of a modicum of cultural resistance on the part of Latinx cooks is further narrated by Wilson's comment: "We've had the radio taken away a few times,' one cook told me, a wry smile creeping to his face. 'But it keeps coming back.'"

In sum, it seems that racialized subjects are, in varying degrees, selected to be foot soldiers, for the most part, under Culinary Man's normative arrangement of the brigade. But soldiers come in different types and genres as well, and small breaches in fealty might suggest a subjectivity type which can sometimes be closer to "mercenary" than "knight," even if the overarching framework of militarism remains unchanged. The next chapter takes up the central role of the chef and examines modes of governance which direct and organize the brigade.

Chapter 4. The Chef: From Culinary Man1 to Culinary Man2

This chapter seeks to explore more directly the subjectivity of the chef as director of the brigade. Following the Wynterian-Foucauldian genealogical model, this chapter explores two different, though overlapping, genres of Culinary Man. The following chapter takes up a third iteration of Culinary Man's subjectivity. For the purposes of clarity, these explorations proceed in a linear fashion, which roughly corresponds with historical periodization. However, just as with Wynter's account, the three iterations of Culinary Man should be understood as embodying distinct characteristics while existing in a shared field of discourse and subjectivity. Differently put, the typologies which follow evince tendencies toward both continuity and discontinuity. Furthermore, any given individual chef may be (and is likely to be) composed of elements of multiple modes of Culinary Man.

This genealogical tracing begins with Culinary Man1, the "tyrant," and it then proceeds to examine Culinary Man2, "the artist." Chapter 5 engages with Culinary Man3, the "humanitarian chef." While all three typologies share broad points of overlap, Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2 represent modes of subjectivity which are elaborated within the fine dining kitchen. Culinary Man3, while often retaining connections to the restaurant, exists primarily *outside* of the kitchen. Further, as will be explored in chapter 5, Culinary Man3's set of technical and discursive practices engages with social concerns in a manner which rarely occurs within the sphere of the other two dominant modes of subjectivity. However, and as chapter 5 will show, Culinary Man3 sustains many of the important constitutive features of Culinary Man's hegemony.

To carry out these investigations, I have chosen some of the more well-known and frequently discussed representatives of the three respective chef genres. In exploring the various points of departure, overlap, and combination across various examples, this chapter endeavors to underscore much of what has already been argued in relation to Culinary Man. Namely, that this discursively reinforced mode of hegemonic subjectivity is predicated on a claim of epistemic and/or technical mastery (or even monopoly) which lends itself to a position of sovereign governance atop the brigade's hierarchical distribution of labor and authority. Furthermore, Culinary Man's overrepresentation, maintained through discursive and disciplinary repetition, eclipses the possibility of alternative modes of subjectivity through the regularization of normative conduct.

Culinary Man 1: The Chef as Tyrant

This section explores the figure of the “angry chef,” whose sovereignty within the kitchen is explosively expressed as an authoritative and absolute mode of domination over the brigade's subjects. Typically, this version of Culinary Man's mercurial temperament and outward hostility is legitimated by a passionate insistence on perfection. As explored below, this prioritization of high standards for aesthetic, technical, and productive output licenses harsh treatment, which is assumed to be a necessary component of culinary leadership. The affective atmosphere of this variant of Culinary Man primarily circulates fear, anxiety, and obedience within the kitchen, and the chef's communication principally involves yelling, insults, and thrown objects.

Culinary Man1 can be seen as a prominent historical trope within western cultural depictions of the chef and, despite the more recent emergence of a calmer version of the normative chef (explored in the next section of this chapter), the figure of the angry chef continues to enjoy popular representation in the media. Historically and contemporarily, many

examples of the temperamental and passionate chef in western media have appeared as white, male, and French.¹

Frequently, the angry chef's rage becomes triggered by insults or perceived disrespect, especially toward the chef's cooking and/or food, which are extensions of his mastery. Aristide Saucourt, a head chef from Saki's short story, "The Chaplet," is described as "a potentate, hedged around with the cold brutality that Genius expects rather than excuses."² In the story, Chef Saucourt becomes irate with a violinist whose music distracts diners from their food, and subsequently, he drowns the musician in a vat of soup.³ In a similar vein, popular depictions often feature the chef's rage as a justified defense of proper haute culinary practices against the "barbarism" of breached etiquette and/or inauthentic eating practices. Anthony Bourdain and Joel Rose's graphic novel, *Get Jiro!*, probes this theme for humorous effect on several occasions, including the opening scene's decapitation of a customer who orders California rolls as well as a later sequence involving the harassment of a Mexican taco stand for featuring inauthentic ingredients.⁴

¹ For one example, see Chef Skinner in the animated film, *Ratatouille*. Skinner is a Napoleonic caricature of the classical Parisian chef. Pixar. *Ratatouille*. (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Pictures Distribution, 2007). In the film, Skinner is wrathful, angry, and passionate about fine cuisine, though his foray into developing frozen foods seems to poke fun at the real life trend of French chefs collaborating with large food manufacturing companies, particularly in the 1970's and 1980's, to produce distinctly non-haute cuisine products. For more on this point, see Rick Fantasia, who cites Michel Guérard as the first to go "slumming" (Guérard's term) with major industrial corporations. Other examples include Paul Bocuse, Bernard Loiseau, Guy Martin, and Joël Robuchon. Rick Fantasia, *French Gastronomy and the Magic of Americanism*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania :Temple University Press, 2018),174-175. Jacques Pepin, whose work with Howard Johnson's in the United States constitutes a major element of the entanglement between French haute cuisine and Americanized mass production, recounts the great amusement which he derived from serving frozen food to unknowing French chefs, such as André Soltner, at his home. Pepin, *The Apprentice*, 159

² Saki (H.H. Munro), "The Chaplet." *The Short Stories of Saki*. (New York, NY: Random House Publishing, 1977), 3.

³ Unsurprisingly, the recourse to use food and other kitchen items as weapons is a common theme of the angry chef trope. See also Ramis, Harold (dir.), *Caddyshack*, (Los Angeles, CA: Warner Brothers, 1980) in which a head chef flies into a violent rage and brandishes a meat cleaver in response to descriptions of the food as "low grade dog food" by Rodney Dangerfield's character, Al.

⁴ "Since when is Sour Cream and Monterey Jack Mexican? You go to Mexico; you see fucking cheddar or jack on a fucking TACO? I think NOT" Anthony Bourdain, Joel Rose, *Get Jiro!*, (Burbank, CA: DC Comics, 2012).

While all of these examples are purposefully extreme, they each describe important elements of Culinary Man's performance. The episode with Chef Saucourt reminds us that the chef's food production should be taken and respected as an artistic performance (this theme is explored within Thomas Keller's work discussed in the next section). The punishment meted out in response to culinary faux pas in *Get Jiro!* highlights the specifically haute character of Culinary Man and the elevated assemblage of norms, values, and practices which constitute fine dining. This brief review of the trope of the angry chef within popular depictions gestures toward the historical backdrop of this figure within culinary traditions as well as its more current cultural configuration. However, within the contemporary tradition of western fine dining, Marco Pierre White has seemingly done more than any other chef to popularize and animate this character. In exploring White's performance as Culinary Man, several important dimensions of this figure, particularly a penchant for tyrannical displays of authority, are illuminated.

Discipline as Domination

The opening pages of White's memoir, *The Devil in the Kitchen*, offer a useful glimpse of White's approach to discipline. The scene begins in White's prestigious restaurant in the Hyde Park Hotel as a cheese trolley rolls past the kitchen on its way to the dining room.⁵ While surveilling the kitchen, White notices that this particular trolley has deviated from his standards. He summarizes: "I saw the trolley going out carrying cheese that was too small. My easy-to-obey rule had been broken by the maître de, Nicolas... That is when I flipped."⁶ White continues:

"I picked up the first cheese. 'Not right!' With all my might I threw it against the wall. It stuck to the tiles. I picked up the second cheese. 'Not right!' I chucked it at the wall. Like the first, it was so wonderfully ripe that it splattered onto the tiles and

⁵ White, *The Devil in the Kitchen*, 1-2

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2

remained glued to them. Then I hurled the remaining cheeses, one after another, at that wall. Splat after splat—six or maybe eight times.”⁷

As cheese hung against the wall, White further narrates: “Nicolas and a couple of cooks raced over to the wall, ready to pry off the cheese and clear up the smelly mess. I shouted, ‘Leave them there, Leave them there. Leave them fucking there all night. No one is allowed to touch them.’”⁸ This scene offers a helpful depiction of Culinary Man’s explosive temperament and perfectionist standards. It also demonstrates the division of labor (i.e. the chef makes a mess, and his underlings rush to clean it) operative within the kitchen.

While admitting that the episode is one of “extreme behavior,” White nonetheless defends this course of action and offers a few further points of description as supporting context. Recounting the prestigious setting as one requiring severity, White further emphasizes that “I could not allow you to endure any weakness at the Hyde Park Hotel...it all had to be consistently of the highest standard...if you’re not consistent, you’ll never go from one to two stars or two to three.”⁹ White’s explanation clarifies a picture of masculinist perfection (no “weakness”) in combination with the intensive expectations of fine dining, notably including the pressure to accumulate (and maintain) Michelin stars. Clearly, from White’s perspective, much is at stake and, as he articulates below, this pressure not only licenses, but necessitates the harsh treatment of workers. White writes:

The cheese on the wall sent out a message to everyone working that night...Every single member of the kitchen staff had to look at the cheese, glued to the wall by its ripeness, whenever they came to the passe...You had to deliver the message that they must never take a shortcut. You can’t just say, ‘Come on boys, let’s get it right.’ That just won’t

⁷ Ibid. 2

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid. 3

work. If you are not extreme, then people will take shortcuts because they don't fear you.¹⁰

This passage usefully offers an explicit articulation of White's philosophy of brigade governance, which holds that an absolute sovereign must use extreme behavior to dominate subjects and to elicit fear and obedience. White's approach recalls the Machiavellian tenet that leadership is better served by the cultivation of fear, rather than love, among one's subjects.¹¹ It would seem that White subscribes to a similar view of his subjects as does Machiavelli, namely, that they are fundamentally self-interested and/or lazy actors (predisposed to take shortcuts) who will not carry out the "proper" course of conduct unless they are motivated by the sovereign into compliance.¹² The public quality of White's display of power recalls Foucault's description of the pre-disciplinary spectacles of punishment, notably the public execution, which shore up the sovereign's power and answer any redress against it. For White, disobeying the rules of the cheese tray is an injury against his own culinary sovereignty, and further offenses will only be discouraged by the production of fear through the spectacle of punishment.¹³

In a different passage, recalling his time as a cook in Albert Roux's kitchen, White also emphasizes the connection between fear and the brigade's productivist mission: "We were driven by a fear of failing, a fear of fucking up, a fear of upsetting the boss. It was easy to gauge the terror—when chefs arrived at the restaurant, they raced to change into their whites. There was no

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "it is much safer to be feared than to be loved when one of the two must be lacking... And men are less hesitant about harming someone who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared because love is held together by a chain of obligation which, since men are a sorry lot, is broken on every occasion in which their self-interest is concerned; but fear is held together by a dread of punishment which will never abandon you." Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*. In Peter Bondanella, Mark. Musa., *The Portable Machiavelli*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1979), 131

¹² This assumption should best be described as an A priori position which primarily relates to "lower level" brigade members. As they undergo more training and discipline, the expectation of compliance becomes more reliable.

¹³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 47-48

time to stop...”¹⁴ Fear, for Culinary Man’s brigade, is a tactic to maintain productivity, discipline, and hierarchy in both structures of governance and practices of labor.

Affective Atmosphere

Furthermore, the utilization of harsh disciplinary practices produces an atmosphere which is antagonistic to solidarity. Crucially, Culinary Man1’s dominion strives to produce relations of isolation and competition between brigade subjects. White underscores the wide reaching quality of the cheese as a disciplinary signifier (“every single member of the kitchen staff had to look...”), which functions to situate each member of the brigade into a totalizing relation of domination and fear.

A key technique in maintaining this situation involves control of the affective atmosphere, particularly of the kitchen’s sonic space which, again, centralizes Culinary Man’s directions and articulations while leaving no space for brigade subordinates to form substantive social bonds with one another. Again describing his time as a member of Albert Roux’s brigade, White narrates the austere auditory landscape of the kitchen which contributed directly to the productive discipline of the line. White writes: “there was no chitchat. If anyone one spoke it was only to talk about the menu or the food. Overall, there were hours of silence, punctuated by orders from René and barks of ‘Yes Chef.’ We all bevered away, sticking to each recipe...and being precise and methodical.”¹⁵ This note makes the connection between silence and productivity apparent, though White also expresses the alluring affective dimensions of this

¹⁴ White, *The Devil*, 54

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 56

arrangement: “I discovered that there was something beautiful about the sounds—chopping, clattering, sizzling—of a working kitchen.”¹⁶

This situation resembles what Jeremy Gilbert describes as “Leviathan Logics,” in which “there are no lateral bonds of fellowship or common purpose, only a collection of parallel, but never intersecting, ‘vertical’ bonds linking each individual to a central or superior locus.”¹⁷ It is also worth noting that Culinary Man’s own phenomenology, in occupying the space of “superior locus,” is affectively conditioned as well. Roy Choi describes this qualitative dimension as Culinary Man while recounting an experience of excoriating a subordinate: “Damn, I felt so strong and powerful. Like a king stepping on his villagers, just because he could.”¹⁸ Choi’s direct allusion to sovereign power encapsulates the dominant approach to discipline within modalities of Culinary Man¹, and it also reprises the Wynterian connection between discipline, subjectivity, and affective cognition discussed in the previous chapter.

However, Culinary Man’s hegemony diverges somewhat from Gilbert’s formulation in that it *does* involve at least some binding notions of common purpose beyond the mere compliance with dominating authority.¹⁹ The balance between harsh domination and the hegemonic project of securing consent is explored further below.

¹⁶ Ibid. 56

¹⁷ Gilbert, *Common Ground*, 50

¹⁸ Choi, *L.A. Son*, 233

¹⁹ Frequently for White, the overarching ethos which he understands as cultivated between and among his brigade members is something along the lines of the broader pursuit of culinary glory and skill, often formalized by Michelin recognition. While discussing his harsh discipline, White writes: “the ones who left, well, fine, at least they had decided a Michelin starred kitchen was not for them...[Gordon Ramsay] would go on to win three Michelin stars of his own. There are other winners too: Phillip Howard has two, Eric Chavot has two; and Steven Terry has one...All of the chefs that went through Harveys will say they have never worked in a more pressurized environment, but I doubt any of them will say they regret the experience. Chefs love mania.” White, *Devil*, 126.

Discipline and Hegemony

Culinary Man requires at least some amount of “buy in” to the broader mission which is undertaken by the brigade. This productive element of discipline is present even in White’s model of leadership which explicitly privileges repressive domination to a significant extent.

White writes:

I was nasty, vicious, aggressive and blunt...but hey, don’t get me wrong—along the way I had earned the respect and loyalty of the brigade. And away from the kitchen, I like to think I had my moments of compassion too. I helped out those with financial problems, and when Gordon went to work in France, I lent him the money for the trip. I was also there with the rest of them when they played football on Wandsworth Common. In fact, I was often the one who dragged them out to play when they said they were too tired to exercise. The boys would do anything for me...²⁰

This passage announces the need for authoritarian cruelty to be balanced by at least some kinder forms of interaction if hegemony is to be sustained.²¹ For Culinary Man1, the proportion of cruelty to kindness greatly privileges the former, although, as will be explored in the next section, other variants of Culinary Man come to feature a greater emphasis on the cultivation of brigade subjectivity in less overtly harsh terms. Moments of compassion notwithstanding, White’s governance does seek to install a totalizing sense of authority which implicitly prevents the brigade from forming more solidaristic or lateral forms of relations. Chapter 5 will explore alternative models of culinary subjectivity which emerge through archipelagic formations outside of Man’s overrepresentation. However, it is worth restating that a central function of the brigade

²⁰ Ibid. 130

²¹ If Marco Pierre White can indeed be read within a Machiavellian framework, then this point too would be consistent. While underscoring fear as an important method of governing, Machiavelli is also clear that “above all, a prince must guard himself against being despised and hated,” thus, cruelty must have a limit if it is to produce durable hegemony. The use of small acts of generosity, which do not produce “a reputation for it,” is also a technique allowed by Machiavelli to offset other cruelties. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 128-130. White makes reference to other rare instances of generosity: “When I was feeling charitable, I’d give instructions to remove the kitchen’s skylight, thus allowing some of the heat to escape.” White, *Devil*, 129.

is the disciplinary production of docile, productive, and, subsequently, apolitical subjectivities which do not challenge Culinary Man's hegemony.

Furthermore, within this silent workspace, the humiliations experienced by White's brigade become more noticeable and intense, further contributing to an atomized field of brigade subjects. White notes: "when a [non-executive] chef is receiving a bollocking, none of his colleagues jump in to defend him. The rest of the brigade look down and carry on with the job. Each of them knows that sooner or later, he will be the one getting a bollocking."²² White's observation illuminates the manner in which harsh treatment becomes normalized as the common expectation of the kitchen, further cementing White's centralized authority through public displays of sovereign power.

White explicitly describes the use of this technique as a means to cultivate an atmosphere of fear and control. White writes: "Normally only one person was allowed to speak during service, and that was me. Kitchen visitors said it was a bit like watching a surgeon in an operating theatre. Step now into my theatre of cruelty..."²³ White's understanding of his practices of cruelty as taking place within the context of a "theatre" anticipates themes of the chef as a performer, explored further and key to Culinary Man2's subjectivity. The next several pages detail a dialogue (which mimics the sparse interactions between surgeons and assistants during operations) of harsh treatment, humiliation, and punishment meted out to White's cooks. Summarizing these anecdotes, White explicitly reformulates his philosophy of disciplinary management:

in order to achieve my dream, I reckoned I needed a brigade with army-standard discipline and, as I had learned at Gavroche, discipline is borne out of fear.... If you

²² Ibid. 128

²³ Ibid. 125

don't fear the boss, you'll take shortcuts, you'll turn up late. My brigade had to feel the pain, push themselves to the limits, and only then would they know what they were capable of achieving.²⁴

Despite the textures of fear, domination, and militarism, White's concluding note, which pertains to the expansion of brigade capacities, highlights the more Foucauldian disciplinary project of cultivating docile and productive subjectivity. Gordon Ramsay, who worked for White in the late 1980s, expresses an awareness of the transformative properties of White's harsh treatment: "But with Marco, the more he screwed you, the more he turned you over, the more you felt yourself becoming better."²⁵

Glory and Judgement

Taking White's harsh approach in the context of disciplinary cultivation, rather than merely as brute repression, helps to underscore the perfectionist emphasis on high technical and aesthetic standards which drive the brigade's central mission. Key metrics for haute cuisine standards are generally provided by institutional bodies such as the Michelin guide.²⁶ The pursuit of Michelin level recognition, status, and glory ultimately grounds Culinary Man 1's most fundamental mission. White's above gesture toward "achieving his dream" explicitly references this pursuit of winning (specifically three) Michelin stars.²⁷ This fundamental imperative lends itself to a particular form of disciplinary gaze which, again, is considered to be a necessary component of actualizing Culinary Man's aspirations for perfection, high status, and glory.

²⁴ Ibid. 126

²⁵ Gordon Ramsay, *Roasting in Hell's Kitchen*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2006), 82

²⁶ White writes: "A restaurant with three Michelin stars is a monument to the highest—the most *extreme*—expression of the art of cooking." White, *Devil*, 4. The universal and exclusionary scope of White's exaltation comes at the expense of all non-fine dining modes of culinary practice, thus providing a useful example of Man's overrepresentation.

²⁷ Throughout the book, White more explicitly states this, such as when he writes: "My dream, of course, was to win three stars from Michelin..." Ibid. 171

Anything short of this goal is not registered as a worthy undertaking. In a passage which usefully clarifies the use of tyrannical discipline in the context of pursuing totalizing glory, White writes:

I went berserk if the brioche wasn't toasted properly... Insignificant to you, maybe, but the difference between life and death to one of my cooks. If the brioche wasn't right or the vegetables hadn't been chopped properly, then someone was in for a nasty bollocking. 'Do you really want to be the best?' I'd tell them. 'If you do, that's fantastic; if you don't, then don't waste my time.'²⁸

This narration provides a clear illustration of the chef's mode of judgement, which is constantly surveilling the kitchen in search of any minor flaws which might sabotage the pursuit of glory.²⁹ For White, performing the domination necessary to transform the brigade into one which can operate at a Michelin level is a fundamental part of a "true" chef's duties. This point is clarified below by White's recollection of his time working for Raymond Blanc.³⁰ White notes: "though gifted in many ways, he desperately lacked the authority of his Michelin-starred rivals. He was like the headmaster who was too kind to discipline the wayward miscreants in his seventeen-strong brigade."³¹ This passage reiterates White's theory of discipline as necessary for the highest achievement and interestingly directs Culinary Man's mode of judgement toward a peer, rather than underling, thus demonstrating that chefs also discipline one another toward the telos of *total* Michelin glory.

Aside from the use of anger to perform a harsher brand of discipline, White also theorizes that the intensive affective performance of the chef has implications for the acquisition of

²⁸Ibid. 126

²⁹ And in fact, although the food remains the central object, this gaze extends outside of the kitchen: "Yet even before I started to tackle the cooking side, I became obsessed with what I call 'the illusion of grandness.' The plates and silverware had to be the finest, and the tablecloths had to be beautiful..." Ibid. 175

³⁰ Leblanc is a widely celebrated French chef whose restaurant, "Le Manoir aux Saisons," has "only" received two Michelins stars, rather than the maximum of three.

³¹ Ibid. 79

knowledge, which further cements the chef's hegemonic position. As White explains: "to have a passion for something means that you have to seek great understanding of its creation, which, in turn, gives you a good chance of perfecting it."³² The assumption that a passion for food should translate into an obsession with its technical operations (with the purpose of perfecting them) is a key element of Culinary Man's totalizing approach to cooking. White's emphasis on passion is important in that it suggests that the intensive, perfectionist, and harsh insistence on particular ways of doing things is not merely a cynical device to legitimate disciplinary control. Instead it presents Culinary Man's totalizing way of desiring as a sincerely felt emotional disposition, rather than a disingenuous performance, at least in the case of White.³³ This internal emotional dimension is tethered to the external performances of the disciplinary mission and to White's authoritarian approach to governance.³⁴ In a passage which underscores the entanglement between the chef's impassioned emotional disposition, harsh treatment of underlings, militaristic discipline, and pursuit of totalizing perfection, White notes:

My unmanageable desire for perfection brought out a certain tetchiness in me. I expected my chefs and waiters to match my commitment, and I let them know that. My addiction to work, my constant craving for an adrenaline fix, set the pace, both front and back of house...If joining Gavroche was the culinary equivalent of signing up for the foreign legion, then taking a job at Harveys was like joining the SAS.³⁵

³² Ibid. 175

³³ This point is worth underscoring given that the figure of the passionate chef is a trope frequently performed on television portrayals of fine dining. Gordon Ramsay's various projects, *Hell's Kitchen* chief among them, have done much to popularize this image of the chef, perhaps to the point of cliché.

³⁴ And in fact, passion is also a vehicle for ensconcing culinary authority for White: "I was so passionate about the food and the restaurant that any criticism was destined to wind me up. A customer questioning the cheese dish was criticism." Ibid. 138.

³⁵ Ibid. 12

While White extols the entanglement of passionate desire for perfection alongside disciplined work which strives to actualize this pursuit, there seem to be drawbacks as well.

Upon finally winning his first Michelin star, White recalls:

I really would like to say that it was one of the happiest days of my life. But by now you know me well enough to know that it did not bring me happiness. There was no celebration, no knees-up. Somehow it didn't register as a great achievement because I wanted so much more.³⁶

In White's admission, the totalizing or absolute quality of his aspirations impedes the enjoyment of any "smaller" accomplishments, even those as significant as winning a Michelin star. However, even reaching the telos of three Michelin stars was still not fully satisfactory.

White notes:

I had won three Michelin stars, but my race was not yet finished... Stars are awarded for what is on the plate, but what about Michelin's *couverts*? In the guides you see them as little pictures of crossed knives and forks... They are awarded for pleasantness, luxury, aesthetics, and ambiance. To get five of them, and five red ones rather than black ones, became my new obsession.³⁷

White's discussion above speaks to a common experience of finally getting what one desires yet remaining unsatisfied. Broad traditions within western philosophy, particularly certain psychoanalytic traditions, deem this to be, more or less, a natural condition.³⁸ That is to say, these theories presuppose that a sense of lack will inevitably characterize human modes of desiring and/or define the subject itself, such as in the case of Jacques Lacan's work. White's recourse to expand the territory of aspiration (and to "find" more lack), a move which resembles

³⁶ Ibid. 115

³⁷ Ibid. 196

³⁸ For one notable discussion of this theme, see Lacan's 1960-61 seminar on "transference." Jacques Lacan, *Transference: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII*. Translated by Bruce Fink, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1960 [2015])

David Harvey's theory of the "spatial fix,"³⁹ speaks to a certain insatiability imbued within Culinary Man's totalizing mode of desiring. Though White would indeed actualize this newer obsession as well, this was a little more than a temporary "fix,"⁴⁰ as White reports: "I felt as if I was perched on top of the highest mountain. I could go no further."⁴¹

Deleuze and Guattari's first book, *Anti-Oedipus*, offers a critique of the western psychoanalytic tradition's conception of desire as lack, among other things.⁴² They argue that this notion of desire is conceptually too narrow and that it has political implications which impede the freedom of human creative potentials. In the book's preface, Foucault summarizes Deleuze and Guattari's project by noting that "to be anti-oedipal is to be anti-ego as well as anti-homo, willfully attacking all reductive psychoanalytic and political analyses that remain caught within the sphere of totality and unity, in order to free the multiplicity of desire from the deadly neurotic and Oedipal yoke."⁴³ Several elements of this brief review of *Anti-Oedipus* are pertinent to Culinary Man's mode of desiring, including Foucault's emphasis of the "anti-homo," which can be taken in reference to the Latin etymology which is often rendered as "man."⁴⁴ Foucault's emphasis on "totality and unity" signals recurrent themes within Culinary Man's normative set

³⁹ Harvey's concept asserts a notion of capitalist response to limitation and/or crises which involves securing further geographical and political space (broadly defined) for the purposes of continued accumulation. David Harvey, "The Spatial Fix: Hegel, Von Thunen, and Marx." *Antipode*. Vol. 13. Issue 3 (1981), 1-12.

⁴⁰ Harvey's language of "fix" works well with White's situation in that it describes both the solution to the problem of accumulation (aspirational/affective and recognitional, in White's case) as well as the temporary satiation of an unmanageable desire, such as White's oft-stated addiction to work and/or adrenaline.

⁴¹ White, *Devil*, 200

⁴² While Deleuze and Guattari's critique is quite involved and encompasses a number of theoretical engagements, ontological commitments, and political implications, a more succinct description might note that, for them, desire should not be principally thought of as predicated on lack. Instead, they advance a model of desire which is productive, contextual, and always in processes. For instance: "Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression... As Marx notes, what exists in fact is not lack, but passion..." Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Anti Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1977) 26-27

⁴³ Foucault, Michel. "Preface" in Deleuze, Guattari, *Anti Oedipus*,. xx

⁴⁴ As explored in the introduction, Foucault's work on "Man" in his work, *The Order of Things*, is influential to Sylvia Wynter's genealogy of Man. Furthermore, Wynter, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari all offer critiques of western modes of being which are resonant with one another.

of operations, techniques, and aspirations. Furthermore, Culinary Man's insatiable mode of desire predicated on lack seems quite resonant with Deleuze and Guattari's critique of psychoanalytic conceptions of desire, which ultimately limit creative expression, freedom, and human happiness. White seems to confirm this connection as he describes his eventual decision to not only retire, but also to "return" his three Michelin stars.

While there are several notable reasons listed by White, a major theme involves becoming tired of following the ceaseless path of desire for culinary glory. White writes:

the nonstop process of refining dishes and striving for perfection was exhausting...Even when you have three stars, you still have to keep raising your game. People look at you as the top chef and their expectations become greater...it can seem never ending.⁴⁵

This reference to other people's ever expanding expectations helpfully underscores the social (or shared) production of Culinary Man's desiring economy. In addition to the totalizing approach to food, White also lamented the totalizing lifestyle (and working hours) which fine dining demands, and which leaves little time for other pursuits. White notes: "in the kitchen I had three stars, but home I had another three: Mati, Luciano and Marco [White's wife and two sons]...I was so obsessed with my work, so tunnel-visioned, that nothing else played a part."⁴⁶ Upon deciding to retire as a chef and subsequently returning the Michelin stars, White expresses a sense of freedom and relief: "Yet, here I was, effectively returning the accolade it had taken a career to win. My dream had controlled me for two decades, but now I was in control."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ White, *Devil*, 217

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 215

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 219

While White is something of an outlier (in that it remains rare for chefs to decline Michelin stars⁴⁸), the sentiment of deviating from the Michelin guide's totalizing authority has seemingly grown in recent decades. In 2003, celebrated French chef Bernard Loiseau died by suicide at a time when rumors suggested that the Michelin guide was considering a demotion of his restaurant from three stars to two. While this was never confirmed, speculation ensued which subsequently led to discussions of mental wellness and to reevaluations of the pressures imparted by the Michelin guide.⁴⁹ In addition to this, other chefs have lamented the manner in which the Michelin guide's haute standards limit the types of creative output which can be carried out within its framework.⁵⁰ While these points of departure—White's retirement included—constitute counter-descriptions away from its institutional authority, the Michelin guide remains a powerful force within contemporary culinary culture. Thomas Keller, the subject of the next section, expounds on the meaningful importance of the Michelin tradition:

Receiving three Michelin stars is a huge responsibility—you have to bear that responsibility with strength, conviction, determination, and commitment, and your whole team has to do that every night. You're representing over 100 years of history. The countless chefs that have been in that position, many of them that have made our careers possible. Before Paul Bocuse, [it was] Fernand Point. Before Fernand Point, Auguste Escoffier. There's countless chefs that we stand on the shoulders of and we have to pay respect to who they were, what they did and the awards that they received. It's a huge responsibility we have to remember and wear that with pride.⁵¹

While one can certainly read a sense of pressure within Keller's note above, it is also clearly presented in positive terms. Furthermore, the hegemonically French character of fine

⁴⁸ And technically, stars are given to restaurants and not to chefs. Though White and the few others who have also "returned" their stars have done so by asking not to be included in upcoming publications of the Michelin guide.

⁴⁹ Michael Steinberger, "Michelin and the Deaths of Two French Chefs," *New York Times.com*, February 5, 2018.

⁵⁰ Julio Biasca and Frederick Dhooge have both, respectively, "returned" Michelin stars so as to explore forms of cooking which are not "worthy" of Michelin glory, including "simpler" fare such as fried chicken., Sam Kashner, "Why Some of the World's Most Famous Chefs *Don't* Want a Michelin Star," *Vanity Fair.com*, October 1, 2015. This observation underscores the narrow field of value and Eurocentric dimensions of fine dining.

⁵¹ Thomas Keller, "5 Q's with Thomas Keller" *Michelin Guide.com*, 2019.

dining (and what it means, in Michelin's terms, to achieve culinary success) is present in Keller's genealogical references to Bocuse, Point, and Escoffier. Whatever the critiques and departures offered against the Michelin guide, or the Franco-western fine dining tradition more broadly, both remain a vital force in dominant culinary culture. As Gordon Ramsay demonstrates, while remarking on Michelin pursuits as well as on Keller specifically, the sense of lacking desire attached to Culinary Man's normative virtues persists as well. Ramsay writes:

People often ask me whether there'll ever be a day when I've got enough restaurants in my group and enough Michelin stars under my belt. The answer to both questions is 'no'...Alain Ducasse has got three sets of three-starred restaurants, in New York, Monaco, and Paris. So it's definitely possible. That's my goal. And Thomas Keller, the American chef, has two lots of three stars. So, if anything, I feel like I'm lagging behind. I'm under-achieving.⁵²

The next section explores Thomas Keller as a gentler and (even) more aesthetically driven iteration of Culinary Man. As explored below, Culinary Man2 deploys a softer, though likely more insidious and efficient set of disciplinary techniques which do not require the heavy-handed aggression performed by Marco Pierre White.

Culinary Man2: The Chef as Artist

While the preceding section outlined a more "classical" version of Culinary Man, this section examines the more contemporary iteration of the artistic chef. American chef, Thomas Keller, provides a useful example of "Culinary Man2," even though it is one which maintains several overlapping features with Culinary Man1. However, there are important areas where

⁵² Ramsay, *Roasting in Hell's Kitchen*, 273-274. Ramsay's book title offers an additional demonstration of the fusing of anger, harsh treatment, and perfection within Culinary Man's discursive field.

Culinary Man2 diverges from Culinary Man1, in particular the fact that “he” enacts a more explicitly Foucauldian style of discipline which contains significantly fewer elements of harsh or repressive treatment. In a manner which parallels Foucault’s account of the birth of the prison, Culinary Man2 has replaced the fiery domination of the public excoriation with more subtle and “gentle” disciplinary techniques.⁵³ A post from American chef, Scott Mackenzie, describes this shift in approach as he notes: “If your staff fears you, they’ll only do the minimum to keep you off their ass. If they respect you, they’ll do whatever they have to do in order to make you proud.”⁵⁴

To begin this exploration, several areas of continuity with Culinary Man1 are explored, in particular, the fact that Culinary Man2 still retains strong tendencies toward perfectionism and maintains normative roots in the classical French tradition. Approaches to discipline and aestheticism, respectively, signal larger points of discontinuity, which shape Culinary Man2 as more of a creative master who inspires rather than as a dictatorial tyrant.

Perfectionism

Just as with Marco Pierre White, Culinary Man2 holds a strong commitment to producing perfect food, and this mission also implies a heavy emphasis on disciplining the brigade through the careful scrutinization of and instruction in very precise and specific forms of technique. While Keller, like White, displays an awareness of the Michelin guide and shares an appreciation of its significance—Keller famously has images of stars displayed in his kitchen at the French Laundry and, regarding Michelin, remarks: “everyday we think about that”⁵⁵—the theme of

⁵³ Summarizing the shift in methods of punishment which *Discipline and Punish* follows, Foucault notes: “We have then, a public execution and a time-table.” Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 7

⁵⁴ Scott Mackenzie, Posted on Mackenzie’s Facebook page, *Culinary Anarchy*.

Aug. 22, 2022

⁵⁵ CBS News. Jan. 11, 2020. “The Dish: Thomas Keller.” *CBS News.com*: 2:07

institutional recognition appears somewhat less frequently in Keller's discourse than it does with White.⁵⁶ Keller tends to articulate his approach to food in more abstract or esoteric ways,⁵⁷ though they often still convey a sense of totalizing perfection. Remarking on his culinary ethos (and his sense of its departure from more "typical" modes of being), Keller notes:

To a lot of people, it's just a job... For me, you buy into the whole thing for your whole career, or you don't do it... Do you really care about everything that's going on around you, do you care about everything? Or just the finished plate? Because it doesn't begin with the plate, it begins when you wake up. It's got to be a philosophy. You have to be determined, determined to do it every day. If you're going to have a clean plate, you've got to have a clean oil bottle... [speaking hypothetically to an underling] it's very hard to explain to somebody... 'yeah, I want you to be perfect'... and translate that into everything that you do.⁵⁸

Keller's governance in the kitchen famously insists on very fine details within the scope of his brigade's operations. As Grant Achatz, speaking about his time as a cook under Keller, makes clear, the emphasis on perfection is fused to Keller's projection of mastery and authority. Achatz writes: "there were a few unspoken rules: chef Keller was god; try to be like chef Keller, exactly; the food was perfect or it was wrong; failure was never an option; and 'yes, chef' was the only proper response to any request."⁵⁹ In order to carry out "perfect food," Keller's example enforces very particular technical operations. Keller has become fairly well known, due in part to his public presentations and educational efforts directed toward non-professional cooks,⁶⁰ for his

⁵⁶ A variety of factors may account for this. However, the geographical gap between European and American milieus—as Michelin has only somewhat recently begun reviewing U.S. restaurants—may be pertinent.

⁵⁷ "I can tell you the mechanics—how to make custard, for instance. But you won't have a perfect one if you merely follow my instructions. If you don't feel it, it's not a perfect custard... If you're a really good cook, you can go back in time... The recipes in this book are about wanting to take the time to do something that I think is priceless. Our hunger for the twenty-minute gourmet meal, for one-pot ease, and prewashed, precut ingredients has severed our lifeline to the satisfactions of cooking." Thomas Keller, *The French Laundry Cookbook*, (New York, NY: Artisan, 1999), 2-3

⁵⁸ Thomas Keller, In Michal Ruhlman, *The Soul of a Chef*, (New York, NY: Penguin, 2001), 318-319

⁵⁹ Achatz, *Life on the Line*, 87

⁶⁰ Keller's cookbooks fulfill some of this function, as does his "Masterclass" course in basic cooking technique, which features an early lesson on blanching.

approach to blanching, an operation which involves quickly cooking food (generally, vegetables) in boiling water prior to halting the cooking process by submerging the cooked item into an ice bath. Recounting a conversation about Keller's blanching technique, Michael Ruhlman offers:

the water had to be very, very salty. Keller wants it to taste like the Atlantic. And it had to be a rapid boil. If you added vegetables (in some cases, such as fresh peas, they had to be ice cold) and the water lost its boil, Keller instructed you to throw them out and do it right. I had met a former cook who had spent all morning not only shucking fava beans, a tedious task in itself, but also removing their skins, which is easy to do after they're cooked, but tedious and time consuming when they're raw. Half his workday he spent preparing pounds of fava beans to be cooked. He brought the salted water to a boil and dumped in the favas. The boil vanished, Keller saw it and told him to throw the favas out and start again.⁶¹

Ruhlman's account captures the exacting (and difficult, particularly with the rushed time constraints of restaurant production) standards of Keller's technique, which has an aesthetic goal at its center.⁶² Additionally, the familiar division of labor in which an underling carries out a long, tedious, and unpleasant task for the purposes of serving the chef's particular vision (and the waste produced by the failure to do so) is illustrated as well. Keller's insistence on time-intensive techniques is a key element of the pursuit of perfect food, as it is also demonstrated by the French Laundry's practice of straining sauces over twenty times, an action which would likely be considered of negligible benefit and/or wasted time at restaurants with different standards.⁶³

⁶¹ Ruhlman, I. *Soul of a Chef*, 261

⁶² Ruhlman expands on Keller's blanching approach: "If you cooked your vegetable this way and plunged it into a vast amount of ice water the instant it was done, you would achieve extraordinary color in your bean. You'd have a *greener-than-green bean*." (emphasis added). Ibid. 293

⁶³ Ruhlman, while observing a French Laundry cook named Greg, narrates: "He poured the sauce from one steel bowl through the chinois into another steel bowl, departed, cleaned the chinois and the bowl, then returned and poured the sauce through the chinois again, rapping the rim of the chinois with a spoon to hurry the sauce through (cooks [at the French Laundry] never pumped sauce through with a ladle). After each straining, he examined the fine sediment caught in the chinois, then strode to the dish station to clean the chinois and bowl again and strain again. Finally he poured the sauce through the chinois, and we peered into it. It had caught nothing...He had strained the sauce more than twenty times." Ibid. 256. In addition to illustrating the totalizing quality of Keller's techniques (i.e. sauce must be strained until literally no further sediment exists), this passage also underscores the historically

Interestingly, while Keller's insistence on technical excellence and perfect food resembles much of the western fine dining tradition's usual norms, Keller himself holds a much less teleological or institutionalized rendering of perfection than many of his predecessors. For Keller, perfection is something more akin to a "horizon" rather than an end goal, such as winning Michelin stars. Keller states: "It doesn't exist, because once you reach it, it's not perfect anymore. It means something else. The bar rises to some other plateau...Perfection, is an ideal. I would never want to think that there was perfection in cuisine because it would end the drive."⁶⁴ This outlook can be contrasted with Marco Pierre White's articulations of desire as lack explored above. Still, both chefs share a sense of reverence for the classical French culinary tradition.

Classicism

Another important area of shared continuity between Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2 is a firm rootedness in classical French technique, cuisine, and tradition. While much is often made about both Keller's American identity, as well as his exploratory or inventive approach to cooking, Keller embodies Culinary Man's underlying assumption that traditional French haute cuisine is the pinnacle of culinary activity. For instance, Grant Achatz developed a desire to work for Keller after reading a review of the French Laundry which notes with praise: "Thomas Keller's The French Laundry seems to be one of those three-star country restaurants that so captivate us in France."⁶⁵ Much of Keller's style and discourse reflect traditional French

French and, relatedly, racist dimensions within fine dining terminology, which are normalized to the point of regularity. The "chinois" is a conical strainer which, according to traditional French culinary discourse, resembles the kinds of hats worn by Chinese people. Anecdotally, I have observed this piece of equipment used to facilitate racialized forms of mimesis and mockery many times.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 317

⁶⁵ Achatz, *Life*, 59

sensibilities, from listing his favorite chef/cookbook as Fernand Point,⁶⁶ to, of course, the name of his most famous restaurant, “The French Laundry.”

Michael Ruhlman, who has written extensively on Keller, credits *The French Laundry* with both popularizing the smaller portions of the “tasting menu” and bringing to fruition Keller’s hopes to “encourage more people to return to classical French cuisine, the source of his methods and ideas.”⁶⁷ A strong classical influence is borne out in Keller’s biography as well, in the form of his first mentor in America, a French chef named Roland Henin, as well as a formative “pilgrimage” year spent in Paris working at the Michelin starred restaurant, “Taillevent.”⁶⁸

As will be explored later, Keller’s allegiance to French cooking interestingly locates him in the middle of a growing tension between tendencies toward tradition and those toward experimentation and exploration. While contemporary sentiment has, for various reasons, relaxed or elided some of the long running assumptions of French culinary superiority, reverence for haute cuisine remains a durable part of the western culinary imaginary. This hegemony is illustrated by the compliment paid to Keller by acclaimed French chef, Michel Richard, who proclaimed that “He [Keller]’s one of the best French chefs anywhere,” or by Jean-Louis Palladin’s more epistemological observation that “He [Keller] has the mind of a French guy, you know? He’s thinking like a French cook.”⁶⁹ Both comments demonstrate the continued reverence for French cooking, as well as Keller’s continuity with that tradition. Palladin’s comments also underscore the gendered aspect of Culinary Man (it is a French “guy” who models what it means

⁶⁶ Ruhlman, *Soul*, 229

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 286

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 266, 272

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 232

to be excellent) as well as the centrality of French modes of cognition. Indeed, as the next line of inquiry explores, Keller's ostensibly superior rationality, aesthetic prowess, and technical genius underscore his hegemony in the kitchen, all of which are tethered to Keller's incorporation into the extant discursive regime which continues to articulate French (and specifically haute and/or Parisian) cooking as the peak of gastronomic activity.

Keller's Hegemonic Discipline

While Culinary Man1's authority certainly included, alongside the authoritative affective performances examined above, a claim to superior knowledge, discourse on Culinary Man2 is defined to a greater degree by allusions to intelligence, creative genius, and technical mastery. Thomas Keller's brigade leadership exemplifies the "genius" discourse of Culinary Man2's hegemony. Grant Achatz, while narrating his first experience with Keller's food, writes: "if it[the food] wasn't perfect, it was damn well close. But it was also so *smart*. It was clever without being cloying... This flat out blew away the meals I had at restaurants in Europe."⁷⁰ Achatz's praise offers a clear example of the knowledge-centric discourse which elevates Culinary Man, while also underscoring the logic of appraisal which uses Europe as the standard for comparison.⁷¹ Furthermore, Achatz illustrates the positive affect of being subordinated to the superior knowledge (rather than brute authority or aggression) of Keller, stating: "I was in awe. I felt like a kid again—like I *knew* nothing about cuisine, cooking, or food and was starting from scratch. It was truly an exciting night. (emphasis added)"⁷² The sense of awe and excitement expressed by Achatz mirrors similar comments made by Kwame Onwuachi, explored in the

⁷⁰ Achatz, *Life on the Line*, 70

⁷¹ The enduring logic of European culinary superiority reflects Sylvia Wynter's account of Man's overrepresentation which is also rooted in an overarching assumption of white, male, European superiority.

⁷² *Ibid.* 70

second chapter, and, again, demonstrates the formation of consenting brigade subjects through hegemonic discourses, affects, and positionality.⁷³

Ruhlman, while studying Keller and his French Laundry kitchen, also highlights Keller's rationality while narrating his leadership. Ruhlman writes:

It is in these young cooks, Eric most of all, that one notices the effect of the chef's mind on the staff...a chef's mind and personality permeate a kitchen, determine absolutely not only its standards but also its tone and tenor...the weaker the chef, the more nebulous this dynamic becomes. Keller was anything but nebulous. Eric, it seemed, was attempting to adopt Keller's entire thought process.⁷⁴

The above passage offers another illustration of the "culinary Cartesianism" referenced in chapter two, while emphasizing the more subtle forms of discipline deployed by Keller to maintain hegemony over the brigade. The key difference between Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2's respective approaches to discipline stems from Keller's "softer" means of regulating the conduct of his cooks. As gestured in Ruhlman's imagery of permeation, tone, and dynamics, Keller controls his brigade without inspiring fear through displays of anger, per Marco Pierre White's model. Instead, brigade subjectivity is formed in mimetic relation to Keller's high aesthetic standards, through precise technique and by way of disciplinary practices which are normalized into habit through repetition.

Ruhlman notes that Keller "once had a temper but got that under control."⁷⁵ This description of Keller's past anger reminds of the overlapping continuities which exist across and between various iterations of Culinary Man—the "hybridity" of Man in Wynterian terms—but

⁷³ This is another instance of the Foucauldian character of brigade discipline. Subjects are formed through productive power which shapes the disposition of brigade members through normative repetition rather than by means of repression or coercion.

⁷⁴ Ruhlman, *Soul of a Chef*, 257

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 222

also signals discontinuity. While the points of emphasis and affective expressions used by Culinary Man shift, the mission of control, mastery, and subjectivity production remains consistent. Ruhlman's description of a rational Keller who has tamed his emotions exemplifies this continuity. Keller himself makes the point even more explicit, stating: "There comes a point where you've exhausted rational expression. And you've got to revert to more primitive means. But by then it's too late anyway."⁷⁶ Ruhlman adds a note of summary: "So now he uses calmer means to convey his anger or disapproval. Silence can be more effective than a scream."⁷⁷ Keller's discussion of the two respective modes of punishment mirrors Foucault's commentary on the shift from the more gruesome, though riskier (from the perspective of the sovereign) "spectacle of the scaffold" to the development of the prison's more subtle disciplinary practices.⁷⁸ The explosive tirades of "the angry chef" come with inherent risks which can threaten to undercut the kitchen's central mission.⁷⁹

Wynter's framework would describe Keller and Ruhlman's discussion as a changing set of descriptive statements (or Foucauldian discourse) which describe, in normative terms, what a chef should be. Under the new discourse ushered in alongside chefs like Keller, a calmer and more rational Culinary Man² rules his kitchen without needing to utilize the same kinds of "primitive" performances favored by the older model of Culinary Man¹. Ruhlman's description

⁷⁶ Ibid. 240

⁷⁷ Ibid. 240

⁷⁸ Foucault discusses the manner in which the public executions could backfire and lead to social disturbances against the sovereign. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 61

⁷⁹ Examples of this include workers who are "pushed too far." With respect to Marco Pierre White, episodes with two (now) famous former underlings serve, respectively, to illustrate this. After receiving too much abuse, Mario Batali reports "I was frightened for my life, this guy was a mean motherfucker" and that after four months, he "dumped two handfuls of salt into a beurre blanc and walked out." Buford, *Heat*, 9. Additionally, Gordan Ramsay reached a point of emotional breakdown while under White's employ, and walked out of White's kitchen several times (with White chasing him down to convince him to stay on several occasions). Ramsay, *Roasting*, 86

of the enhanced effectiveness of calmer and softer means again recalls Foucault's account of the shift from sovereign displays of gruesome punishment to subtler modes of corrective discipline.

Anthony Bourdain aptly summarizes the discontinuity between Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2:

I found that there are two schools of chefs, two management schools: there's the Gordon Ramsay school which I, for better or worse, pretty much came up in that school. And then there's the Joe Torre, Thomas Keller school. Now, unless you're Thomas Keller—Thomas Keller, presumably, you really don't need to yell at anyone. At the Per Se kitchen, I'm willing to bet, that if you didn't satisfy the chef, he doesn't have to yell at you. You're lucky enough to be working at Per Se. If on the way out of the day's work you nod at chef Keller and say 'goodnight chef' and he doesn't even look up or say goodnight to you back, you probably want to go home and hang yourself in the shower. That's motivation enough, he doesn't need to bully or yell.⁸⁰

Bourdain's comments describe a highly panoptic quality within Keller's kitchen in which the sovereign need not trouble himself with punishment because the brigade subjects discipline themselves. Bourdain uses Gordon Ramsay as an archetype for Culinary Man1, likely due to Ramsay's ubiquity within contemporary culinary media and discourses, though as a former protégé of White's, Ramsay works well within my framework as well. Notably, Bourdain underscores that Keller's hegemony does not *require* yelling and bullying as technologies of discipline, while also illustrating the sense of gratitude which brigade subjects might feel just to be within Keller's presence and sphere of activity. Grant Achatz seems to confirm Bourdain's speculations as he recounts: "You never questioned it... You just fucking did it.... You don't even think about not saying yes... But, if he gives you the nod of approval, that's it, you're *golden*. Life is good."⁸¹ Achatz's account narrates an advanced project of discipline, in that it is

⁸⁰ Anthony Bourdain, "Leadership Lessons from the Kitchen." Speech delivered for the *International Chef's Conference* organized by StarChefs.com (2006.), 3:30-4:00.

⁸¹ Ruhlman, *Reach*, 135

not so much that the subject is compelled against their interests or desires to reject an alternative (and to relent to authority), but rather that there is no apparent “choice” to be made. One does not even consider any alternative in the first place. The significance of the “nod,” and, in line with Bourdain’s narration, the implications which follow from the prospect of withholding it, offers a useful glimpse into the microeconomy of disciplinary gestures which, among other things within the disciplinary constellation of Keller’s kitchen, sustain power over the culinary subject.

Thus, as Keller’s brigade operates without the kinds of public humiliations and sovereign displays of authority which are commonplace in Marco Pierre White’s kitchen, a smoother, though no less controlling, affective atmosphere characterizes Keller’s kitchen. Upon arriving, one of Achatz’s first observations about the French Laundry is: “They didn’t talk amongst themselves... There was no chaos in the kitchen, no yelling, and no fear on the faces of the staff. Everything was calm, quiet, and deliberate.”⁸² Achatz’s description recalls the modulation of pacing, time, and space (explored in earlier discussions of *mise en place* in chapter 2) which acts as a constitutive mode of brigade subjectivity. Additionally, this passage reveals some element of continuity with White, specifically, the similarly silent kitchens. However, the serene quality of Keller’s quiet kitchen differs greatly from the repressive silence of White’s space, which illustrates the difference in respective forms of governance between Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2.

Even the kitchen’s economy of movement, which is typically carried out at a high pace in order to match the demands of restaurant production, takes on a different tone under Keller. Ruhlman describes Keller’s kitchen by noting that:

⁸² Achatz, *Life*, 65

“All of his [Gregory, a line cook] movements, so calm and slow, seemed nearly thoughtless...I had never seen anyone move slowly under pressure in the kitchen. And yet, that was the rule here. Under Keller, cooks learned the importance of moving slowly. If you were moving fast, something was wrong—you hadn’t planned well, you hadn’t been efficient—and your food would suffer. To move slowly was the goal, an element of self-discipline you learned as you become a better cook.”⁸³

Key within Ruhlman’s account is the emphasis on discipline which emerges from precise expectations, namely those which modulate the speed at which the body of the cook should conduct itself, which become socialized as internal forms of regulation and governance. Ruhlman’s observations mirror the accounts of normative line cook subjectivity explored in the previous chapter. The calmer affective atmosphere is itself an effective disciplinary tool. Keller’s emphasis on “patience and intensity”⁸⁴ offers a technology of control which is indispensable for sustaining active consent among brigade subjects, particularly those who, like Achatz, had previously been more accustomed to feeling constantly bullied.⁸⁵

Keller’s leadership also performs a certain mode of inclusion, with regard to decision making, though this does not amount to a fully democratic form of governance. I argue that this genre of inclusion, explored below, offers another method of maintaining consent within the brigade without sacrificing any meaningful capacities of decision making.

Once he became a sous-chef at the French Laundry, Achatz was included in more of the creative production within the brigade. Speaking about all of the sous-chefs under Keller, Achatz notes: “Chef Keller treated each of us like specialists, delegating the responsibilities of the kitchen to us based on strengths and personalities...The creative process was always

⁸³ Ruhlman, *Soul*, 256

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 260

⁸⁵ Achatz narrates his disappointment with his previous job, working for Charlie Trotter, noting that: “I wanted one-on-one mentoring. But the personality of this kitchen was the antithesis of that. The behavior of Trotter made such mentorship of cooks impossible. I wanted to grow, but instead I got ass-kickings.” Achatz, *Life on the Line*, 48

collaborative...”⁸⁶ While Keller and certain other chefs offer a sense of democratic collaboration, there are two major features which immediately limit the horizontal quality of such extensions of decision making.

The first limit arises from the brigade’s hierarchical structure which results in the Chef’s enhanced visibility at the expense of his underlings. Ruhlman describes this dynamic well: “They see Thomas Keller, the apotheosis of the American Chef, in magazines and on network television, but not the labor of his four hundred employees.”⁸⁷ Not only does Culinary Man dominate the representational economy, per Ruhlman’s note, but the chef also captures the work, including the creative labor, of the brigade for himself. Onwuachi recalls a feeling of accomplishment about his work being included on Keller’s menus, but as a conversation with Achatz makes clear, this form of inclusion is an act of appropriation as well.⁸⁸

Upon presenting his superior with a new dish, Achatz writes that Keller, cognizant of Achatz’s aspirations to eventually run his own restaurant, offered the warning that: “the minute we put this dish on the menu, it’s no longer a Grant Achatz dish. It will be a Thomas Keller dish. You won’t be able to use this when you eventually become a chef. People will think you are stealing from me.”⁸⁹ Keller’s calm atmosphere of (relative) respect and occasional inclusion deviates sharply from Marco Pierre White’s “dictatorship”⁹⁰ in which the brigade is a mere

⁸⁶ Ibid. 98-99

⁸⁷ Ruhlman, *Reach*, 12

⁸⁸ Although Onwuachi’s excitement is muted by the stoic social atmosphere of Per Se: “My dish, on the menu at Per Se. I should have been overjoyed. I suppose that somewhere inside of me, I was. But by this time, nothing could get through the game face.” Onwuachi, *Notes*, 197

⁸⁹ Ruhlman, *Soul*, 100

⁹⁰ Ramsay, *Roasting*, 77

object to carry out the chef's vision.⁹¹ However, this softer appearance obfuscates dynamics which perhaps constitute a more insidious form of hegemonic exploitation.

The second major limit to Keller's style of inclusion is that it takes place only between Keller and cooks who have risen to a certain level within the brigade's hierarchy. Or, in other words, inclusion is granted by Culinary Man² to those who have become disciplined with sufficient repetition and intensity such that they have internalized Keller's own proclivities, approach, and sensibilities. Ruhlman's comments above about the oversized influence of Keller's mind on the bodily conduct of the brigade exemplify this situation. Furthermore, Keller contributes a more explicit demonstration of this dynamic as he imagines an "ideal kitchen" which includes "no head chef, no sous chef, no brigade."⁹² This vision seems like a radical departure from Culinary Man's typical model of governance. However, Ruhlman continues to narrate Keller's "utopian" (according to Ruhlman) vision, describing that:

There are only five or six cooks, people like Grant, Gregory, Eric, who share similar notions of perfection...If this situation comes to pass, if the five or six cooks share the same notions of how to make stock, how to clean, how to keep one's station, how to finesse a sauce to silky excellence, how to cook a piece of meat perfectly, to season it perfectly, every single time, how to take a Pullman load out of a plastic bag, then the perpetual shackle of maintaining a great restaurant will be broken. A head chef must constantly be on people to do it better....⁹³

Several features of Keller's ideal kitchen are worth examining here, beginning with the fact that the current white, male line cooks who work at the French Laundry are its normative

⁹¹ White, *Devil*, 105. "I needed a system for making sure the brigade brought my vision to life, plate after plate."

⁹² Ruhlman, *The Soul of a Chef*, 252

⁹³ *Ibid.* 252-253

models. Coincidentally, these same three cooks mentioned by Keller are the sous chefs included in the deliberations recounted by Achatz above.⁹⁴

The list of agreed methods also highlights that the disciplinary scope ranges from significant culinary techniques like cooking meat to the astonishingly minute activity of removing bread from its packaging. Most of all, however, it is instructive that the disciplinary structure of the brigade will only be transformed—even in Keller’s most idealistic and utopian moment of imagining—when its prescribed techniques, attitudes, and virtues are so thoroughly internalized and normalized so as to no longer need a disciplinary apparatus. Keller’s description notably highlights the limited imagination of Culinary Man and also runs closely parallel to Gilles Deleuze’s theorization of the “control society,” which might succeed Foucault’s disciplinary society, once the normative work has become entrenched deeply enough.⁹⁵

Thus, the inclusion of additional bodies which are sufficiently disciplined to think in hegemonic terms falls short of a radically inclusive democracy. It is worth delving further into the normative mode of creative production which “counts” under Culinary Man’s hegemonic logic. While haute cuisine’s strong emphasis on aesthetic production sits at a point of continuity between the two models of Culinary Man explored so far, Keller’s brand of aestheticism (which is deeply entangled with the ostensibly superior knowledge claims explored above) marks a particular point of emphasis within Culinary Man’s field of descriptive statements.

⁹⁴ Continuing the same passage above which references the “specialists” of the French Laundry, Achatz adds more explicit detail regarding the pairing of strengths with tasks: “Greg led the morning team and did most of the ordering, Eric would oversee the entire operation, but concentrate on the meat and butchering stations, and I spent most of my time looking over the fish and canape stations.” Achatz, *Life*, 98

⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Societies of Control,” *October*. Vol. 59 (1992), 3-7

Aestheticism

As explored above, Thomas Keller's culinary approach remains heavily influenced by the aesthetics and techniques of classical French cuisine. However, Keller stands out within much culinary discourse not only for his mastery of the hegemonic culinary tradition, but also for his much lauded sense of playful artistry and inventive intelligence. Keller is seen not simply as a highly skilled practitioner of the craft of cooking, but also as a creative master whose work advances the art of cooking. Despite being considered a "French chef" at times, his American nationality is often invoked in articulations of Keller as a forward-looking creator. Chef Roland Henin, speculating about the future trajectories of American cooking, offers: "Give them a chance to mature in order to make the anchor for this American cuisine that's emerging. What it is going to be, I don't know, but people like Thomas are going to write it..."⁹⁶

Henin's sentiment helpfully underscores the manner in which Keller's status transcends his own kitchen governance and is elevated to a position of mastery and authority over the field of cooking itself (or, at the very least, Franco-American cuisine). Keller's prestigious reputation produces a strong desire to work for Keller among prospective cooks—Grant Achatz sent Keller handwritten letters for two weeks straight to ask for a tryout⁹⁷—which, per Bourdain's narration about Keller's lack of yelling in the section above, significantly aids the project of securing hegemonic consent among a brigade of subjects eager to be instructed, molded, and transformed.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ruhlman, *Soul*, 311

⁹⁷ Achatz, *Life on the Line*, 60. Achatz prefaces this anecdote with an account of reading a review of Keller's restaurant and food.

⁹⁸ Eric Ripert adds a similar note when describing his former boss, the lauded French chef, Joël Robuchon. Ripert writes that he was willing to "endure anything to learn." Ripert, *32 Yolks*, 181.

Keller's approach to culinary aesthetics and production is perhaps best characterized by his notion of "the law of diminishing returns," which, for Keller, refers to a declining sense of enjoyment as one eats. Keller writes:

Most chefs try to satisfy a customer's hunger in a short time with one or two dishes. They begin with something great. The initial bite is fabulous. The second bite is great. But by the third bite—with many more to come—the flavors begin to deaden, and the diner loses interest... What I want is that initial shock, that jolt, that surprise to be the only thing you experience. So, I serve five to ten small courses, each meant to satisfy your appetite and pique your curiosity⁹⁹

Keller's explication of this philosophy helps to clarify the oversized emphasis on aesthetics which, relative to even some of the most decadent stylings of Culinary Man1, transforms the presentation of food service into an entertainment performance comprised of many small courses. Keller's small courses tend to have a certain playful, clever, or, as Kwame Onwuachi describes, "dad joke" quality to them, which further contributes to the image of Culinary Man2 as a creative genius, and not "merely" a skilled craftsman.¹⁰⁰ For example, Keller's "salmon cornet," a small bite of salmon tartare served in a funnel-shaped piece of tuile with a chive garnish, resembles an ice cream cone with sprinkles and is likely the most well-known of these small, whimsical dishes. Typically, the cornet is the first course served at Keller's restaurants and, as Onwuachi notes, it both sets the "tone" of the diner's evening and, as an additional illustration of the division of labor which such aesthetic projects require, takes "only one bite to eat but hours of work to make."¹⁰¹ The dish, and those like it, not only requires a high input of labor to assemble, but also a variety of specialty tools and knowledge. In this way, the tasting menu functions as a technique which places further distance between Culinary

⁹⁹ Keller, *The French Laundry Cookbook*, 15

¹⁰⁰ Onwuachi, *Notes*, 195

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Man, the professional, artistic, and normatively male chef, and the sphere of “domestic” cooking. Phoebe Damrosch, who worked as a server at Keller’s Per Se restaurant, provides a useful demonstration of this tension with an anecdote below.

Damrosch describes purchasing Keller’s French Laundry cookbook prior to interviewing for the Per Se job in order to familiarize herself with Keller’s work. After receiving the job, Damrosch recounts several ill-fated attempts to make Keller’s famous salmon cornets. While some of Keller’s specialty ingredients were unavailable to Damrosch, the required set of tools proved to be the more serious obstruction. Damrosch writes: “the recipe called for a circular stencil, whatever that was...Since I didn’t have a Silpat, I spooned my cone batter onto a nonstick baking pan using the homemade hummus mold.”¹⁰² After her first effort resulted in failure, Damrosch’s next attempt led her to a Williams-Sonoma store, where she purchased “cornet molds (15\$), an offset spatula (12\$), a Silpat (25\$)...and a pastry bag (10\$).”¹⁰³

Damrosch’s inclusion of the prices for each piece of equipment underscores the class component of Culinary Man’s genre of food. Additionally, Damrosch notes that one of Keller’s cooks laughed out loud to the point of tears upon hearing of her attempt to use non-specialty (“household”) tools,¹⁰⁴ thus demonstrating the use of discursive articulation to enforce particular culinary conventions. However, even with the “proper” equipment, Damrosch struggled to complete the cornets. Summarizing the gap between the home cook and the professional chef,

¹⁰² Phoebe Damrosch, *Service Included: Four Star Secrets of an Eavesdropping Waiter*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008), 20

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 27

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 27. This articulation can be useful contrasted with chef Roy Choi’s note within his own (considerably more accessible) cookbook which states: “So, if you ain’t got that much to begin with, *which I get, my brothers and sisters*, then you can just mix everything up in an old plastic bowl. Or cut a plastic 2-liter Coke bottle and use that. On the real, the food in this book always tastes better when it’s made with cheap-ass tools like 99-cent plastic bowls, mismatched utensils, and wooden spatulas. Then you can cook the dishes with anything from an elaborate stovetop to the hood of your car on a hot Cali day.” Choi, *L.A. Son*, 323-324

Damrosch juxtaposes her own difficulties: “I lacked the fine dining technique that would make a sharp tartare...At the French Laundry, and eventually, at Per Se, an army of cooks bakes the cornets in perfectly calibrated ovens...The army makes uniform little balls of perfectly diced salmon.”¹⁰⁵ Eventually, Damrosch gives up on the “untouchable perfection” of Keller’s cookbook and summarizes the lack of applicability within the home, noting that even a cook with the requisite skills set to perform Keller’s techniques would “not only disappoint her guests by her absence from the table, but would amass a mountain of dirty dishes rivaled only by an equally high mountain of debt to the specialty food store (where she miraculously found rue for the bass and Japanese yuzu in abundance).”¹⁰⁶

Damrosch neatly summarizes the vast amount of time, financial resources, and stratified labor (namely, for menial tasks such as dishwashing) which prop up Keller’s performance of the masterful, perfectionist, and creative chef-artist. Closing the cookbook, Damrosch notes: “I knew I would never cook again from this book. Back to food porn it would be—look, don’t touch, I thought. The *French Laundry Cookbook* sets up an unattainable model, but perhaps this is the allure.”¹⁰⁷ Sarah Jaffe, whose work further explores the celebration of male mastery carried through western discourses on “the artist,” captures this relational pairing, writing: “the image of the male genius has been with us a long time, as celebrated as the wife in the home is unsung.”¹⁰⁸

Thus, the “tasting menu” approach, which favors the presentation of many small, though ornate, interesting, and fun portions, constitutes one of the most explicit points of difference between Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2. While the tasting menu allows for the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 28

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 30

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 30

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Jaffe, *Work Won’t Love You Back*, (New York, NY :Bold Type Books, 2021),179.

contemporary chef to showcase a series of innovative and creative dishes, it should be noted that the form is still rooted in the traditional modes of French classicism. Ruhlman expounds on this point:

A subsequent rise in the popularity of the chef's tasting menu—a meal of six to nine courses designed each night by the chef—spread throughout the country, reaching even culinary backwaters such as Cleveland and Detroit and popping up in numerous low-end restaurants, ones far removed from the French tradition out of which the form sprang...Keller's whole point was that there was a perfect quantity to serve beyond which the flavors began to dull.¹⁰⁹

Ruhlman's note is useful in demonstrating that, while the semi-recent trend toward smaller tasting menus does constitute a novel phenomenon in certain ways, there is a strong sense of continuity at play as well. The classical French tradition remains close at hand, as does the assumption that it is imbued with a certain "civilizing" quality. This colonial texture is aptly expressed by Ruhlman's designation of "backwater" culinary territories. Culinary Man's emphasis on perfection as a primary quality is also clearly present in the smaller tasting menu, which intensifies and elongates the dining experience. Key as well is the manner in which the smaller tasting menu's extended series of creative presentations allows for a performance of artistic mastery, which emphasizes the chef's genius at the expense of the invisibilized labor performed by the brigade (and other restaurant workers).¹¹⁰ Onwuachi provides a succinct account of this dynamic:

One of Per Se's signature dishes is a white-truffle-oil infused custard served with a ragout of black winter truffles. It's presented about midway through the chef's tasting menu, arriving on a silver platter, a small amount of silken custard in a hollowed out

¹⁰⁹ Ruhlman. *Soul*, 286

¹¹⁰ Kwame Onwuachi reiterates this point while emphasizing, again, the division of labor which corresponds to the aesthetic production of the tasting menu. Onwuachi writes: "That two of those teams—the prep and morning team—were devoted solely to preservice preparation gives an idea of the sheer amount of labor needed to present the seven to nine courses, most no more than a few bites..." Onwuachi, *Notes*, 187

hen's egg...It's no wonder Keller never takes it off the menu, it's his masterpiece. But someone has to hollow out and clean the eggs...¹¹¹

Onwuachi's note again reprises the familiar distribution of visibility/credit and labor which highlights the chef and, with the use of the term "masterpiece," underscores the enhanced textures of artistic mastery present in Culinary Man2's discursive field. The tasting menu's structure, and the aesthetic meanings imbued into them by the construction of an artistic identity, present the chef as a brilliant performer and transform the fine dining experience into more of an entertainment event. Recalling the positioning of chef and musician as rivals featured in Saki's short story at the chapter's outset, it appears that this notion of the chef as a performer is not a new one, although it does seem to have captured the present moment with a significant degree of intensity, no doubt aided by the rise of novel culinary media.¹¹² An additional anecdote from Ruhlman captures the particular way in which Culinary Man2's tasting menu combines excess, aesthetics, and artistic performance:

My final night in Yountville that winter I had my third French Laundry meal. It lasted more than four and a half hours. I did not order. I was VIPed—as is every solo diner, friend or stranger—and Keller would thus cook for me ('if you would like' the server said), sending me an array of canapés before the chef's tasting began and including myriad dessert courses as well. Nineteen courses in all, with five desserts, four half bottles of wine, and a double espresso. Midway through the meal I needed the bathroom and a minute to stretch my legs. When I returned, Laura Cunningham noted that "Thomas was mad" when informed I was up. *Why?* He wanted to know. At first I thought, *What does he expect?* I'd been there two hours and had numerous glasses of wine. There was no formal intermission in this situation. But then I wondered about it from his point of view. He was working to serve me an extraordinary meal. It was *not* unlike my walking out of a theatre during a performance put on for my benefit, and he thought it was terrifically rude...the knowledge of his irritation made me realize that he was actually performing. Indeed, the meal entertained me like a play or orchestral performance. Better

¹¹¹ Ibid. 189

¹¹² The somewhat recent phenomenon of the "celebrity chef," spurred in large part by popular television shows featured on the Food Network (*Chopped*, *Beat Bobby Flay*, *Iron Chef America*, *Emeril Live*,) infuses the chef's culinary subjectivity with a set of public-facing sensibilities. For discussions of the effects of popular media on the chef, see Ruhlman, *The Reach of a Chef*, Allen Salkin, *Scratch: The Uncensored History of the Food Network*, and selected essays in Bourdain, *Medium Raw*.

than most, I'd venture. The work of a single distinctive mind and voice performing at its peak for an eager and receptive audience.¹¹³

Ruhlman's note encompasses much of the centralized representation of the chef as a lone artist, particularly as it articulates Keller's "single minded" vision which drives the performance of genius, artistry, and perfection. The extended excess of the tasting menu's procession of luxury is also well captured by Ruhlman's detailed notes.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, Marco Pierre White offers a critique of the contemporary tasting menu, which gestures towards another major point of departure from previous iterations of Culinary Man.

A 2008 panel titled "The Role of a Chef," featuring White, Bourdain, and Michael Ruhlman (as moderator), explored the changing occupational characteristics, media economy, and cultural function of the contemporary chef. Early into the conversation, White offers a critique, which identifies the contemporary tasting menu as a novel technique of control. White notes:

you look at the modern day three star, they control their clients by forcing these twelve courses, sixteen course menus down their throat...it's very easy to put one scallop on a plate time four for a table of four. If you look at the old world, the majority of people ate a la carte. That's when you had to cook when you've got a table of six with six different main courses. They're dictating to you; you're not dictating to them. Whenever you go to a three-star restaurant today, they force you down this tasting menu. I went to a restaurant two years ago and I was given two choices: eighteen or twenty courses...I go for the eighteen courses like an idiot and now I'm sitting there three and a half hours later...I said, "can I have the bill" and he said, "well you haven't had pudding yet." I don't want four puddings; I just want to go home....¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ruhlman, *Soul*, 306

¹¹⁴ Ruhlman lists the nineteen course procession which begins, of course, with the salmon cornet.

¹¹⁵ Marco Pierre White, "The Role of a Chef" panel held at the 2007 International Chefs Congress hosted by *Star Chefs.com* (2007), 16-18m

While I have asserted so far that Culinary Man2 asserts a more subtle form of discipline over the brigade (relative to Culinary Man1) through the use of a gentler disposition, White's note would expand this sense of control to the diner as well. The "old world" of fine dining juxtaposed against the ostensibly easier and more controlling sensibilities of Culinary Man2 provides a compelling illustration of the distance between these respective culinary styles. In response to White's critique, Bourdain, who also admits to being "kind of over" the tasting menu, asserts a sense of continuity, offering: "but it's your fault man, everyone wanted to be like you and they wanted to make those pretty things and then they got a little ambitious maybe."¹¹⁶ White denies this connection ("nothing to do with me") and, later in the discussion, critiques the tasting menu once more, though this time as an extension of the chef's ego. In response, Ruhlman teases: "it's a very good point, but you were also known for having an extraordinary ego, right?," to which White, after a brief pause, flatly responds: "I never fed eighteen courses to anybody."¹¹⁷

The above exchange makes clear that, while a sense of continuity can be observed between the fine dining stylings of the "golden age of gastronomy"¹¹⁸ and that of the contemporary era, the tasting menu (and its implications vis-à-vis the construction of the master artist chef) offers at least some sense of discontinuity, while deploying a novel technology of control. This question reprises a long running conversation about the artistic status of the chef,¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 19m

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 45m

¹¹⁸ This is a term White marshals often to describe the previous era of fine dining, which can be thought of as the high period of Culinary Man1. For instance, "I stepped into the dying days of the golden age of gastronomy...I saw standards and style that, like so many other hotel kitchens, had been inspired by Escoffier." White, *Devil*: 25

¹¹⁹ This debate is a frequent one within haute cuisine discourses, though no clear consensus seems prevalent. Certain representatives within the history of the French tradition have asserted the identity of the chef as artist, as Amy Trubek suggests, as part of attempts to professionalize and elevate the activity of cooking. Arguing this position was also a function of constructing a gendered distinction between the culinary art and domestic activity. Trubek, *Haute Cuisine*, 111. Alternatively, there are no shortage of contemporary proponents of the view that cooking is a "mere" craft; See: Ruhlman, (2001), Soltner, (2012) or Bourdain, (2000).

although it perhaps clarifies the stakes of the debate. Culinary Man1, at least as represented by White, tends to elide the description of “artist”—in the above panel and elsewhere, White asserts that “Mother nature is the true artist, they are the cook”¹²⁰—while Culinary Man2’s embrace of an artistic identity helps to maximize the project of hegemonic discipline.

The day after the “Role of the Chef” panel, Grant Achatz, who by then had left Keller’s French Laundry to pursue his own projects, delivered a sharp rebuttal. While initially slated to give a presentation on the “new tools of gastronomy” of contemporary cooking, Achatz, pacing back and forth in agitation, opens his remarks by noting that: “something came up here at the congress on Sunday with a group of three...gentlemen who were sitting up here that I feel I need to address.”¹²¹ Achatz goes on to admonish White, Bourdain, and Ruhlman (without naming them explicitly) for deviating from the values of “professionalism, respect, and creativity,” and sarcastically offers that:

maybe, in fact, they’re right...maybe the food that I produce, Wiley [Dufresne] produces, Feran[Adria] produces...Charlie Trotter, Thomas Keller...if that’s the case, then we should just shut them all down. Because, in fact, they’re not important. The best restaurants in the world are not important.¹²²

Achatz’s opening remarks map out a few other current iterations of Culinary Man2, including Keller’s, which utilize multi-course tasting menus while also consolidating the contemporary chef’s hegemony through the declaration of “best in the world.” Next, Achatz, directly contradicts White’s assertions with the claim that “food is, in fact, art,”¹²³ and thus the chef is an artist. While White’s descriptions refer to contemporary gastronomy as “cooking by

¹²⁰ White, “Role of a Chef”, 24m

¹²¹ Achatz, Grant. “New Tools of Gastronomy: Service-ware reimaged.” Talk delivered at the 2007 International Chefs Congress hosted by *Star Chefs.com*.

¹²² Ibid. 6-8m.

¹²³ Ibid. 10:54m.

numbers” and as “soulless food,” Achatz counters that, without creativity, ingenuity, and invention, “it would produce both cooks and chefs and people that would be mindless.”¹²⁴

Achatz’s rejoinder is interesting in that it foregrounds the connection between culinary work and subjectivity formation (“producing” certain kinds of chefs) while also reprising the characterization of Culinary Man 2’s enhanced rational capacities through its reference to mind. Achatz is a particular genre (or subgenre) of Culinary Man2 and, in many ways, it departs from Keller’s by going even further into the aesthetic terrain of the chef as artist.

Achatz links his decision to leave Keller’s employ to a growing discrepancy between his own sense of aesthetic exploration and Keller’s greater tendencies toward stasis. Achatz explains:

I was so excited to explore and push new boundaries with food that I was in danger of compromising the vision that chef Keller had crafted over many years in his kitchen...now he and the French Laundry were at a different stage of maturity. Every day in that kitchen was about striving for perfection through refining years of ideas that were known and comfortable. The team continued to finesse dishes and increase the level of sophistication, but it was done in a set style...He [Keller] probably saw that I was no longer a soldier fighting his fight.¹²⁵

Descriptive statements within the field of fine dining discourse frequently engage a continuum between refinement and innovation, as within Achatz’s reflections above. The soldier metaphor mobilized by Achatz interestingly symbolizes different kinds of battles, but it does not deviate from the broader imagery of militarism which saturates the field of fine dining discourse. While it is more of a question of negotiating proportions (between tendencies of refinement and innovation) rather than an “either or” scenario, the two respective genres of Culinary Man are largely characterized by a preference for refinement or innovation. For instance, Culinary Man1

¹²⁴ Ibid. 13m

¹²⁵ Achatz, Grant. *Life on the Line*, 104

holds more conservative tendencies toward refinement, such as with Marco Pierre White, who further writes that: “we live in a world of refinement, not in a world of invention... People who claim to have invented a great dish are only fooling themselves. Someone has always done it before.”¹²⁶ Even Keller, despite his reputation for creativity, is described by chef Joshua Schwartz as one who “became famous not for experimentation, but for doing innovative interpretations of classical dishes.”¹²⁷ Achatz, on the other hand, represents a higher proclivity toward innovation and experimentation, a sensibility captured in his description of his culinary telos as “an all-out mission to take food and dining further and further.”¹²⁸

One function of this emphasis on innovation present in the culinary subjectivity of chefs like Achatz is that they come to exemplify Culinary Man’s claim to superior rationality to perhaps an even greater degree than their predecessors. Deborah Harris and Patti Giuffre identify that, despite other stylistic differences between genres of Culinary Man, a consistent distinction in value operates across these descriptions. The familiar gendered and classed distinction between the male professional and the female domestic is exaggerated even more with the “boundary-breaking” experimenters like Achatz. Harris and Giuffre write:

Culinary masters like Grant Achatz of Chicago’s Alinea create ‘provocative’ and ‘ingenious’ food that is extremely ‘innovative.’ Focusing on the mental work required to be a successful chef promotes the occupation to the rank of white collar, creative-professionals rather than blue-collar production work and further separates the food from that prepared by the home cook.¹²⁹

Harris and Giuffre’s analysis narrates the enhanced imagery of masculinist intelligence which remains imbued within descriptions of the heroic male chef, though their description of

¹²⁶ White, *Devil*, 109

¹²⁷ Ruhlman. *Reach*, 282

¹²⁸ Achatz. *Life*, 145

¹²⁹ Giuffre, Harris, *Taking the Heat*, 52

the occupational and reputational stakes also indexes distinctions between the more working-class stylings of Culinary Man I and the greater societal prestige offered to contemporary fine dining chefs.¹³⁰ Further, in a note which sits parallel to Damrosch's anecdote about Keller's cookbook, Harris and Giuffre cite an interview with Achatz and fellow "gastronaut" Heston Blumenthal in which the two chefs explicitly state that their respective cookbooks are "definitely not aimed at the traditional home cook."¹³¹

Thus, the movement away from tradition on the part of some of the Achatz-like forms of "artist-chef" subjects not only depart from the classicism of previous chefs like White, but also constitutes a different, perhaps more intensive, form of the gendered negation vis-à-vis the so-called private or domestic sphere. Thus, even the distance between the approaches of White and Achatz takes place in a broad field of continuity which is predicated on Culinary Man's continued overrepresentation at the expense of marginalized "others."

However, within Achatz's attempt to forge new culinary approaches, one can still observe tendencies toward the stasis, classicism, and tradition of Culinary Man. In a letter to David Carrier, who would become Achatz's sous chef at his first restaurant, Trio, Achatz writes: "I want my technique rooted in French. We will clean foi and cook meat and fish the way I learned from Thomas[Keller]. But I want to be part of the revolution that is sweeping Europe. The new techniques and bold combinations of flavors..."¹³² While the above letter's excerpt demonstrates the mixed quality of Achatz's influences and aspirations, which include textures of

¹³⁰ White explicitly describes his era as a time when "cheffing was still predominately a working-class profession then." White, *Devil*, 128. Bourdain also describes the less glamorous and pre-celebrity chef days of the industry through a description of the Culinary Institute of America such that: "It was 1975 and CIA was still getting more than their share of farm boys, bed-wetters, hicks, flunk-outs from community colleges and a few misfits for whom CIA was preferable to jail or juvenile detention... Back then, the desired end product seemed to be future employees at a Hilton or Restaurant associates corporate dining facility." Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, 37-38.

¹³¹ Giuffre, Harris, *Taking*, 54

¹³² Ruhlman, *Reach*, 127

both Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2, an additional example of extant traditional sensibilities underscores the “currency” which classical French cuisine continues to hold within the western gastronomic field. On the opening menu of his first restaurant, “Trio,” Achatz featured an Escoffier dish, albeit presented as part of a tasting menu in the form of small portion.¹³³

Remarking on the explicit traditional influence, Achatz notes:

it’s a reference point for diners, shows how far, or not far, we’ve come...it’s more than a hundred years old and it’s new. And it’s a personal F-U to all those people who say ‘ah those guys just work with foam over there.’ We know how to work with foie gras, we know how to work with artichokes.¹³⁴

Not only does Achatz’s experimental embrace of novelty continue to bear traces of tradition, but his remarks seemingly perpetuate and confirm the centrality of classical French technique as the standard by which culinary practice (and knowledge) should be judged. One could perhaps read Achatz’s nontraditional presentation as a form of parody against classicist bias. And yet it still may be difficult to forge a hard distinction between innovative pastiche and the reproduction of Culinary Man’s hegemonic tradition.

Achatz can be most closely characterized as another iteration of Culinary Man2. As gestured toward in Achatz’s remarks on technique above, his kitchen mirrors the French Laundry in several ways, including Keller’s performance related insistence on not serving food unless all diners are currently seated.¹³⁵ Achatz additionally models the “softer” form of discipline which distinguishes Culinary Man2 from Culinary Man1. Ruhlman, while observing Achatz’s kitchen, recalls a situation in which a cook, Jefferey Pikus, runs out of bacon during service—something

¹³³ “Artichoke #3970 was served as a single bite on a spoon resting in a porcelain ring, a bottomless plate, in effect, or ‘the anti-plate’” Ibid. 324. The number “3970” is a direct reference to Escoffier’s *Le Guide Culinaire*, in which each recipe is numbered.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 325

¹³⁵ Ibid. 119

which, per the normative expectations of *mise en place* discussed previously, should not happen. Ruhlman describes Achatz's response: "He's pissed and says to Pikus: 'it's no use lying to yourself.' He says it very quietly and matter-of-factly, but you can see Pikus is miserable and humiliated, and pissed at himself, even as he never stops hustling through his service."¹³⁶ The disciplinary style of the "famously soft spoken"¹³⁷ Thomas Keller is paralleled by Achatz's delivery of a quiet castigation, which translates into an internalized affective response within Pikus ("pissed at himself") accompanied by productive movement.

Challenging Culinary Man2

In sum, *Culinary Man2*'s particular approach and emphasis on aesthetics and recourse to gentler though no less effective disciplinary techniques constitute points of departure from the previous genre of *Culinary Man*. However, the field of subjectivity across these two iterations of *Culinary Man* is by no means a simple, even, or straightforward set of distinctions, as the various points of continuity across versions and discontinuities within these subjectivities demonstrate. Rather, *Culinary Man* is a mixed field of hybrid modalities and uneven distributions, even if the mappings provided above attempt to highlight some major, if broad, trends within the development of *Culinary Man* from the "classical" era into the contemporary.¹³⁸

Recently, however, *Culinary Man2* and the tasting menu's indulgent and opulent sensibilities have come under greater social scrutiny. For instance, chef Jonathan Waxman states: "Charging so much money for that long of a meal is kind of ludicrous in this day and age; it needs to evolve."¹³⁹ Expanding on the theme of the waning (though still extant) hegemony of

¹³⁶ Ibid. 119

¹³⁷ Onwuachi, *Notes*, 187

¹³⁸ And even these periodizations are contested, subjective, and somewhat murky.

¹³⁹ Kim Severson, "Thomas Keller, An Exacting Chef at a Crossroads" *New York Times.com* (May 2017)

Culinary Man2's artistic performances, food journalist Peter Meehan writes: "There's always going to be a place for expense-account dining like that, but it's not central to the conversation about food or cooking or being a chef."¹⁴⁰

Additionally, the culture and practices of fine dining have been subject to a growing critical discourse which, subsequently, engages much of the hierarchical, elitist, and white masculinism of Culinary Man2's ongoing overrepresentation. Indian American, Queer, and non-binary chef Preeti Mistry exemplifies this critique, as they describe fine dining as "disingenuous, built from a system steeped in oppression and hierarchy in which women, gays and other minorities — whether customers or cooks — are not treated the same."¹⁴¹ Mistry's comments derive from a profile of Thomas Keller, in which they note: "It's essentially haute couture, and we know haute couture appropriates from minorities and urban communities. Chefs as powerful as Mr. Keller have a responsibility to address those issues. You need to go on your woke journey."¹⁴²

Mistry's comments challenge the fine dining space with an invitation to reflect on its uneven power dynamics and social responsibility. In response, Keller remarks:

I pushed against convention when I was young. Then you realize there is no reason to push against things. There is no value in it...Hard work and dedication to craft will right all wrongs. No matter what your circumstance, you need to find your own way out. In order to get ahead, you have to work hard. It's pretty simple."

Keller's comments signal a rejection of Mistry's invitation as well as an inability to grapple with differential positionality, effectively channeling much of the universalizing

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Since these comments, Meehan has also been subject to critiques which allege a toxic, misogynistic, and abusive workplace. See Meghan McCarron, "The Boundary Pusher" *Eater.com*. August, 2021.

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Ibid

tendencies of Wynter's Man. Keller's articulation of "bootstrap" ideology and dismissal of Mistry's concerns denotes an underdeveloped, naïve, and uncomprehending mode of social thinking which likely comes (at least in part) as a result of such totalizing commitment to fine dining aesthetics. Additionally, Keller's reaction may speak to a sense of instability within Culinary Man's hegemony, which is vulnerable to the social criticisms offered by Mistry and others. Responding to the exchange between Keller and Mistry, Korsha Wilson writes:

Keller's answer feels very familiar to me, a woman of color. His position is the equivalent of saying "All lives matter" in response to someone saying "Black lives matter," and I'm not surprised. Keller is a successful chef, with no firsthand grasp of what it's like to be a woman or a person of color, and he did what a lot of people do when something they love is criticized: **He stripped his critic of her unique experience and viewpoint so he could re-center himself in the discussion. (emphasis original)**¹⁴³

Wilson's note accurately summarizes the broader social discourses, such as the reactionary "all lives matter," which contextualize Keller's comments and point to the enduring overrepresentation of Culinary Man. As a chef, Keller is not unique in his refusal to "step outside of the kitchen" and to think through larger social matters, even as critiques of this apolitical modality continue to mount. The next chapter picks up a third genre of Culinary Man, one which does include matters of social justice, cultural concerns, and, in doing so, appears to deviate from fine dining subjectivity to a greater degree than either of the previous two modalities of Culinary Man. However, as with previous instantiations of Culinary Man, Culinary Man³ also retains tendencies toward continuity with its predecessors. Culinary Man³'s gesture toward social concerns perhaps evinces a sense of vulnerability and may function, at least in part, as a means of repairing and sustaining hegemony in the face of social criticisms. Thus, the move to include

¹⁴³ Korsha Wilson, "Dear White Chefs: Stop Talking, Start Listening." *Eater.com*, May, 12, 2017.

more language of social justice concerns may sit parallel to Wynter's description of Man's various "mutations," which fold new characteristics into its extant mode of normative subjectivity in response to instability caused by critique, revaluation, and crisis.

In addition to tracing some of the novel features of Culinary Man³ which distinguish it in significant ways from both Culinary Man¹ and Culinary Man², chapter 5 explores several central characteristics which are in line with these earlier modalities of Culinary Man. For Wynter, Man's mutations take on new variations by way of layering novel attributes, discourses, and practices on top of the previous ones. In a similar manner, one can read Culinary Man³'s "classical" traits just beneath the surface of novel additions, such as an interest in social affairs. Thus, for Wynter, the task becomes not simply to innovate Man toward better ends, but to discontinue Man's hegemony completely, so that an egalitarian humanism might take its place.¹⁴⁴

In the next chapter, Culinary Man³'s engagement with humanitarian work (studied in the figure of Jose Andrés) is explored as a novel trait which demonstrates a broader undertaking (by chefs) with social justice concerns. While this activity is in many ways an improved or welcome addition to Culinary Man's set of practices, a critical analysis provided by food worker, activist, and commentator Ashtin Berry illustrates the forms of continuity which prevent Culinary Man³ from moving beyond the framework of Man. Berry instead invites an engagement with extant and traditional practices of marginalized women of color who, perhaps in part by virtue of their

¹⁴⁴ Wynter phrases the aspiration to abolish or move beyond Man in various ways. For instance, "we have to replace the ends of the *referent-we* of liberal monohumanist Man² with the ecumenically human ends of the *referent-we in the horizon of humanity*. We have no choice." Sylvia Wynter, "Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick: Unparalleled Catastrophe For Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations" in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being as Praxis*. Edited by Katherine McKittrick, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2015), 24. Elsewhere, Wynter discusses the desire to "grasp the hitherto *unknowable conception of human freedom that is to be imperatively realized, this for the first time, in ecumenically human terms.*" Ibid. 63

exclusion, have not been formed as culinary subjects in the normative image of Culinary Man. Berry's suggestion is parallel to Wynter's theorizations on the end of Man, an event which Wynter believes might enable previously marginalized subaltern subjects "as well as our Western and Westernized global selves, to now collectively give humanness a different future..."¹⁴⁵ In following Wynter and Berry, the next chapter also seeks to explore culinary subjectivity outside of Culinary Man by way of turning to the work of Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 73.

Chapter 5. Challenging Hegemony? Culinary Man 3 and Vibration Cooking

This chapter continues chapter 4's genealogy of Culinary Man by examining the contemporary figure of the "humanitarian chef," or Culinary Man3. This iteration of Culinary Man departs from the apolitical and socially indifferent sensibilities of Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man 2. However, as this chapter illustrates, Culinary Man3 maintains certain central features of Culinary Man's normative subjectivity, including the assembly of militarism with productivism, a hierarchical division of labor, and a central position of visibility. After examining Culinary Man3's points of continuity with as well as departure from brigade subjectivity, as explored in the preceding chapters, this chapter takes up alternative models of culinary subjectivity which depart from or move beyond Man. As a key figure for this exploration, I engage the work of writer and anthropologist Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, which, as this chapter seeks to elucidate, presents a critique of Culinary Man while also forwarding an alternative vision of food and cooking.

Culinary Man3

Culinary Man3 offers perhaps the most significant departure from much of the normative practices and values of western fine dining. This section begins with a more specific examination of these points of rupture prior to examining key traits which still mark this form of culinary subjectivity as a genre of Man. Given that, as I argue below, Culinary Man3 places questions of social justice, inequality, and distribution at the center of its normative description of the chef, José Andrés represents a vivid example of this paradigm and thus serves as a good case study for examination.

Andrés immigrated to the United States from Spain in the early 1990's after working for Ferran Adrià, who is largely credited with popularizing the highly experimental “molecular gastronomy” style which captivated Grant Achatz, among others.¹ Adrià was also a large influence on Andrés who, upon arriving in the U.S., quickly became well known for his upscale, avant-garde, tapas style tasting menus. Andrés recounts being inspired by Adrià's example of creating new techniques, styles, and aesthetics which, for Andrés, felt like “a new universe was being created.”² In this way, Andrés's trajectory was, prior to his involvement in humanitarian relief efforts in Haiti in 2010, squarely pointed in the direction of Culinary Man2, and Andrés's dozens of fine dining restaurants continue to reflect this style. While on vacation in the Cayman Islands, Andrés felt compelled to go to Haiti in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in order to help.³ Since 2010, Andrés and his NGO, World Central Kitchen (WCK), have engaged in food relief efforts in Puerto Rico, Texas, Poland, Ukraine, and other areas experiencing humanitarian crisis.

While still overseeing his various high end restaurants, Andrés is, at this point, perhaps better known for his work with World Central Kitchen. For my purposes here, these humanitarian engagements are of particular interest for the manner in which they redescribe the chef in terms which seem to depart sharply from the various traits of Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2 described above. Most explicitly, Andrés often shies away from the moniker of chef—at one point, answering an interviewer that “I don't have a title”—and typically, he

¹ Achatz lists his trip to Adrià's restaurant, El Bulli in Roses, Spain, which included a forty-course meal that Achatz describes as “mind altering,” as a key moment in his aesthetic formation. This experience is also a crucial point in Achatz's break from Keller: “Thomas looked at me oddly, as if he dreaded the day I would want to implement some of the techniques I saw at El Bulli, but I knew it was coming. Suggesting such a thing at the French Laundry bordered on heresy.” Achatz. *Life*, 102-103

² Jose Andrés, “We Feed People” (Documentary). Howard, Ron (producer). National Geographic (2002): 6:30

³ Ibid. 10:30

identifies more generally as a cook.⁴ At times when Andrés does utilize the title of chef, he tends to assert an occupational role which deviates from the exclusive, fine-dining orientation of many of his predecessors. Andrés writes: “Whether I am cooking for Washingtonians or refugees, my job as a chef is the same: to feed the many.”⁵ Beyond his own personal outlook, Andrés is explicit in arguing for this more egalitarian culinary sensibility as a normative goal for chefs more broadly, stating that: “I believe, my profession, we are not being influential enough in the way we are feeding humanity.”⁶

In Wynterian terms, Andrés provides a descriptive statement of the chef which ruptures the previous aesthetic and hegemonic missions of figures like Keller and White, respectively, even if Andrés, via his fleet of upscale restaurants, does keep a foot in the camp of Culinary Man.⁷ Often, Andrés manages this mixed set of sensibilities by emphasizing his food relief efforts at the expense of his fine dining work. For instance, Andrés notes: “I have created many avant-garde dishes as a chef but there are few meals, I’m prouder of than the hundreds of thousands of sandwiches we made in Puerto Rico.”⁸ Thus, while Andrés clearly continues to perform elements of Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2 in practice, even noting that “it was not easy maintaining two lives,”⁹ his discourse tends to prioritize his humanitarian work.

⁴ Ibid. 1:55, 5:35

⁵ Jose Andrés, Richard Wolffe, *We Fed an Island: The True Story of Rebuilding Puerto Rico, One Meal at a Time*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2018), 4

⁶ Andrés, *We Feed People*, 9:58

⁷ Andrés can be characterized by a certain proximity to Culinary Man2 due to his stylistic similarities to the aesthetics of chefs like Keller, Achatz, and particularly, Adrià. As later elements of this chapter explore, Andrés also evinces some of the dominant tendencies toward authoritative governance found in Culinary Man1 as well.

⁸ Andrés, *We Fed an Island*, xi. An additional example of this dynamic can be observed in Andrés’s noting that “I missed a call from Michelin because I was checking on the giant volumes of chicken and rice in the paella pans [used in disaster relief].

⁹ Ibid. 98

In addition to orienting the chef toward a different central goal, Andrés produces commentary on topics which generally exceed the scope of interest of fine dining chefs. Through stepping out of the restaurant kitchen, Andrés has voiced critiques of various institutions, including FEMA,¹⁰ the Trump Administration,¹¹ NGO's,¹² U.S. and Spanish Colonialism,¹³ the state's legal apparatus,¹⁴ and "old ways of thinking" more broadly.¹⁵ If, as I have argued above, the disciplinary norms of fine dining tend not to produce overtly political discourse (or anything outside of Culinary Man's mission, for that matter), Andrés constitutes at least some deviation from this trend.

Furthermore, Andrés has not been shy about displays of emotion and vulnerability which land far outside of the typically masculinist, stoic, and even cruel affects performed by Culinary Man, particularly as embodied by White's Culinary Man1. At one point, Andrés writes: "I began crying too...I have always looked like a strong boy and tried to protect that image. But I was astonished by these stories and heartbroken for the many people still suffering without clean water and food."¹⁶ This passage is interesting in that Andrés mobilizes the normative image of strength, explored in previous chapters, and narrates his own investment in it, while also ceding it to the dire situation's emotional context.¹⁷ These scenes of tears can be sharply contrasted to depictions of crying featured in the discourses of Culinary Man1, particularly an incident which involved Gordon Ramsay breaking down while working for Marco Pierre White.¹⁸ For Andrés,

¹⁰Ibid. 65, 154, 159

¹¹ Ibid. 66, 95,

¹² Ibid. 183

¹³ Ibid. 2, 56-60

¹⁴ Ibid. 69

¹⁵ Ibid. 13

¹⁶ Ibid. 119

¹⁷ Andrés recounts crying alongside feelings of helplessness in several other passages in the book. Ibid. 96, 119, 161.

¹⁸ White recalls: "Gordon, meanwhile, never really cracked until his final night at Harvey's. I don't recall what he'd done wrong, but I yelled at him, and he lost it. He crouched down on the floor in the corner of the kitchen, buried his head in his hands and started sobbing." White, *Devil*, 141.

tears display a sense of vulnerability and announce the grave stakes and consequences of the world's social misery, whereas for Ramsay, they were the consequence of repeated bullying. When asked about the incident, White often draws humor out of dismissively asserting that "Gordon Ramsay made himself cry. That was his choice."¹⁹ This sense of juxtaposition around crying reveals a deviation from certain masculinist affects on the part of Andrés in favor of an emotional display rooted in humanistic concern and care.

There is likely much more one could delve into vis-à-vis Andrés's moments of deviation away from previous genres of Culinary Man. But the central point so far is that his performance as a chef embodies a different set of descriptive statements and normative manners of conduct than those of some of his fine dining predecessors. There are, however, points of continuity which, as I argue, make him into a different iteration of Culinary Man rather than a subject who moves beyond Culinary Man altogether. In the next section, I examine traits which Andrés shares with the dominant forms of culinary subjectivity, which include the continued presence of militarism, a central position of visibility, and a hierarchical structure of authority.

Militarism

While Andrés's food relief operation proudly favors sandwiches over haute creations, it still echoes the militaristic imagery of the fine dining brigade. From narrations of "brothers at arms feeding the many" to descriptions of food trucks as "our Navy SEAL operations," Andrés utilizes the familiar metaphorical language of culinary militarism.²⁰

Additionally, just as with the brigade, this militaristic sensibility rises beyond mere metaphor and is expressed in the structure of authority and the division of labor. For instance,

¹⁹ White, Ruhlman, Bourdain. *Star Chefs*: 40m.

²⁰ Andrés, *We Fed*, 203, 207

Andrés writes: “at the heart of this factory was my sergeant-major of sandwiches, a heroic volunteer called Dilka Benitez...she kept close control of the volunteers, veering from encouragement to discipline in a few yells.”²¹ The task of cultivating the appropriate subjectivity is also expressed by Andrés, who notes with satisfaction: “together, they[Dilka and another volunteer] built the volunteers into a hugely successful and productive team...”²² The relief efforts perhaps lack a formal brigade. However, the spirit of militaristic hierarchy which applies discipline to ensure productivity remains consistent.

In a certain sense, Andrés’s brand of culinary militarism surpasses the traditional brigade in that it involves collaboration with actual security agencies as well. This is due in part to an appreciation of the military’s great potential for mobilizing, organizing, and distributing resources in times of crisis.²³ Andrés himself is a former sailor. Thus, this understanding of potential may be rooted in personal experience as well.²⁴ Andrés’s aspiration to direct the military’s infrastructure toward more ostensibly progressive or humanitarian causes such as crisis relief, recalls similar proposals by other theorists.²⁵ However, Andrés also expresses support for the current form of several U.S. security agencies, perhaps most controversially the U.S. border patrol and I.C.E. Again, much of Andrés’s admiration for these agencies stems from their practical capabilities. For instance, they are able to traverse difficult terrain in the aftermath

²¹ Andrés, *We Feed an Island*, 137

²² *Ibid.* 137

²³ Andrés writes: “I started imagining what we could achieve if we combined forces: World Central Kitchen with other NGOs and the U.S. military...If the U.S. Navy had a hospital ship, why couldn’t we use a ship as a floating kitchen. We could cover the island that way, using the ship-to-shore transport normally used in military operations. *Ibid.* 125

²⁴ *Ibid.* 1

²⁵ See Frederick Jameson, “An American Utopia.” *An American Utopia, Dual Power, and the Universal Army*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2016), 28. “So the first step in my utopian proposal is, so to speak, the renationalization of the army along the lines of any number of other socialist candidates for nationalization”. Certainly, Jameson’s work has many implications, components, and arguments which exceed the simple suggestion to direct the military toward different ends, though this basic suggestion reflects Andrés’s desire to do the same.

of disasters that other NGO's and relief actors cannot.²⁶ Whether intentional or not, Andrés's collaboration with these governmental agencies serves to improve their ability to carry out policing and securitization missions by assembling charitable giving alongside military enforcement. Andrés writes: "My friends in Homeland Security Investigations told me that delivering our food made their job so much easier. It's far better to approach someone with a sandwich than a gun, no matter if you're carrying a gun anyway."²⁷ Thus, the provision of food in combination with agents of the state facilitates a smooth maintenance of policing and surveillance operations, producing something of a "humanitarian hegemony."²⁸

However, Andrés does express an awareness of the tension between working with security agencies and advocating for immigrants and/or marginalized people more broadly.

Reflecting on this contradiction, Andrés writes:

'I never thought I would be helping people by working with I.C.E.' I joked. In fact, I had staff of mine back on the mainland asking me why I, an advocate for

²⁶ Andrés writes: "The best partnership we have in the last two weeks, God bless them all, is HIS from Homeland Security. Many of them are border patrol and many of them are Puerto Rican. They have forty trucks, and they go to the rough and hard areas." Andrés, *We Fed an Island*, 147

²⁷ Ibid. 236

²⁸ For further commentary on some of the dangers of combining humanitarian aid with securitization projects, see François Debrix, *Re-Envisioning Peacekeeping: The United Nations and the Mobilization of Ideology*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). Debrix's text examines medical humanitarianism in the context of the UN's global governance and interventions. This framework offers useful insights which translate well to World Central Kitchen's brand of culinary humanism. Useful points include the implications for western media for whom "humanitarianism simply sells" (172), as well as the positioning of humanitarianism within colonial civilizing discourses: "human charity becomes the mark of civilization, the sign of humanity." (183) The role of signifying humanity takes on important significance under the framework of Man's overrepresentation and Wynter's arguments about Man's apportioning of humanity. Additionally, the apolitical character of Andrés's humanitarianism, explored further below, might be contextualized as well: "The Red Cross and its members operate on an ideological basis summarized by the slogan 'tutti Fratelli' (all are brothers), an ideology that refuses to discriminate among victims. It is at this precise historical moment that humanitarianism, turned apolitical and transnational by the work of Henry Dunant, adopts an ideology of international solidarity and unity that it has retained until today." (187-88). For more discussion of humanitarianism in combination with national security agencies, see also Ilan Kapoor, *Celebrity Humanism*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 27. Kapoor writes: "More troubling perhaps, is when humanitarianism aligns itself with the nationalist proclivity to identify external threats and enemies." Kapoor's commentary underscores the manner in which humanitarian aid, when linked with national interests and security agencies, provides a useful tool for implementing hegemonic foreign policy objectives such as the operations carried out in the global south as part of the "war on terror." Kapoor's framework can be applied to U.S. neocolonial management of Puerto Rico as well, despite its proximity and formal lack of "external" status.

immigrants and immigration reform, was working so closely with the people behind all of Trump's deportations...I could only say that even though ICE was breaking up families, there are some good people there who are doing great work.²⁹

Andrés's position, as expressed above, has led several smaller restaurants and organizations to cut ties with World Central Kitchen. One such organization, NYC Mutual Aid Workers, published a short piece explaining that: "In light of the uprising sweeping the country, and initiatives in cities like Minneapolis to dismantle the police, any collaboration with police or ICE in any way is unacceptable... Continuing to distribute WCK food would normalize collaboration with ICE and police, and neocolonialism in Puerto Rico."³⁰ The piece further charges Andrés's organization with profiting (symbolically, if not economically) from the use of the "fetishized photo of Andrés feeding a young black girl in Puerto Rico."³¹

These critiques highlight the manner in which Culinary Man3, through stepping out of the kitchen, actually holds a greater potential to uphold neo-colonial governance, militarism, and incarceration, while placing humanitarian imagery in service of U.S hegemony. It is perhaps more difficult to imagine the instrumentalization of Grant Achatz's molecular gastronomic creations in service of carceral securitization agencies, whereas humanitarian aid provides a tool of legitimation which is far smoother to apply. Further, the above note regarding the use of racialized and gendered imagery to reinforce a colonial dynamic (the civilized saving the oppressed) highlights the manner in which the chef remains highly central and visible within the representational economy. This is a point which is explored further below.

²⁹ Andrés, *We Fed an Island*, 212

³⁰ North Bronx Mutual Aid, "Why NYC Mutual Aid Workers Are Cutting Ties with World Central Kitchen." *Medium.com*, June 18, 2020

³¹ *Ibid.*

There is something interesting in the “apolitical” stylings of Andrés’s articulations. In a way, Andrés’s politics reflect, albeit in a different manner, the deeply ingrained disciplinary traditions of Culinary Man.³² Much of Andrés’s responses to these kinds of charges tend to evade the central content of the critiques by favoring a more neutral framing of charity as an unimpeachably universalistic mission. For instance, per the statement by NYC Mutual Aid, World Central Kitchen has asserted that “They are simply feeding people and do not see any difference between anyone.”³³ The inability (or unwillingness) to read difference between ICE agents and the dispossessed citizens of Puerto Rico (a territory which Andrés himself describes as neocolonial) amounts to a refusal to critically analyze relations of power. Previous iterations of Culinary Man develop apolitical tendencies as a byproduct of the disciplinary norms which leave no room for any external matters, political or otherwise. By contrast, Andrés’s model explicitly embraces a neutral lens. However, the outcome of both processes is similar. As various critiques have offered, the “power-blind” model may in fact be more harmful.³⁴ As the next section explores, Culinary Man3 shares points of continuity with Culinary Man1 and 2’s central positioning within the brigade’s field of representation.

Visibility/Centrality

Related to the critiques examined above, Andrés’s version of Culinary Man has difficulty altering the long running centrality of the chef within fields of representation and discourse. Ron Howard’s documentary on World Central Kitchen, *We Feed People*, opens with a scene of

³² And as noted in footnote 27, this disposition fits well within the context of western humanitarianism.

³³ *Ibid*, *Medium*.

³⁴ For instance, see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2003).

Andrés's answering a question about the formal name of his role. Andrés bluntly responds: "I don't have a title," and shortly after, he explains that, in the context of WCK, he identifies as a cook rather than a chef.³⁵ Despite Andrés's stated intentions, he has indeed received an immense amount of personal publicity as a result of his humanitarian efforts, and much of this media coverage has reiterated the description of Andrés as a famous or celebrity chef.³⁶ While one could perhaps hypothesize that this exposure may have aided his restaurants, it is also the case that Andrés's humanitarian efforts have benefitted from his visibility and haute cuisine credentials. At times, Andrés describes utilizing various connections with elites, such as politicians and CEOs, in order to facilitate his humanitarian operations.³⁷ Thus, it is difficult to separate Andrés's identity as a culinary celebrity from his humanitarian work.

This dynamic also appears in discourse on the relief efforts of World Central Kitchen as there is a pronounced tendency to identify the relief work with Andrés alone. However, it should be noted that, for the most part, Andrés speaks in plural terms—this is perhaps most evident in his book title: "We Fed an Island"—and he frequently seeks to emphasize the work of volunteers and/or Puerto Ricans themselves in the food production operations.³⁸ At other times though,

³⁵ Andrés, *We Feed People*: 1:55-5:35

³⁶ For example, Andrés reports being introduced at a meeting with the phrase: "So we have our famous chef, Jose Andrés. Do you want to report on what you guys are doing today?" Andrés, *We Fed an Island*, 147

³⁷ Private sector/business connections mentioned by Andrés include Rafael O'Ferrall, of Dade Paper Company (95), Jorge Unanue of Goya Foods, who lends Andrés the use of a private helicopter (159), and other unnamed "wealthy friends" (127) who offer financial support. With regard to political connections, Andrés writes: "It was time for me to contact my friends in Washington, so I started calling senators I knew personally. I called Mark Warner...I left messages for Kirsten Gillibrand... Ibid. 152. Additionally, Howard's documentary features clips of Andrés with Bill Clinton as well as with Joe Biden, who explicitly offers: "You're famous, man!" Andrés, *We Feed*, 44-46. Andrés describes using these connections to boost visibility for his relief operation as well as the general state of affairs in Puerto Rico.

³⁸ Examples include Andrés's statement: "we are about to reach today one million meals cooked by the men and women of Puerto Rico," or "we sang together like the victorious fans inside a soccer stadium, as we had just heard the news that we'd hit a huge target: twenty thousand delicious—and portable—ham and cheese sandwiches made in just one day." Ibid. 195, 138.

Andrés's invocation of "we" seems to squarely indicate chefs and restaurant cooks.³⁹ And in certain moments, Andrés's high esteem for restaurant chefs implicitly downgrades the capabilities, value, and agency of non-professional culinarians and the Puerto Rican people. For instance, while railing against the incompetence of the federal government, Andrés writes: "'We can feed the island' I told them. 'We don't need anybody else. Everybody says we need the partners, but you don't need the partners. They should just leave it to the professionals. We can teach people how to do this themselves.'"⁴⁰ In this way, Andrés's operation—which flew in chefs from Andrés's own restaurants⁴¹—continues to keep the framework of the restaurant central, even while operating in a significantly different context. Additionally, the imagery of professional chefs instructing the Puerto Rican masses how to feed themselves recalls colonial themes of "the civilizing mission."

In continuity with the chef's centrality respective to the brigade, the collective framing of "we" slides at times into a singular articulation of Andrés, who, while recalling a conversation with a skeptical FEMA executive, writes: "'Do you remember I have thirty restaurants?' I replied. 'I know how to do this'...It wasn't an idle piece of bragging. To feed the island, I needed to create the biggest restaurant in the world.'"⁴² In other descriptive moments, the collectivity of the Puerto Rican volunteers, who "formed the backbone of the operation,"⁴³ recedes from view, such as when Andrés states: "I can feed 500,000 people tomorrow...Let me loose, I can feed the island."⁴⁴

³⁹ Andrés writes: "we were just a couple of chefs, who knew how to cook, trying to feed the many, "while one of his fellow restaurateurs, José Enrique, adds: "It's kind of on us, no one else can do it." Ibid. 19-20

⁴⁰ Ibid. 150

⁴¹ Ibid. 128

⁴² Ibid. 177

⁴³ Ibid. 27. While Andrés's intention in this phrasing is clearly one of praise, the imagery of a mass of volunteers as a "backbone" can perhaps imply that the chef is the head and/or mind, which would constitute a reprisal of the Culinary Cartesianism explored in earlier chapters. Without reading too much in Andrés's statement, this hierarchical dynamic can still clearly be seen. This is explored further in the next section as well.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 142

The notion of the singular chef who can accomplish a mission (with the help of a subordinated brigade) sits in continuity with earlier iterations of Culinary Man. However, the ends of Culinary Man³'s mission are humanitarian in nature and thus, depart sharply from the more aesthetic objects of previous culinary campaigns. The difference in content may function to help preserve the centrality of the chef's cultural hegemony during a political moment which includes increased pressure from various social justice discourses (such as those explored at the end of the last chapter) on various institutions, including the restaurant, to embrace some form of gesture toward these concerns.

The sliding tension between the "we" and the "I" does not seem to be lost on Andrés himself. Andrés opens the book's acknowledgements by noting: "it wasn't by chance that we called this book *We Fed an Island*. I am humbled by the amount of personal recognition for my work in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, it seems that every moment needs a face..."⁴⁵ Taking Andrés's statements as genuine, it would seem that his lack of desire for personal fame simply does not translate into a more horizontal distribution of attention, visibility, and praise. The limits of Andrés's personal refusal recall the similar dynamics expressed by Pete Jordan's dishwasher anarchism explored in Chapter 1. This outcome is likely due to Andrés's preexisting celebrity, outsized access to resources, and indeed perhaps tendencies toward individualistic frameworks within media reporting.⁴⁶ Still, the enduring overrepresentation of Andrés within these accounts also seems to indicate the deeply ingrained culture of the brigade, which is trenchantly organized around the centrality and subjectivity of the chef. The next section explores this point further by focusing on the dynamic of the chef's authority.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 249

⁴⁶ In some sense, Andrés's observations may reprise 19th century debates about the validity of "the great man theory" carried out by sociologists, among others.

Authority

In addition to his increased visibility, Andrés also embodies Culinary Man's wielding of authority within World Central Kitchen's humanitarian operations. As already explored above in the case of the "sergeant-major of sandwiches," a stratified division of labor corresponds to hierarchical arrangements of decision making, governance, and discipline. The sandwiches produced by World Central Kitchen, referenced above as a point of pride for Andrés since they seem to exceed the many "avant-garde" dishes he has created as a chef, serve as a helpful example of the distribution of tasks and authority within the relief operations.

Andrés narrates a scene of sandwich making production. He writes: "At side-stations, volunteers prepared huge bowls of mayo-ketchup mix, and cut the ham and cheese out of packets for quick assembly...other volunteers laid out slices of bread."⁴⁷ While Andrés decided upon the use of sandwiches in the relief operations,⁴⁸ volunteer labor assembled them. In the foreword to Andrés's book, actor Lin-Manuel Miranda and his father, Luis A Miranda Jr., recount their time as sandwich makers: "As sandwich-making beginners our instructions were simple—lots of mayo, cheese, and ham...For more experienced workers, the cooking menu expanded beyond sandwiches to include *soncocho*..."⁴⁹

Thus, in a manner which parallels the "entry level" labor of the dishwasher within the brigade, workers with less culinary experience or skill performed the work of sandwich making, while others performed somewhat more involved tasks. The Mirandas' note about mayonnaise also indexes the governing authority of Andrés, who oversaw the assembly line and gave out

⁴⁷ Ibid. 137

⁴⁸ Andrés explains that the sandwich was chosen for its ability to provide a meal which was both easy to transport and distribute, as well as something which would remain edible for longer periods of time. Ibid. 136

⁴⁹ Ibid. xi

instructions to the volunteers. In a passage which translates Culinary Man's disciplinary gaze into World Central Kitchen's admittedly different context, Andrés recounts an address to his volunteers: "Thank you. We love you. But I see we are not putting enough mayo' I turned to consult my team... We want to give the best food. And please put more mayo."⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Andrés also describes overseeing other facets of the operation, noting: "I liked to visit our culinary school kitchens to check on the quality of their cooking... [they] needed regular visits to make sure they were getting the right amount of chicken on each plate."⁵¹ Elsewhere, Andrés describes a scene in which volunteers washed and prepped large quantities of vegetables and chicken, while at the same time "outside, on more foldable tables, I spread out my new maps and planned our expansion across the island."⁵² While, again, Andrés's relief context is certainly different, the description replicates fine dining juxtaposition of the mental labor of Culinary Man against the bodily labor of the brigade—not to mention how the imagery of a cartographic planning of "expansion" might resonate with previous colonial invasions.

The governing dynamic in which the chef's orders are carried out by culinary laborers recalls the brigade's production, even as there are also important qualities which distinguish Andrés's operation from the fine dining brigade. For instance, the donated quality of labor effaces the disparities in wages which characterize the various levels of the brigade's strata. There is also Andrés's practical and humanitarian, rather than aesthetic, motivations for adjusting the sandwiches.⁵³ Still, Andrés remains at the head of decision-making, and his operation retains tendencies which favor fine dining chefs over non-professional cooks.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 138

⁵¹ Ibid. 207

⁵² Ibid. 105

⁵³ Andrés explains that the sandwiches were becoming too dry in transport. Ibid. 136

At one point, the pastor of a Puerto Rican church, which had been carrying out its own hunger relief operations, sought resources from World Central Kitchen and was initially denied. Andrés explains: “That wasn’t our model: we gave people cooked food and only supplied professional cooks with ingredients to open kitchens. We had no cash to spare and couldn’t just throw ingredients at places with *no chefs*, where we had no *control* over the quality of the cooking (emphasis added).”⁵⁴ Ultimately, one of Andrés’s supervisors acceded to the pastor’s plea for supplies, and Andrés himself relented: “We had our way of doing things and this wasn’t it. On the other hand, this was a moment when people were really hungry. This was a time to let the dogs out, open more kitchens, and trust in the community.”⁵⁵ The bias towards the institutionalized knowledge of professional cooks—even in a time of mass crisis—alongside the implication that providing scarce resources to non-chefs would be tantamount to waste, demonstrates continuity with Culinary Man’s professional sectarianism, even if Andrés’s reconsideration perhaps provides an important moment of rupture.

Earlier chapters explored the organizational system of *mise en place* as a tool in Culinary Man’s persistent struggle to neutralize chaos. *Mise-en-place*’s mastery over disorder unsurprisingly (considering the disaster context) accompanies Andrés’s embodiment of the humanitarian chef as well. As an explanation for his operation’s success, Andrés credits, to a significant degree, the managerial and disciplinary skills of the restaurant chef. Andrés writes:

Restaurants are complicated businesses, and a great chef needs to be a great manager—not just of people, but of orders, supplies, and inventory. If you can’t get the management right, it doesn’t matter how good of a chef you are...Chefs understand how to create order out of chaos, just as they know how to control fire to cook great meals.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid. 201

⁵⁵ Ibid. 201

⁵⁶ Ibid. 235

In addition to reprising the theme of managing chaos and controlling nature (fire), Andrés continues this thread with a seemingly favorable comparison of culinary production with an ant colony. Andrés notes: “each ant works with local information and has no big picture of what’s going on. It has no plan, and no obvious leadership, yet together the colony achieves incredible feats of organization and engineering.”⁵⁷ Despite the notion that his operation had no plan—and Andrés invokes this characterization in contradistinction to the slow movement of bureaucracy—much of the decision making, planning, and logistical operations were directed by Andrés and high ranking members of World Central Kitchen. Andrés is clearly not an ant in the analogy (which utilizes a literal colony as its model) above, but rather aspires to be a “food tsar who can cut through the bureaucracy to save and rebuild lives.”⁵⁸ Andrés’s tsarist ambition belies his indifference and refusal toward the title of chef, although one can perhaps understand this sensibility in the urgent context of mass suffering and the desire to expediate relief.

There remains a tension within Andrés’s culinary relief operations between the horizontal efforts of community-based food relief and the more vertical utilization of the chef’s particular expertise and skills, including the ability to administer disciplinary regulation, to hold authority over laborers, and to oversee logistical organization. The gap between these operations is illuminated in an exchange featured in Howard’s documentary between Andrés, one of his cooks, and a Black Haitian woman.

The episode opens with a view of hundreds of displaced Haitians standing around as Andrés, speaking to a posted soldier, notes: “we have some food, but I don’t know if it’s smart to

⁵⁷ Ibid. 235

⁵⁸ Ibid. 237. Andrés invokes the notion of a “food tsar” at other times as well— “I looked at him and wished we had a president in office who could make me the food tsar of Puerto Rico. You can achieve so much if you have the power to cut through the bureaucracy that makes the federal government so expensive and inefficient.” Ibid. 117

deliver it. I don't want to create mayhem."⁵⁹ Shortly after, the camera pans over to one of Andrés's cooks, Alejandro, who is speaking to a Haitian woman who has just offered to trade for food. Next, Alejandro turns toward the woman, with a sandwich in hand, and assures her that she can have the food without exchanging anything. Suddenly, the interaction is upended by Andrés who, marching over to Alejandro, shouts "Stop!" prior to excoriating him in Spanish: "Do you want to create chaos?! How many years do I have to say this?! Now everyone is going to come here! Don't fuck me!"⁶⁰

In this scene, which is reminiscent of Culinary Man1's sharp discipline, Alejandro looks aside and nods as Andrés pushes him out of the way. Shortly after, viewers see Andrés attempting to apologize to the woman, who sharply directs Andrés: "No. I don't want to hear it. You tell *him* sorry. I don't want to—" ⁶¹ Andrés interrupts the woman to explain himself: No, I did. Tell her [to Alejandro]. Tell her what happened. Ma'am do you know why I was upset with him? Because you know what happens with these people. When you start giving food sometimes in a disorganized way, you know what happens? That everybody sometimes comes and creates problems."⁶² Throughout the encounter, the woman articulates "I don't want to hear it" at least seven times, while Andrés interrupts and speaks over her.

At one point, clearly recognizing that Andrés is not listening, she turns to Alejandro and repeats herself. In the next scene, which appears to be at least a few minutes after the initial conversation, Andrés and the woman stand together alone and Andrés offers: "You saw me respond, it's for a reason, I have seen it before and now, I agree with you. I don't want to use that

⁵⁹ Andrés, *We Feed People*, 58m

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 59m

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 60m

⁶² *Ibid.* 60m

excuse...” Andrés restates his rationale—the concern for sparking a sudden and unmanageable crowd movement—as the woman politely nods prior to stating: “yeah, but when people see your reaction, they say ‘there’s no love, there’s no conscience’”⁶³ She is barely able to get through the sentence as Andrés continues to speak over her: “but for you to know, for you to know. No, it’s the contrary.” The woman then ends the conversation and walks away adding: “alright, but thank you, okay, Señor Jose.”⁶⁴

The scene is useful in underscoring the extant textures of Culinary Man which appear in Andrés’s iteration of the humanitarian chef: from the administration of harsh discipline toward a subordinate to reproducing the invisibility of knowledge produced by a woman of color who, herself, seems to disappear under Culinary Man’s explanatory gaze. Andrés, occupying an assumed position of authoritative knowledge, interrupts, talks over, and dismisses the concerns of the Haitian woman, who he is meant to be serving, while articulating a logic of control against chaos. Sitting in his truck speaking to the camera, Andrés expounds further:

Many people always say, Jose, you are very hard on everybody. Me? I would love to be the nice guy, all the time: ‘good job, good job, good job.’ I’m sorry, when it ain’t happening, everything is fucked, especially when people are thirsty and hungry. Ain’t ‘good job’ because we are not maximizing what we can do. So, what else you want me to tell you? Okay, let me say it with nice words: [speaking softly]: ‘we are not maximizing the potential of what we are doing.’ Alright, what’s next? If we go next, it’s fine, but if not: [yelling and clapping hands]: ‘We are not maximizing what we are doing!’”⁶⁵

Andrés’s above note directly recalls the disciplinary style of Marco Pierre White who, as explored in Chapter 4, legitimates displays of anger, abuse, and yelling with a similar justification. The difference, of course, is that Andrés marshals these despotic sensibilities in the

⁶³ Ibid. 60m

⁶⁴ Ibid. 60m

⁶⁵ Ibid. 61m

context of hunger relief while White's commitments do not extend beyond the boundaries of the fine dining restaurant. In some sense, this difference in objectives casts Andrés in a more positive light in that hunger relief is likely more defensible, from a social justice perspective at least, than upscale consumption.

However, the continuity with previous models of Culinary Man may actually enable greater forms of harm, particularly given that Andrés's context of disaster relief brings him into contact with more vulnerable populations. At times, Andrés voices a concern with hierarchical models of charity and articulates an awareness of his differential positionality.⁶⁶ However, in the interaction mentioned above, Andrés relegates the woman to an object of charity, who must be instructed in correct practices, rather than allowing her the agential expression of a collaborative subject. Andrés's embodiment of Culinary Man 3 reminds us of the limits of good intention alone while also recalling Paulo Freire's diagnosis that "pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanization."⁶⁷

There is much to admire about Andrés's commitment to helping to feed others, and the operations carried out by World Central Kitchen in Puerto Rico (and elsewhere) seem to greatly surpass the lethargic efforts put forth by the U.S. federal government.⁶⁸ However, the points of continuity with Culinary Man1 and 2 examined above suggest that, with regard to the Wynterian

⁶⁶Andrés comments on his position as one of the "white people with power" that informs the uneven landscape of charitable aid. Ibid. 42-45m.

⁶⁷ Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970[2000]), 54

⁶⁸ Admittedly, this is often a low bar, though it is a central critique offered by Andrés throughout his various written works and interactions with the media.

task of dismantling Man, there is still much work to be done. The second part of this chapter engages various attempts to move beyond the framework of Culinary Man rather than merely improving or reforming it. It does so by examining extant practices, critiques, and theorizations of foodways offered by marginalized populations and people of color. Food activist and sommelier Ashtin Berry, in conversation with Preeti Mistry, poignantly and critically articulates Culinary Man's overrepresentation. On the topic of Andrés, Berry succinctly summarizes:

Jose Andrés, I do respect in many ways, the things he has done, but in many ways, he is still acting as a colonizer. We need to talk about that, because if we don't openly and transparently discuss this...we actually don't make room or space to have leaders who do different in the future...I think it's amazing Jose Andrés has all this backing. I also feel like he missed an invitation to invite women of color, specifically Latina women of color, Black women of color, indigenous women of color, who have been—maybe not under an LLC—doing these mutual aid efforts...I remember looking at his [Andrés's] board and seeing all these white people and thinking 'this is what colonization looks like.'⁶⁹

Berry's comments highlight the lingering presence of Man, even within the field of humanitarian aid. However, they also point to the existence of marginalized culinary activity which, while not new, can provide important visions of what food and cooking can (and do) look like outside of Culinary Man's domain. The next section seeks to follow Berry's insight in exploring the culinary activity of Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor and what she calls her "vibration cooking" methodology.

⁶⁹ Ashtin Berry, Preeti Mistry, "Chef Heroes and White Saviorism" *Loading Dock Talks* (podcast, 2021.), 38m.

Vibration Cooking as Archipelagic Methodology

Berry's description of the invitation (missed by Andrés) to center women of color within discussions of culinary activity recalls Wynter's interest in the subject positions which exist as points of deviance from hegemonic normativity and are excluded from full personhood under Man's classificatory system and subjectivity. In order to move beyond Man's hegemony, it is necessary to engage with the histories, knowledges, and social perspectives of those marginalized by Culinary Man. While there are many options to explore in this regard, this section engages with the work of Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor as one of many culinary methodologies which deviates from Culinary Man's normative subjectivity.

Smart-Grosvenor, a celebrated poet, writer, and culinary anthropologist born in South Carolina's low country, offers a vibrant and unique perspective toward the culinary field. Smart-Grosvenor's work adeptly critiques Culinary Man's hegemony (particularly the discursive practices of white/Euro-supremacy) while importantly articulating the relational, epistemological, and caring dimensions of Black food, which have been ignored, demeaned, or appropriated by Culinary Man. Perhaps most notably, Smart-Grosvenor's work extols the collaborative uses and creativity of culinary activity which occurs *outside* of the restaurant and without the use of a brigade. Apart from denaturalizing the form of commonsense which presents the fine dining space as the apex of culinary production, Smart-Grosvenor's narratives offer a descriptive statement, in the Wynterian sense, which opens up alternatives to Culinary Man's dominant mode of organizing food work. In what follows, I seek to show that Smart-Grosvenor's work offers an archipelagic approach to the culinary field which can serve as a useful point of departure for a critique of Culinary Man's hegemony.

Relational Culinary Subjectivity

Smart-Grosvenor is perhaps best known for her seminal 1970 cookbook, *Vibration Cooking, Or The Travel Notes Of A Geechee Girl*. This text is a useful introduction to Smart-Grosvenor's archipelagic sensibilities, which embed culinary subjectivity within sets of social, ancestral, and familial relations. The techniques of storytelling and correspondence/dialogue inform her narration-based methodology. Describing her intentions in writing *Vibration Cooking*, Smart-Grosvenor writes: "Back in the day, a cookbook had about a page and a half of introduction, recipes, and no narrative. Coming from a culture of storytellers, I wanted to tell stories about the gatherings, the people, the food, and the history of food."⁷⁰ Additional notes evince Smart-Grosvenor's desire to utilize food in order emphasize human connection, culture, and sociality, such as the titular self-reference to "Geechee." The terms Geechee and Gullah (often combined together as "Geechee Gullah," or vice versa) generally describe communities of descendants of enslaved Africans who reside in the lower Atlantic coastal regions.

While some commentators have noted Smart-Grosvenor's revaluation of a term that has at times carried derogatory connotations,⁷¹ it is perhaps more important to highlight the connective social role that this point of emphasis plays in Smart-Grosvenor's construction of identity. A pride in her Geechee heritage shapes an important mode of culinary subjectivity which foregrounds social relations with others, particularly family and ancestors. The Geechee/Gullah people commonly trace ancestry to the rice growing regions of West-Africa prior to enslavement and to subsequent work on rice plantations in the American south. Judith

⁷⁰ Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking: Or The Travel Notes Of A Geechee Girl*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011 [1970].), xxxiv.

⁷¹ "That term was long considered a pejorative among both blacks and whites, but she proudly reclaimed it" Anita Gates, "Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor Dies at 79; Celebrated Gullah Food and Culture." *New York Times.com*, Sept.6, 2016.

Carney's *Black Rice* describes this historical connection as well as the importance of African horticultural knowledge, skills, and technique—frequently omitted or dismissed from cultural and historical records—in cultivating rice in North America.⁷² The first recipe featured in *Vibration Cooking*, a meditation on Hoppin' John, denotes the historical and cultural connection between rice and low country African descendants. Additionally, it offers a sense of culinary technique that explicitly draws value in relation to familial sociality. Smart-Grosvenor writes: "Us being geechees, we had rice everyday... That was one of my jobs too. To cook the rice. A source of pride in me was that I cooked rice like a grown person."⁷³ In this sentiment, successful culinary technique amounts to achieving a certain competence, which allowed Smart-Grosvenor to participate in cultural ritual in collaborative relation with family members. This aspiration (and subsequent pride when reaching it) is a different note than the brigade chef's totalizing desire for mastery, productivity, and glory, as explored in Chapter 4.

In addition to Smart-Grosvenor's embrace and articulation of her Geechee identity, she intentionally carves out a form of archipelagic subjectivity by choosing a title for herself—"culinary griot"—that also draws a cultural and historical connection to diasporic African traditions. Explaining the preference for the term, which refers to traditions of storytelling and oral history practitioners in Western Africa, Smart-Grosvenor notes:

"I named myself... What I was studying and looking at all the time was the influence of Africa in the melting pot, the taste of Africa in the melting pot. And my style of writing, I don't know how to just make a statement, I have to tell a little story. And so, the "griot" came in... I thought "griot" would talk about [what I do] more, because if I were an anthropologist, I would just be turning in papers..."⁷⁴

⁷² Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁷³ Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*, 3

⁷⁴ Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, "Interview with Tracey Dingmann." *New Mexico Public Broadcasting*, Feb. 10, 2012.

Smart-Grosvenor's note evinces a sense of self-defining agency while underscoring the epistemic dimensions of storytelling which are often overlooked in favor of more traditional modes of intellectual discovery (such as those put forth by academic disciplines). The practice of choosing one's name is, of course, no small matter within the racialized context of Black experiences within America. Smart-Grosvenor underscores this point and highlights the political significance of naming practices within the historical context of colonial practices:

Calling people out their names is a bad habit the people of European descent seem to have...they went all the way down to Africa and called nature out its name...Victoria Falls, Leopoldville, Johannesburg...The W.F.'s [white folks] that came here did the same thing with the indigenous people living here...⁷⁵

In addition to identifying the stratifying role which hegemonic signifying practices have played in colonial domination, Smart-Grosvenor creatively utilizes recipe names to critique and redescribe those same colonial legacies. For instance, her "So-called 'Indian' Pudding" takes Columbus to task for misnaming and mistreating indigenous people.⁷⁶ Smart-Grosvenor also utilizes the recipe form to celebrate the agency of Black resistance figures, such as with her "Harriet Tubman Ragout,"⁷⁷ or "Nat Turner Apple Pork Thing."⁷⁸ Smart-Grosvenor further utilizes the terrain of culinary signification to draw parallels to racialized social mistreatment while offering explicit interventions through her choice of description for certain foods. For instance, Smart-Grosvenor writes: "If you are wondering how come I say so-called okra it is because the African name of okra is gombo...I am a Black woman. I am tired of people calling

⁷⁵ Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2018 [1972]), 117

⁷⁶ Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*, 77.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 25

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 172

me out of my name. Okra must be sick of that mess too. So, from now on, we call it like it is. Okra will be referred to in this book as gombo.... [Black people] will be referred to as Black people.”⁷⁹

In sum, Smart-Grosvenor’s approach to subjectivity involves a sense of creative expression, political intentionality, and a connective relation to familial/ancestral community. One anecdote from *Vibration Cooking* encompasses these themes acutely. While sitting alone dressed in African clothes as was normal for her (“I love to wear African clothes. I think I look better in them”), Smart-Grosvenor was approached by a white woman who, while deploying racialized insults, chastised her for dressing inappropriately for someone “of American descent.” Smart-Grosvenor’s succinct reply articulates a theme of creative agency in the construction of subjectivity: “I am who I think I am. I am free and free to define myself.”⁸⁰ Smart-Grosvenor’s note conveys a significant theme in Black Feminist literature: the importance of defining one’s sense of self, particularly in hostile social contexts which, per Wynter’s account and others, historically construct Blackness and femininity as failed or incomplete projects relative to Man.⁸¹

Non-Prescriptive Approach

⁷⁹ Ibid. 75

⁸⁰ Ibid. 117-118

⁸¹ For one example of this theme, see Patricia Hill Collins, who notes: “By emphasizing the power of self-definition and the necessity of a free mind, Black feminist thought speaks to the importance African-American women thinkers place on consciousness as a sphere of freedom. Black women intellectuals realize that domination operates not only out of structuring power from the top down but by simultaneously annexing the power as energy of those on the bottom for its own ends. “Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), 227-28.

Perhaps one of the most discussed elements of Smart-Grosvenor's culinary theory is the distinct lack of strong prescriptive sensibilities with regard to cooking. One of the most cited passages of *Vibration Cooking* is Smart-Grosvenor's opening note which explains:

And when I cook, I never measure or weight anything. I cook by vibration. I can tell by the look and smell of it. Most of the ingredients in this book are approximate. Some of the recipes that people gave me list the amounts, but for my part, I just do it by vibration. Different strokes for different folks. Do your thing your way.⁸²

Smart-Grosvenor's vibration-oriented culinary approach departs significantly from Culinary Man's insistence on very particular metrics and techniques. This non-prescriptive preference reflects a certain sense of admiration for personal freedom of expression. For instance, Smart-Grosvenor praises her grandmother's "custom made (she made it)" clothing by noting that "everywhere she goes, she creates her own climate of beauty."⁸³ This note and the many similar warm familial anecdotes which populate Smart-Grosvenor's culinary text are important as they emphasize the individual's capacities for self-definition and creative agency. However, Smart-Grosvenor's exaltation of internal creative agency is best read in the context of the importance she places on the relational connections between individuals (most often exemplified by the sharing of food and recipes⁸⁴). And thus, "vibration cooking" takes on an affective shape which bears resemblance to Audre Lorde's notion of "the erotic."⁸⁵ Vibration-cooking takes on significance beyond its technical culinary application as an important

⁸² Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*, xxxvii

⁸³ Ibid. 11

⁸⁴ Smart-Grosvenor's discussion of her grandmother's stylistic sensibilities is immediately followed by three different recipes which her grandmother shared with her.

⁸⁵ For Lorde, "the erotic" is defined as an internally located "measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings," which achieves its most empowering function when it involves "sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers..." Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," *Sister Outsider*, (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. 1984 [2007]),55-57.

methodology for political subjectivity. Like Lorde's notion of the erotic, vibration-cooking preserves and protects an internal sense of creative self-expression while also providing a relational technology. Historical experiences of enslavement, dispossession, and marginalization likely provide an important sense of necessity for safeguarding both ends of this dialectic. Additionally, vibration-cooking as a methodology can be read as an inverted parallel to the dominant subjectivation logic of Culinary Man. In other words, while Culinary Man's disciplinary project seeks to disaggregate the brigade into individuals who are in competition with one another, it nonetheless achieves this individualistic outcome through a largely homogenizing (or normalizing) form of socialization. Vibration-cooking, on the other hand, seeks to allow the individual subject a large amount of creative terrain to define themselves (via culinary practice), and this freedom exists within the context of an affective atmosphere of familial, ancestral, and social solidarity.

Smart-Grosvenor explains further the generational continuity which inform vibration cooking as a culinary approach: "And vibrations just was a form of cookery that's been around for. It's not that you don't measure because you don't care. They didn't learn to cook by a book and [recipes] that gave you a quart-cup of this. You had to learn another way."⁸⁶ However, there are some limits and exceptions within the domain of vibration cooking—rice, for example, requires a more scientific and less improvisational approach, according to Smart-Grosvenor.⁸⁷ Vibration-cooking functions to empower the individual's sense of taste or whim as well as to reflect political economic conditions. Smart Grosvenor notes:

But the vibration part might be 'I don't feel like chicken tonight, I think I'm gonna have me some fish. And I don't feel like frying it, I think I'm gonna fix it like this...and maybe that

⁸⁶ Smart-Grosvenor, "Interview with Tracey Dingmann"

⁸⁷ Ibid

spice you need which costs more than the whole meal, so you say, ‘well I’m gonna season that another way.’⁸⁸

This note, too, is an important divergence from the manner in which Culinary Man’s discourses increasingly set parameters around what kinds of meals “good” normative subjects should eat.⁸⁹ Culinary Man’s apparatus of knowledge and technique rely on prescriptive discourses which outline not only what foods/dishes should be consumed, but also, crucially, the set of precise techniques which the “proper” applications should require. Smart-Grosvenor’s open sense of flexibility does not leave much room for hegemonic projects such as Culinary Man’s consolidation of legitimate knowledge, aesthetic genius, and technical mastery.

This move seems quite intentional for Smart-Grosvenor. Directly before her explication of vibration cooking, Smart-Grosvenor articulates an explicit desire to demystify food, noting: “white folks act like they invented food and like there is some weird mystique surrounding it—something that only Julia and Jim can get to. There is no mystique. Food is food. Everybody eats!”⁹⁰ Smart-Grosvenor’s elucidation offers a descriptive statement of culinary activity which again, sharply departs from and challenges Culinary Man’s gastronomic sensibilities. The fine dining restaurant, particularly its aesthetic and technical operations, is in many ways predicated on a project of mystification which produces a radical sense of separation between Culinary Man’s professional work and the cooking performed in the domestic sphere.⁹¹ Thus, vibration-

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ For instance, the subjectivity project of “the foodie,” which sustains an important relationship to Culinary Man, relies on the proliferation of discourses that consolidate and popularize contemporary trends regarding which foods/dishes to eat. Subsequently, these trends, and the consumer preference which they help to manufacture, directly influence restaurant production (and vice versa). For an example of this phenomenon, see Anthony Bourdain, “Meat.” *Medium Raw*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2010)

⁹⁰ Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration-Cooking*, xxxvii.

⁹¹ Recall the previous chapter’s discussion of professional cookbooks. Bourdain also succinctly makes this point with his reference to “all the bits of business we do to distinguish restaurant food from what you get at home.” Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, 75

cooking's provision of creative agency for the individual also enacts a democratizing move which places trust in the non-professional (or non-Culinary Man) cook's capacities for culinary expression.

Restaurant Application?

It would seem that vibration-cooking offers a mode of culinary production that may not translate easily to the restaurant setting. Thus, a potential objection might be that vibration cooking and brigade work are simply reflections of two different culinary contexts. While this might be true to a certain extent, the crucial point is that vibration-cooking helps to illuminate certain possibilities for subjectivity which are limited by the brigade form. And it also revalues the non-restaurant genres of cooking which are routinely marginalized by Culinary Man. Most likely, Culinary Man would dismiss vibration cooking as anarchic, impractical, and imprecise and thus, not viable for implementation within the restaurant given that the brigade's disciplinary structure rests on deference to authority and the repetition of specific practices. However, while vibration cooking and the fine dining tradition might seem to represent incongruent modes of culinary activity, there are points of resonance which could potentially allow brigade subjects to explore and turn to the different style of culinary consciousness offered by Smart-Grosvenor.

To begin, the practices of actual restaurants often belie Culinary Man's rhetorical emphasis on orderly, precise, and consistently perfect operations. This discrepancy is generally due to the intensive production speed and expectations within the restaurant. Inevitably, and out of necessity, there are times when certain aesthetic standards become implausible to maintain during moments of high volume service. Bourdain describes the tension between speed and aesthetic presentation which arises during such moments as he notes:

...you'd better be fast. They want that food, they want it hot, cooked the way they asked, and they want it soon. It may feel wonderfully fulfilling, putting one's best foot forward, sweating and fiddling and wiping and sculpting impeccable little spires of à la minute food for an adoring dining public, but there is another kind of satisfaction: the grim pride of the journeyman professional, the cook who's got serious moves, who can kick ass on the line, who can do *serious numbers* and "get through."⁹²

Bourdain's note points out the realities of the restaurant business which force the majority of fine dining brigades, at least at times, to deviate from the rigid precision of Culinary Man's normative techniques. Bourdain further elaborates: "We'd like to make sixty-five to seventy-five absolutely flawless meals per night...most restaurants can't charge a hundred fifty bucks a customer for food alone. Sixty-five meals a night (at least in *my place*) means we'll all be out of work—and fast."⁹³ Bourdain's reflections suggest that the majority of fine dining restaurants cannot afford to always execute Culinary Man's technical operations in a pure or perfect form, despite this mode of cooking generally being the central set of techniques used to discipline the brigade.

Some compromise must take place between the ideal notions of cooking and the actual practices which keep Culinary Man's restaurants in business. While I will suggest that this sense of compromise opens the fine dining kitchen up to the possibility for vibration-cooking as a genre of influence (and similarly for other non-dominant culinary traditions), it is helpful to note that the French tradition already contains conceptual resources which usefully deviate from certain elements of the normative image of cooking circulated by Culinary Man. Bourdain offers a useful commentary on this point as well through his description of "System D."

⁹² Bourdain, *The Nasty Bits*, 6

⁹³ *Ibid.* 6

Bourdain traces his own encounter with the notion of “System D” to the literary works of George Orwell and Nicolas Freeling.⁹⁴ Drawing from each author, as well as from a former French Sous-chef of his, Bourdain describes System D as “the ability to think fast, to adapt, to improvise when in danger of falling ‘in the weeds’ or *dans le merde*, even if a little corner-cutting is required.”⁹⁵ System D, then, is the informal genre of improvisation which cooks utilize in order to stay afloat during moments of high intensity.⁹⁶ Of course, System D emerges primarily in order to keep the kitchen’s productive mission on track and thus does not constitute a radical break with Culinary Man’s normative sensibilities.⁹⁷ For my purposes, System D is notable because it opens up, if only briefly, a space of deviation from Culinary Man’s normative practices, which may enable alternative possibilities. Bourdain’s positioning of System D within the literary works of Orwell and Freeling is an important move which legitimates System D by linking it to “the French masters.”⁹⁸ Notably, Bourdain’s note explicitly emphasizes a connection between narrative and culinary subjectivity. This theme, a recurring one in Bourdain’s work, resonates with the Wynterian and Foucauldian approaches to discourse and subjectivity.

Elsewhere, Bourdain turns to certain “classic” works of culinary literature in search of affective

⁹⁴ Within Orwell, it is the use of the term “débrouiller” which interests Bourdain. Orwell writes “Débrouillard is what every plongeur wants to be called. A débrouillard is a man who, even when he is told to do the impossible, will *se débrouiller*—get it done somehow.” Orwell, *Down and Out*, 77. It is this sense of “get it done” which most characterizes System D. Freeling writes: “he was a master of the short cut, the easy way out, the System D. D stands for dé as in débrouiller or démerder—to extricate, and I suppose that in English it is ‘I’m alright, Jack.’ To a hair, Christopher knew how to stay out of trouble. He was a very skillful cook, and a very bad one.” Freeling, *The Kitchen*, 45

⁹⁵ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 4

⁹⁶ Bourdain adds that “it’s when orders are pouring in and the supplies are running low that one sees System D practiced at its highest level.” Ibid. 7

⁹⁷ Bourdain credits System D as often making the difference between “another successful Saturday night and total chaos.” Ibid. 8. This note articulates Culinary Man’s economic interests (successful Saturday night) and aspiration to master chaos, as explored in chapter 2.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 5. Bourdain expounds on this theme: “System D, arguably, reached its heyday in the Victorian-era railway hotels, where the menus were huge...I suspect that some of the classic dishes of that era reflect System D philosophy, particularly the efforts to get more bang from limited ingredients...Parsimonious and forward-thinking Frenchmen—already inclined to make the most of humble (read *cheap*) ingredients, utilized every scrap of stock meat, hoof, snout, tongue, organs, creating dishes that are now popular stand-alone and frequently expensive favorites, ordered on their own merits, rather than served as cleverly disguised by-products.” Ibid. 9

resources which can help to cope with the exhaustion, exploitation, and injustice experienced within brigade life.⁹⁹

Bourdain delves into the work of Orwell, Freeling, Emile Zola, and David Blum (all white and mostly European men) to draw from them narrative materials that may help to constitute a form of culinary subjectivity which is more resilient in the face of Culinary Man's discipline and power. Curiously, Bourdain does not look to these resources with an eye toward *challenging* Culinary Man's power. For example, Bourdain extols the immaculate descriptions of food within Zola's *Belly of Paris*, describing the text as "nearly food porn."¹⁰⁰ However, Bourdain glosses over the novel's political overtones, apart from a brief acknowledgement that Florent, the book's protagonist, is "an escapee from Devil's Island, a starving, desperate ideologue and socialist..."¹⁰¹ More acutely, Florent is an escaped political prisoner who spends most of the novel meeting with a group of revolutionaries to plan insurrection against the French empire.¹⁰² This oversight misses the opportunity to infuse culinary subjectivity with a narrative sensibility which values collective liberation rather than merely culinary aesthetics.

But what if an archipelagic lens were to be applied to Bourdain's interest in seeking out narrative and affective resources to develop alternate culinary subjectivity in the face of power?

⁹⁹ Bourdain writes: "Cooking professionally hurts...I mean also the spiritual pain, the disappointment and self-doubt that comes with being a cog in a large and ever-whirring machine, the crushing sense of futility one feels when working in an operation that is clearly doomed, or the feelings of isolation and frustration one experiences after a seventeen-hour day peeling shrimp and tournéeing vegetables in a less than hygienic cellar prep kitchen...we know what it's like to work all day and night, finally tumbling exhausted into bed, still reeking of salmon and garlic. We have, all of us, made careful observation of the hierarchy around us, wondered, in moments of extremis, why, for instance, the boss just bought himself a new Porsche Turbo when yesterday he said that checks would be late this week—and sorry, but we need to cut overtime...In moments like this, I have always taken refuge in some old friends—in this case, four books whose simple existence has always given me comfort... Ibid. 96

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 98

¹⁰¹ Ibid.98

¹⁰² Florent and his conspirators routinely meet every evening at a café owned by a veteran of the 1848 "February Revolution" to discuss and plan an uprising. Emile Zola, *The Belly of Paris*, Translated by Brian Nelson (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007[1873]),99.

What if one turned toward culinary narratives which empower subjects to challenge and collectively organize against Man? As explored below, Smart-Grosvenor's work can supply these kinds of narrative resources which, in turn, can infuse the descriptive statement of the cook with explicitly political undertones.

Vibration-cooking shares many of the improvisational and non-prescriptive sensibilities extolled by System D.¹⁰³ Perhaps most importantly, System D and Vibration Cooking both offer a point of departure from the rigidity of Culinary Man's disciplinary techniques. For instance, Vibration Cooking clearly rejects most forms of prescription (with some exception, for example, cooking rice). Similarly, System D momentarily suspends the requirement to carry out each operation in the specified manner (informed by disciplinary discourse and Culinary Man's authority) while allowing pragmatic shortcuts. These "open spaces" of culinary operations enable the individual to engage in the kinds of creative practices which Vibration Cooking positions as a central feature. When System D emerges, individuals who otherwise are rarely (if ever) endowed with decision making capacities become able to make quick choices with regard to getting through the rush. While Culinary Man's governance is not dissolved in these moments of exception, it can be suspended as line cooks engage in surreptitious short cuts in order to keep the kitchen running. As Bourdain notes: "at times like these, even one heroic practitioner of System D can save the day, step in, and turn the tide. One guy can make the difference between another successful Saturday night and total chaos."¹⁰⁴ Additionally, System D and Vibration Cooking both share an affective emphasis as well as an underscoring of generational continuity. For instance, Vibration Cooking offers a sense of feeling about food, as explored above in

¹⁰³ To be clear, this passage does not assert that Vibration Cooking is a form of "short cut" cooking which should be denigrated as such. Instead, this comparison (between System D and Vibration Cooking) is intended to demonstrate the potential for practical implementation of Vibration Cooking within the restaurant kitchen.

¹⁰⁴ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 8

Smart-Grosvenor’s quote pertaining to “feeling like” certain dishes and altering them accordingly. System D is similarly articulated in relation to affectivity. Firstly, it emerges during moments of stress in which the kitchen begins to feel like a battlefield.¹⁰⁵ Apart from the urgencies of battlefield affect which often prompt recourse to System D, Bourdain seems to revel in the joyful, irreverent, or mischievous affect which is released by System D—Bourdain refers to the improvisational operations of System D with reference to his “darker urges.”¹⁰⁶ While there are additional points of commonality, overall, the shared sense of affectivity between these two systems provides an important connection.¹⁰⁷

Thus, it is not an insurmountable leap to imagine line cooks adopting more of Smart-Grosvenor’s stylings, particularly if her work was more often included in the largely white and male canon outlined by Bourdain. Given that much of the “lower brigade” reflects more diverse racial and gender identities, it is likely that Smart-Grosvenor’s work would resonate with many culinary workers. Furthermore, Smart-Grosvenor’s work responds to the affective longing described by Bourdain. Thus, it could find a welcoming audience within the brigade’s less privileged members. This point is explored in more depth further below through an engagement with Smart-Grosvenor’s privileging of the domestic cook’s epistemological and experiential perspective. As the next section explores, this sensibility can be read alongside Smart-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 7

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 4

¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, I would argue that the disciplinary affect of Culinary Man’s insistence on precision and tidiness is momentarily suspended in moments of applying System D and that this suspension is crucial for allowing, even if only fleetingly, different ways of performing (and feeling about) food service. Regarding continuity, *Vibration Cooking*, as explored above, connects the practitioner to previous generations of ancestors as well as to immediate community and/or family. As Bourdain points out through his turn to past literature (Orwell, Freeling, etc.), System D connects contemporary line cooks with the classical French tradition. Reiterating this theme, Bourdain writes: “Why this perverse pride in finding that my lowest, sleaziest moments of mid-rush hackwork were firmly rooted in tradition, going back to the French masters.” (Bourdain, Ibid. 5)

Grosvenor's explicit critique (already hinted at above) of the colonial dimensions of the Euro-French sense of gastronomic superiority.

Critique of Man

Smart-Grosvenor provides an important counter-perspective to Culinary Man's uncritical embrace of the "common sense" notion of French culinary superiority. Smart-Grosvenor's critical accounts are further informed by her extended residence in France (a decade or so) after she moved to Paris at age 19 to pursue a creative lifestyle.¹⁰⁸ Throughout the stories and recipes featured in *Vibration Cooking*, Smart-Grosvenor offers an explicit rejection of the French tradition's gastronomic monopoly, while also positioning subjugated culinary knowledges (African, Black American, "Soul Food") as central traditions. In one passage, Smart-Grosvenor succinctly articulates this counter-discourse: "White folks be talkin' about classic, and they mean Beethoven (he was supposed to be a brother, anyhow) and French cooking. Classic to me is James Brown."¹⁰⁹

Indeed, much of Culinary Man's formal and informal discourses assume French techniques and tradition as a central, sometimes unimpeachable, point of reference. Smart-Grosvenor's inclusion of Beethoven, and the theorization that he was actually Black (or at least had some significant African familial/genetic background) is also a notable complement to her reevaluation of the "classic." While the empirical matter of the Beethoven theory is perhaps murky and inconclusive at best, Smart-Grosvenor's note gestures toward an important rhetorical element of the 1960's and 70's era Black power and civil rights movements. Figures like Stokely Carmichael and Malcom X utilized the notion/slogan "Beethoven was Black" to challenge the

¹⁰⁸ Smart-Grosvenor. *Vibration Cooking*, 165

¹⁰⁹Ibid. 145

dominance of white European culture.¹¹⁰ Thus, Smart-Grosvenor's critique of the assumed French culinary superiority is placed in the wider context of Man's overrepresentation through its pairing with the Beethoven reference alongside a celebration of James Brown, whose genre of Soul music articulated proud declarations of Black joy, freedom, and power.

During her time in France, Smart-Grosvenor had frequent encounters with Culinary Man's Franco-centric discourse. Crucially, she expresses an awareness of the disciplinary character of this discourse:

“French people can be so narrow-minded. I got so sick of hearing ‘Oh madame, *en France* we do it different.’ ‘Madame, perhaps where you come from, but *en France*... I go to the point where after I would ask for something and they got that weird *en France* look, I would say ‘yeah-yeah, I know—*en France*’¹¹¹

Notably, Smart-Grosvenor's subjectivity is *not* shaped by the corrective normativity of the “en France” discourse. Instead, an oppositional and critical disposition emerges in relation to it, as indicated by the concluding lines of the passage above. In addition to relativizing the French tradition (i.e., disrupting the symbolic system which centers it as a master-cuisine), Smart-Grosvenor elevates the marginalized creative agency of Black culinary tradition in relation to it.

For instance, a significant point of contact between Black American and French cuisines comes midway through *Vibration Cooking*, as Smart-Grosvenor offers a recipe for chitterlings. Writing against the hegemonic representation of chitterlings as a food that only southern Black Americans eat (thus, per the racializing textures of Culinary Man, rendering it a lower order of

¹¹⁰ Phillip Clark, “Beethoven Was Black: Why the Radical Idea Still Has Power Today.” *The Guardian*. March 7, 2020

¹¹¹ Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*, 57

cuisine), Smart-Grosvenor prefaces the recipe with an extended anecdote from her time in France. Smart-Grosvenor writes:

I was in this fancy restaurant in Paris and the people said, ‘Let us order, we know this place.’ You know the type...So these people order for me, and they are just on pins and needles, dying, really dying for me to taste this enjoyable rare dish. Well thank you Jesus the food arrives and it ain’t nothing but CHITTERLINGS in the form of a sausage. They call it *andouille*. Here is a recipe from Bill Larkins when he used to cook at Pee Wee’s...¹¹²

Smart-Grosvenor’s note above usefully describes an encounter with Culinary Man’s claims to epistemological, aesthetic, and technical mastery, tethered to the notion of Parisian haute cuisine as the apex of culinary activity. Smart-Grosvenor’s dining company took it upon themselves to order for her, which gestures toward the assumption that they might have access to an upper echelon of culinary taste (via familiarity with Culinary Man’s fine dining temples) and unknown aesthetic treasures. This critique of the hegemonic restaurant, and its supposed ability to generate cultural capital, is a consistent theme in Smart-Grosvenor’s work. Elsewhere, Smart-Grosvenor comments on her experiences as a diner, which include more explicitly racialized and gendered modes of treatment. For instance, Smart-Grosvenor notes: “restaurants, fancy ones in particular, are really guilty of that getting familiar routine. When I’m eating in a restaurant full of people, how come I’m honey, and they are sir or madam?”¹¹³ Additionally, Smart-Grosvenor critically probes the restaurant’s normative division of labor: “Especially, in the ‘best’ restaurants, I have noticed ‘racism in the kitchen’...The kitchen doors swing open, one can’t help but notice that the suds busters are dark too.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Ibid. 93

¹¹³ Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018),131

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 132. This passage resonates with the theme of racialized labor explored in chapters 1 and 2 as well.

Returning to the anecdote presented above, Smart-Grosvenor notably pairs her critical reading with a set of descriptive statements which challenge and counter Culinary Man's hegemonic discourse. Through drawing an equivalence between the southern American (and Black) Chitterling to the French andouille, Smart-Grosvenor redescribes the ostensibly particular genius of Culinary Man's aesthetics and places it into a broader context of human culinary activity. This move is parallel to Wynter's provincialization of Man's discursive monopoly over the category of humanity through her assertion that, contra hegemonic assertions, Man is actually one of many genres of the human (not "the" human).

Likewise, Smart-Grosvenor reveals the French tradition to be one of many varieties of culinary craft, and one whose creations mirror similar staples found within (and in many cases, derived from) non-European cuisines and traditions. Thus, Smart-Grosvenor's genre of vibration cooking works against the claims of Culinary Man which elevate the French tradition far above all others. Instead, Smart-Grosvenor's stated mission to demystify food produces a more democratic image of food and cooking while suggesting a shared human context that underpins particular traditions, style, and culinary modalities. Still, as explored in the next section, Smart-Grosvenor acutely offers a situated perspective which emanates vibrantly from her social position(s) and associated epistemic standpoints.

While the above critiques of the "commonsense" of French superiority seem to apply more to Culinary Man1 and Culinary Man2, Culinary Man3 is not immune from these challenges. For instance, while Andrés does not explicitly extol classical French (or Spanish) gastronomy within his work, which again focuses more on humanitarian applications, Culinary Man3's relationship between culinary knowledge and authority remains crucial. As Smart-Grosvenor's work demonstrates, Culinary Man's power stems less from the particular contents

of French cuisine (and the departures made by chefs like Achatz and Keller speak to this as well) and more from the disciplinary production of hegemonic subjectivity as a normative center within the brigade. Typically, Culinary Man makes use of the longevity and cultural capital of the French tradition, but this is not a necessary requirement for hegemony.

Even though Andrés differs from Culinary Man¹ and Culinary Man² in important ways, as explored above, his authority remains tied to articulations of technical mastery, logistical prowess, and culinary knowledge—all features of the hegemonic chef. Furthermore, the French sensibilities of Culinary Man have traditionally functioned to characterize normative culinary subjectivity as white, while establishing a racialized and colonial order of subordinated labor. As Berry and Mistry argue, colonial features remain very much present within Andrés's operations, largely due to the “missed opportunity” to involve more women and/or people of color (specifically, Puerto Ricans in the contexts explored above). This note is important within the context of Culinary Man's historical exclusion of people of color from the brigade's upper ranks (as explored in chapters 1 and 2, primarily). Smart-Grosvenor's work departs from these characteristics of Culinary Man in important ways, and as such it might be able to attend to Berry and Mistry's concerns.

Additionally, Smart-Grosvenor's work (and travels) brings her critiques of Euro-colonial culinary hegemony outside of the restaurant kitchen in ways which reveal Culinary Man's overrepresentation across the broader cultural field. Smart-Grosvenor's insight (and work to challenge Culinary Man) helps to keep visible figures like Andrés, who otherwise might be overlooked by a restaurant-centric analysis, and to recognize colonial, racialized, and gendered domination within the larger political context of western norms. For instance, Smart-Grosvenor's descriptions of the everyday forms of racialized discipline which she experienced as a diner or as

a traveler (such as the white woman's chastisement regarding Smart-Grosvenor's clothes) call attention to subtle forms of stratification. This eye for less overt modes of domination is particularly useful with regard to Andrés, whose hegemony does not rely on emphatic displays of tyranny so much as on minute practices of normative discipline.

Apart from relativizing the European claims of universal dominance, Smart-Grosvenor is able to access marginalized vantage points to illuminate important understandings about food, cooking, and political struggle. In addition to Smart-Grosvenor drawing from her identity as a Black, Geechee, Woman, she embraces the racialized and gendered position of the domestic cook, a figure located at a significant distance from Culinary Man's normative center within dominant culinary discourses, and she draws important political insight from this perspective.

Domestic Cooking: Continuity and Discontinuity

While Smart-Grosvenor is best known for *Vibration Cooking*, another text of hers, entitled *Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off*, offers a crucial counter-discourse to the white, male, and professionalized normativity of Culinary Man. This section explores how Smart-Grosvenor's work, which affirms the position of the domestic cook, can be read in critical relation to the forms of fine dining subjectivity explored in this study, beginning with Culinary Man's disavowal of the domestic cook. Fine dining discourse has a long tradition of striving to place distance between Culinary Man and the feminized, classed, and often racialized figure of the domestic worker. For instance, Escoffier offers:

high society held little esteem for the profession of the cook. This should never have been the case, for cooking is a science and an art, and one who puts all of his heart into satisfying his fellow man deserves recognition. For too long the kitchen chef has been ranked among domestic servants.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Escoffier, *Memories of My Life*, 8

In Wynterian terms, the Black, female, domestic cook occupies the deviant space of “the name of what is evil.”¹¹⁶ Put differently, it falls furthest away from Culinary Man’s normative center, and thus occupies a terrain of excluded perspective that nonetheless is capable of providing lucid critique, or what Wynter refers to as “demonic grounds.”¹¹⁷ Smart-Grosvenor’s *Thursdays...* takes up the domestic cook as an undervalued yet potent culinary subject with a substantive repertoire of creative techniques and knowledges. Thérèse Nelson contextualizes *Thursdays* by noting that all professional cooks within the U.S. were indeed classified as domestic workers prior to 1977. Relatedly, Nelson underscores the fact that “most of the people who cooked in restaurants during this time were Black and brown,” prior to a cultural shift toward a “deference to European aesthetics.”¹¹⁸ A Wynterian genealogical model would cite this discursive shift as a key moment in the development of Culinary Man within the United States which, per Nelson’s account, also resulted in an influx of white and European culinary workers into the newly revalued food industry. Nelson explains further:

at the precise moment America was learning how to dine like the French...hard-won civil rights were finally being afforded to Black cooks, giving them access to new professional opportunities outside of the kitchen. This created a culinary generation gap that made the subsequent white washing of food an easier task to accomplish. This fact becomes a powerful commentary on the struggle modern Black food creatives have had in making headway in an industry that seems to have a curiously short historical memory.¹¹⁹

Nelson’s description provides insight into the normative whiteness of Culinary Man, while further positioning Smart-Grosvenor’s text as a Wynterian counter-voice. She notes that

¹¹⁶ Wynter uses this term to describe the negative value placed on the embodied otherness of racialized and/or deviant subjects by Man’s normative discourse. Scott, “The Re-Enchantment”, 179

¹¹⁷ Sylvia Wynter. “Afterword: ‘Beyond Miranda’s Meanings: Un/silencing the ‘Demonic Ground’ of Caliban’s ‘Woman’” in *Out of the Kumbula: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Edited by Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 358

¹¹⁸ Thérèse Nelson, “Thursdays Off,” In *Black Food*. Edited by Bryant Terry, (New York, NY: 4Color Books, 2021), 12

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 12

“the clearest rebuttal to this historical amnesia is Dr. Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor’s lesser referenced 1972 work *Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off*.”¹²⁰ Theorizing from the terrain of the domestic, Smart-Grosvenor’s critical analysis is well positioned to locate the normative project of subordinating Black culinary labor as a broader societal phenomenon (and not just within restaurants).

For instance, Smart-Grosvenor begins *Thursdays* with an elucidation of the economic exploitation of domestic workers.¹²¹ This stratification is, of course, combined with an explicit racialization of menial work, which Smart-Grosvenor succinctly demonstrates by relaying another Black woman’s account of sitting in an employment office where “well-married white women were walking up and down looking at all of us trying to choose. It was like a slave market...”¹²² The sense of continuity drawn by reference to the slave market underscores the historical durability of white supremacist labor norms which, in line with Wynterian genealogy, remain consistent even while undergoing transformation. Rounding out the deviant “genre” of the domestic worker, Smart-Grosvenor comments on the distinctly gendered discourses which ascribe the sphere of the domestic/private to an arena of “women’s work.”

Writing from the demonic grounds constructed at the intersections of race, class, and gender, Smart-Grosvenor sums up: “Housework has always been the thing. When I was a little

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Smart-Grosvenor draws on a 1970 *New York Times* study which reports that: “of the one and a half million domestics, 82% had cash incomes of less than \$2000 a year, and 50% had less than \$1000.” Smart-Grosvenor, *Thursdays*, 7

¹²² Ibid. 7. Further, Smart-Grosvenor argues that the concept of “menial” is itself contextualized by race and power. Recalling an anecdote of walking with a friend who conveyed surprise at seeing a white man cleaning a building, Smart-Grosvenor writes: “well, 10 times out of 12, it’s not considered menial. Don’t nobody call him the janitor and I bet you he makes some good bucks, liability plus seniority, social security insurance and all the other benefits. Plus, he’s got a title. He’s called “Director of Property Maintenance.” Maintenance, housekeeping department, home technicians usually means white—benefits and good pay. Domestic usually means colored—low and no benefits. It’s all in a name?” Ibid. 8

girl, I never knew that Black women could have any other job (cepting show biz).”¹²³

Furthermore, and parallel to Wynter’s genealogy of Man, Smart-Grosvenor’s text also engages the history of the European system of representation which has relied on racialized conceptions of the division of labor. Smart-Grosvenor introduces a historical meditation on this phenomenon by noting: “More about the Moors. Europeans definitely had/have very definite images, ideas, myths, and roles for Moors. This section on Europe is a record of domestic service that culminates with the American experience of Black servitude.”¹²⁴

By drawing attention to the broader social milieu which subjugates Black, female labor, Smart-Grosvenor contextualizes the brigade’s racialized hierarchy. However, she is also able to demonstrate areas of discontinuity in which the domestic’s exploitation differs from the situation of brigade workers. Most obviously, the “on call” status of the domestic worker surpasses the kitchen’s demanding schedule. In addition to this, the duties of the domestic do not stop at the culinary but involve an expanded set of care-work duties. Smart-Grosvenor writes:

who wants to be in your house and be called on 24 hours a day?...When the W.F.’s [white folks] hire you, sure you have your own room, T.V., and your Thursdays and every other Sunday off, but after you finish cooking and serving the dinner, washing the dinner dishes, and putting the kids to bed, you’re too tired to hardly think about getting the train or bus into town. You can’t go out to the cocktail lounge for a drink. Did you ever see a domestic hanging out in the evening in your local cocktail lounge?¹²⁵

Smart-Grosvenor’s note outlines the state of enervation which results from the hyper-exploitative working day of the domestic worker. The passage’s concluding line can be read as a distinct departure from many of the normative narratives of restaurant workers congregating at bars after work. For instance, Bourdain describes the ritualized trip to the bar after a long day of

¹²³ Ibid. 9

¹²⁴ Ibid. 114

¹²⁵ Ibid. 8

culinary work as an anecdote to lingering adrenaline by noting that “I’m thinking about going home, but I know I’ll just lie there, grinding my teeth and smoking. I tell the cabbie to take me to the corner of 50th and Broadway...”¹²⁶ In fact, due to the particular working hours of the restaurant worker, late night bar visits can often become one of the only forms of sociality with others which is regularly available. An essay by Austin Harvey entitled “I’m in a Toxic Relationship with the Restaurant Industry. Help” captures this dynamic—and its potential underside—succinctly:

If you like the people you’re working with, they can make it all seem worthwhile. The late nights after work sitting around, having a beer, and talking just to *unwind* can create some of the fondest memories. But there’s a negative side to this, as well. Restaurant culture breeds toxicity even in its friendliest forms. Sure, having one beer after work seems harmless, but when that turns into three or four or five *every night* because you *need to unwind*? It isn’t healthy. There’s always the option to simply go home, shower, and go to bed but it becomes isolating and anti-social, lonely in an environment that is entirely reliant on hospitality and socialization.¹²⁷

While Harvey’s note can help underscore the set of normalized rhythms that help to compose brigade subjectivity—inside and outside of the kitchen—even this habit of minor relief becomes legible as a form of (relative) privilege when read against Smart-Grosvenor’s note. Bourdain further describes the culinary sociality that occurs after work in which cooks meet with “others in the field who share their particular half-lives, people who understand what they’ve accomplished and endured during the last ten or twelve or seventeen hours, and who don’t mind the lingering scent of smoked salmon or garlic.”¹²⁸ It stands to reason that domestic cooks *could* also share with Bourdain’s cooks some understanding of the enervating, taxing, and undercompensated work of food service. If one could picture Smart-Grosvenor’s improbable

¹²⁶ Ibid. 202

¹²⁷ Austin Harvey, “I’m in a Toxic Relationship with the Restaurant Industry. Help.” *Medium.com*, 2020.

¹²⁸ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*, 89

image of the exhausted domestic worker out at the same dive bar as Bourdain on a Saturday night, what forms of culinary solidarity might potentially emerge? While there are clearly differences which characterize these respective culinary workers, there seem to be potential areas of overlap, collaboration, and solidarity as well.

However, the possibility for such an archipelagic connection between domestic cooks and restaurant workers seems at times precluded for at least two major reasons. Firstly, as stated above, Culinary Man's articulation of the field of brigade subjectivity "stops" at the doors of the kitchen. Put differently, the sense of self constructed by Culinary Man's disciplinary and discursive practices does not imagine domestic workers as part of the broader community of culinary laborers. If it imagines them at all, domestic workers appear mostly as the negation which the professional brigade cook is distinguished against. Even Bourdain, who is often a more archipelagic commentator than many, offers a conception of the "subculture of cooks" that is almost always articulated in terms of restaurant employment.¹²⁹

Secondly, as Smart-Grosvenor's work makes clear, the domestic cook and the restaurant worker do not share the same conditions of stratification. Throughout various fine dining discourses and memoirs, there is sometimes a tendency to compare the difficult life of the restaurant cook/chef with more intensive forms of exploitation and servitude, which omit or bypass important discussion of particular forms of social stratification (race, gender, and so on) that undergird these forms of subordination. For instance, Bourdain describes the dynamics of

¹²⁹ See Bourdain's reflections on his own work, such as his note that "what I set out to do was write a book that my fellow cooks and restaurant lifers would find entertaining and true." Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*, xiii. And "I didn't really know how true this was—or how universal—until I began to travel...or that 'this thing of ours'—the subculture of cooks—was so international." Ibid. 306. While Bourdain's later media endeavors (television shows mostly) often strove to engage non-fine dining and sometimes non-restaurant cooks, Bourdain's descriptive statements of the cook remain heavily tied to the professional (restaurant) cook as a primary point of reference.

restaurant employment by noting the inequality between workers and patrons, writing: “We are the backstairs help. We are in the *service* industry, meaning that when rich people come into our restaurants, we cook for them...the people in our dining rooms are different from us. We are *the other thing*.”¹³⁰ Bourdain’s Manichean description infuses a sense of otherness into brigade subjectivity which informs the affect of culinary labor. However, this description feels a bit off the mark when compared with Smart-Grosvenor’s account of the deeply racialized, gendered, and hyper-exploited existence of the domestic cook, as explored below. On this point, Marco Pierre White is even more flagrant with his repeated recourse to “slavery” to describe the difficulties of the restaurant life.¹³¹

While an archipelagic sensibility would endeavor to examine the domestic cook and the restaurant worker’s respective conditions of life in such a manner that would appreciate areas of overlap (which furthermore might form grounds for solidarity), the discontinuities also matter. Bourdain’s above note about “the backstairs help” does perhaps capture some sense of alienation present within the restaurant. However, reading Smart-Grosvenor on the same point provides a sense of continuity, while crucially outlining the sharply different social histories, forms of violence and exclusion, and political stakes which distinguish the racialized domestic worker from Culinary Man. Smart-Grosvenor writes: “it’s a common thing for colored folks to be told by a doorman to go to the service entrance. What is a service entrance? How come the people who wash your clothes, cook your food, care for your child got to enter a separate door?”¹³²

¹³⁰ Bourdain, *Nasty Bits*: 19

¹³¹ See White’s reference to cooks as “the slaves of the stove,” for instance. White, *Devil*, 219. Or that his memoir, “Devil in the Kitchen...” was first published in the U.K. under the title “White Slave.”

¹³² Smart-Grosvenor, *Thursday*, 13

Smart-Grosvenor's more historically grounded descriptive statement of what it means to be considered "the backstairs help" underscores the Wynterian point that the Black female domestic cook is considered less human in ways that Culinary Man does not generally experience. However, while the two reasons listed above seem to preclude Culinary Man and the racialized domestic worker from finding common grounds for solidarity, this is not necessarily the case with regard to members of the subordinated brigade. The sense of stratification, particularly along gendered and racialized lines, experienced by the domestic worker would seem to be quite resonant with the experiences of those relegated to the "bottom rungs" of the brigade's hierarchy (such as some of the cases explored in chapters 1, 2, and 3). Furthermore, the difference in material conditions (between the labor and responsibilities of domestic work and those of the restaurant worker) may not be an insurmountable gap with regard to projects of solidarity building.

For instance, Bourdain's description of feeling like "the backstairs help," while subject to the critique offered above, offers a starting point for assembling points of resonance—not identical experiences—between these respective groups, particularly among those at the lower levels of the brigade.¹³³ Furthermore, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, a sense of solidarity has emerged across otherwise unrelated sectors of food service due in part to their shared inclusion in the emergent category of "essential work," and because of the subsequent expectation to continue laboring under hazardous conditions. The pandemic prompted novel

¹³³ In other words, the experiences of the racialized and gendered dishwasher, such as "Alejandra" from the first chapter would have quite a bit in common with the domestic worker and the shared affect of feeling like "the help," even if an imperfect analog, gestures toward these points of similarity. In some sense, the dishwasher fits in something of a "domestic" role within the kitchen as both are reflections of Man's investments in white, male authority and privilege. Recall that Orwell, as quoted in chapter one, articulates this positioning: "Theirs [dishwashers] is a job which offers no prospects, is intensely exhausting, and at the same time has not a trace of skill or interest; the sort of job that would always be done by women if women were strong enough." Orwell, *Down and Out*, 76-77

forms of collective deliberation (pertaining to working conditions, wages, safety, and so on) within particular restaurants as well as more broadly across the food service industry.¹³⁴

There are indeed parallel dimensions between the subjectivity of certain brigade members and the position of the domestic cook. Subjugated brigade members would likely find Smart-Grosvenor's framework to be a more resonant account of culinary labor than much of what is offered by Culinary Man's normative discourse. Thus, pursuing the affective, analytic, and narrative resources offered by Smart-Grosvenor could imbue a more collective and politicized form of subjectivity among stratified members of the brigade. Smart-Grosvenor expands on these themes in ways which bring the domestic cook into contact with key discussions found within the field of Black critical and Black Feminist political thought. For instance, Smart-Grosvenor elaborates on the theme of racialized servitude in a way which resonates with Black Feminist critiques of 1st wave feminism's overly white field of representation. Smart-Grosvenor asks: "is there enough money to rent a slave? Cause that's what it is....Is there enough money to send for a girl from the South or the Islands, or, as of late South America, to keep house for you, mind your overindulged brat, what you go to Women's Lib meetings?"¹³⁵ Notably, this critique also articulates the globalized dimensions of domestic work and identifies the geographic distribution

¹³⁴ For an example of Covid-19 prompting collective discussion and organization on the part of line cooks, see Debbie Chase. "Why Line Cooks Like Me Aren't Going Back." *Jacobin*. Issue No. 42(2021). For a discussion of the wider links between cooks, across differences in particular industry or field. For a discussion of the pandemic's prompting of new evaluations of the food service industry, see also Rebecca Cho, "The Decision to Stay in Restaurants." *Line Cook Thoughts Blog* (2021). Cho writes: "The pandemic truly unleashed the structural and core issues of the food and beverage world and as amazing as the progress has been we have yet to scratch the surface."

¹³⁵ Ibid. 9. Smart-Grosvenor's critique of the racialized economy of service work which provides the conditions of possibility for more socially privileged, generally white, women to attend feminist meetings resonates with important critical accounts offered within the Black Feminist tradition. For instance, bell hooks opens a critical reading of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* by noting: "She[Friedan] did not discuss who would be called in to take care of the children and maintain the home if more women like herself were freed from their house labor and given equal access with white men to the professions...she did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure class housewife." bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*,(Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984) 1-2

of labor which undergirds care work within white, western contexts. Smart-Grosvenor's discussion recalls the restaurant's racialized division of labor, which also profits from vulnerabilities associated with immigration and global inequality, as explored in chapters 1 and 2.

Indeed, Smart-Grosvenor's insistence on a global context informs much of her analysis. Throughout *Thursdays*, she collects different narrative accounts of domestic work into an archipelagic framework which emphasizes a common demand for social liberation. Smart-Grosvenor introduces a slew of experiential narratives of exploitation and degradation by noting: "I hate to demystify the myth that we loved working for them, but the following stories are true. All over the planet, the desire to leave massa's service was never far from Beulah, Delcie, Lillie Mae or Sophie's mind."¹³⁶ Smart-Grosvenor's engagement with this desire for freedom extends directly from the explicitly political set of descriptive statements that characterize her account of domestic culinary subjectivity. The intentional refutation of the myth of docile domestic labor offers an important departure from Culinary Man's hegemonic subjectivity (which, as we saw, explicitly seeks to construct docile workers).

For Smart-Grosvenor, a sense of possibility for resistance always lingers within the intensive forms of subjugation encountered by the domestic worker. In the context of the historical continuity that exists between enslaved Black Americans and domestic workers,¹³⁷ Smart-Grosvenor draws from accounts of enslaved resistance, bricolage, and rebellion.¹³⁸ Offering a method of reading "against the grain" with regard to archival sources, Smart-

¹³⁶ Smart-Grosvenor, *Thursdays*, 45

¹³⁷ This theme of continuity, as explored above, is continually articulated by Smart-Grosvenor's descriptions of the domestic worker as a "rented slave."

¹³⁸ These include "stealing food" to share with family for subsistence, Ibid. 58, 74, and weaponizing food, with the use of poison, against plantation owners. Ibid. 92

Grosvenor writes: “There are many, many recorded cases of acts of rebellion among house [enslaved workers]. If there are many, MANY recorded, you know how many are off the record.”¹³⁹ This tradition of rebellion against Man informs Smart-Grosvenor’s articulation of domestic culinary subjectivity (again, infusing it with a descriptive statement which emphasizes the capacity for collective resistance). This tradition of culinary rebellion could also provide a valuable resource (with regard to cultivating alternative modes of subjectivity) for subjugated brigade members.

Furthermore, Smart-Grosvenor weaves historical reflection on enslaved uprisings into a contemporary account of political organizing among domestic workers. The text concludes on a note of archipelagic possibility which describes the formal organizational assembly between a newly formed household worker’s union and the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.¹⁴⁰ In sum, Smart-Grosvenor’s descriptive statement of the Black, generally female domestic culinary worker offers a mode of subjectivity which critically analyses its subjugation by Man and organizes collectively for liberation. These points of emphasis infuse a sense of politicized agency that departs significantly from Culinary Man’s brigade subjectivity which allows no deviation from its central gastronomic mission.

Archipelagic Culinary Subjectivity

The brief exploration of Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor’s work above illuminates the possibility of radically different modes of culinary subjectivity which can challenge Culinary

¹³⁹ Ibid. 89

¹⁴⁰ Smart-Grosvenor emphasizes the overlapping epistemological standpoint shared by both unions, each largely comprised of Black workers whose experiences of racialized stratification inform their political organizing work. Smart- Grosvenor writes: “For the Household Workers Union Is composed largely of Black membership. And, having come through the struggle for recognition many years ago, who better than the Sleeping Car Porters, also mainly Black, knows of the racial prejudices, the servile conditions, the ridiculous wages and a host of other ills that the domestics are working under.” Ibid. 151

Man's normative image of the cook. The non-prescriptive, affective, and experimental genre of cuisine promoted by vibration cooking preserves a sense of open space through which culinary subjects might more actively define themselves, as opposed to being rigidly formed through the brigade's normalizing discourse and habitual practice. Within her elaboration of this open philosophy, Smart-Grosvenor provincializes French cuisine and demystifies cooking, returning it to the general domain of creative human activity. Furthermore, Smart-Grosvenor's recentering of the commonly erased and demeaned figure of the domestic cook opens up histories (including contemporary histories) of struggle, resistance, and collective organization which invite culinary subjectivity to reflect on these insurgent traditions. On Smart-Grosvenor's accounts, food presents a relational technology of resistance, survival, and care within the hostile context of Man's overrepresentation.

Notably, Smart-Grosvenor's sensibilities around collective organizing depart from Culinary Man's articulation of the brigade, but they are not unprecedented within the restaurant kitchen. For instance, Pete Jordan, whose work as a traveling dishwasher was explored in chapter 1, recalls his excitement at learning of a 1930 labor strike carried out by New York dishwashers. Jordan writes: "The bits of history that I was uncovering fascinated me...decades before I ever picked up the scrub brush, pearl divers[dishwashers] were in the streets battling for their rights...Absolutely remarkable! Their legacy needed to be honored."¹⁴¹ Jordan's statement speaks to the history of restaurant labor organizing (limited as it may be), as well as to the effects on his own subjectivity which emerged from engaging and discovering this history. Additionally, Jacques Pepin, who organized a mass walkout at the famed New York Franco-American restaurant *Le Pavillon*, writes: "In France, such events were so common that there was a special

¹⁴¹ Jordan, *Dishwasher*, 178

term denotating when an entire kitchen brigade quit: *la brigade saute*—“the brigade explodes”¹⁴² Pepin’s narration (and the existence of the phrase itself) also points to the already existing forms of organizing and resistance which, although part of western culinary history, are obfuscated by Culinary Man’s description of the normative cook. Pepin expands upon this theme by offering an important counter description of the cook, noting that

my training as a chef had taught me that being a chef—no matter where—was a blue collar job. Period. A respected job, to be sure, but there was not much difference between a short-order cook at a corner diner and a cook at Le Pavillon; both were just working stiffs in my eyes. For that matter, at this time in New York, so were the dishwashers, who were in the same union as the chefs.¹⁴³

Pepin’s description offers additional evidence of the history of collective organizing within fine dining spaces. Crucially, Pepin also describes the culinary worker in more general and inclusive terms, thus opening space for solidarity across different kinds of culinary positions. The examples listed above, as well as more contemporary instances of collective resistance,¹⁴⁴ make clear that Smart-Grosvenor’s work (which speaks to racialized and gendered subjugation in more explicit ways than Pepin and others) can impact the fine dining tradition in a manner which could imbue brigade subjectivity with a more collective and political disposition.

¹⁴² Pepin, *The Apprentice*, 145. While the mass walkout was eventually abandoned due to intimidation from men who Pepin implies to be connected to organized crime, Pepin notes that the brigade simply shifted to more subtle forms of resistance within the kitchen. Pepin writes “but there was no way they could force us to work overtime. Or make us work if we were sick or keep us from ignoring an order from the dining room that required careful, very lengthy preparation. And there was no way they could prevent us from leaving one by one, which we did.” Ibid. 146.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 153

¹⁴⁴ For example, see the work of the organization, “One Fair Wage,” which works to improve wages for restaurant workers. Relatedly, the organizing work of Tsehaitu Abye within restaurants or the recent unionization struggles within the “Tartine Bakery” in San Francisco constitute more specific examples of collective resistance within the kitchen. Abye’s work and the Tartine unionization both have explicitly mobilized the restaurant’s subordinated population of women, undocumented workers and workers of color to organize collectively. For further discussion of this, see Osuna, Katy “Demystifying Collective Action.” *Copper and Heat* (podcast, 2021), and Osuna, Katy, “Tartine Union: A Case Study” *Copper and Heat* (podcast, 2021).

There are, of course, other subjugated, ignored, or otherwise non-hegemonic culinary traditions which speak to these issues and can offer alternatives to Culinary Man. In other words, Smart-Grosvenor's model is one of many potential ways of cultivating culinary subjectivity outside of Culinary Man's normative image of the brigadier. Recalling the Wynterian notion of the "archipelagic," as laid out in the introductory chapter, one could collect many different approaches to food and cooking under the loose banner of an archipelagic culinary theory. Key features of this concept would emphasize culinary modalities which sustain the tendencies toward relationality, connection, and political critique while continually pursuing liberatory horizons beyond Man's overrepresentation. Attempting to fully map out the constellation of possibilities beyond Culinary Man (including historical, extant, and future modalities) greatly surpasses the scope of this work, which is more concerned with taking the initial step of offering a critical theorization of Culinary Man.

An additional concluding example offered by Ntozake Shange reveals important connections to Smart-Grosvenor's work around the themes of care, relationality, dispossession, and marginalization. It also engages a non-prescriptive, narrative methodology. Shange's recipe (detailed below) is notable for providing an additional vision of archipelagic cooking practices. Smart-Grosvenor, who contributed the foreword to Shange's book, describes Shange's text/recipe as a work which "reminds us of those culinary connections and expands our culinary horizons."¹⁴⁵

Shange narrates her recipe for "Cousin Eddie's Shark with Breadfruit":

First, let your favorite fisherman know that you a-lookin' for him to bring ya a good sturdy shark, but not too big unless you expectin' all the family from Port-of-Spain

¹⁴⁵ Ntozake Shange, *If I Can Cook/ You Know God Can*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998): xiv

and San Fernando to show up. See if he can't find somebody to share the shark with ya so ya don't waste the meat. Have him get one of his men to clean it for ya, they'll only be lookin' for a bit of change, ya see. Let them fillet it as well—be sure to mention that. Shark is not the easiest fish to chop up. I can tell ya that. Okay, wash it off really well. If the water has been turned off for the day, make sure you're at Lower Village Pump in time to get enough to boil 1 large breadfruit and 4-5 green bananas. Water won't come back, if it's been shut off, till after you want all your cookin' done with.

Okay, baste your $\frac{3}{4}$ inch shark meat in some coconut oil and a dash of Girley's pepper sauce. Oil the grill too, so your shark don't stick, fall apart. Then, season the shark with garlic, if you choose. But don't use too many things. Set your shark on the broiler for no more than 5-6 minutes. It's not goin'ta turn all brown now, but a honey color, to my mind. Take it off the grill and cover so them safe from fly and other pest.

Now in a large pot full of boiling water, set your green bananas (with peels) and breadfruit slices. You've peeled and seeded the breadfruit already. Don't be afraid when it changes to a blood red color, that's the mourning of our ancestors, hungry for us to live now. Okay, now boil these up in your water with some cilantro, garlic, onion, and pepper to taste. When they are easily pierced by your fork, they are ready to eat. That's how I do it and me mohda before that.¹⁴⁶

There are many important themes within Shange's recipe which offer sharp departures from the sensibilities of Culinary Man as well as mark the recipe as an explicitly political text. Shange's opening notes on procuring shark meat, for instance, approach the problems of waste, portion size, and economy which Culinary Man's brigade system is also, in large part, designed to combat.¹⁴⁷ Importantly, Shange economizes scarcity not through a productivist mastery¹⁴⁸—in the manner in which haute cuisine chefs devise ways to commodify otherwise wasted materials, for example, pickling and selling kale stems, and so on—but rather through the foregrounding of a politics of care grounded in relationality (with the favorite fisherman, extended family/potential guests, and whoever else might take part in the shark) and communal sharing. Similarly, Shange's notes about seeking help with fabricating the shark meat evinces a sense of humility that can be sharply contrasted to Culinary Man's sense of mastery. For

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 30

¹⁴⁷ In the sense that the brigade is designed to economize resources. More critical views would likely find the restaurant to be a project with generally high levels of waste.

¹⁴⁸ A notable dimension of Wynter's Man2 is his role as a "masterer of scarcity." Wynter "Unsettling," 321

instance, Shange's admission that shark meat is indeed difficult to chop strikes a significantly different chord than the bravado of Michael Ruhlman's statement that "put that [knowledge of the 7 "official" cooking techniques and the 5 tastes] with *mise en place*, and there's nothing in the kitchen that you can't do."¹⁴⁹

Shange's text develops a personalized and vibrant sense of voice through its place/culture-specific grammar, spellings, and references. An embodied presence, such as Shange's, is not generally emphasized or included in the normative practices of recipe writing. This narrative style resonates with Smart-Grosvenor's vibration methodology. As a point of comparison with institutional culinary knowledge production, the Culinary Institute of America's official directives for recipe writing are restricted to more technical elements such as yield information, precise ingredient measures, preparation steps, critical points of temperature and/or time sensitive handling procedures, and so on.¹⁵⁰

Eschewing the more universal voice of Culinary Man's best practices for writing, Shange's text/recipe speaks directly to the kinds of political-economic conditions which might limit access to water. This consideration is clearly an important one for Shange and presumably for many of those whom she seeks to speak and connect to via this recipe. Along the same lines of engaging community (particularly, vulnerable, dispossessed, or marginalized ones), Shange's recipe contains a certain democratic sensibility in that it explicitly reserves space for the reader's preferences and choices (for example, season with garlic "if you choose"). Again, this recalls Smart-Grosvenor's emphasis on vibration affectivity.

This non-authoritative style of direction steers clear of the language of epistemological mastery characteristic of normative culinary subjectivity (for example, the color of the cooked

¹⁴⁹ Ruhlman, "Mise en Place": 8min, 30 sec.

¹⁵⁰ The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) *The Professional Chef, 9th edition*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & 2011), 15

meat is relativized by noting “to my mind”), although Shange is still providing guidance for cooking the dish. Notably, in a move which straddles tradition and heterogeneity, Shange’s illustration leaves space for alternative methods of preparation while still remaining faithful to the set of familial relations which produced this particular recipe. Shange’s concluding note on following her mother’s example as well as the poetic warning about the forthcoming blood red color preserve a deep set of social connections, political memory, and ancestral continuity.

Political theorist Kennan Ferguson has argued that cookbooks should provide models of political authority.¹⁵¹ Shange’s less prescriptive style, her humility, and her non-hegemonic subjective positioning potentially offer a different model of political authority. Crucially, they constitute significant departures from Culinary Man’s style of writing, cooking, and governing that can open up new political possibilities. These features, alongside those found in Smart-Grosvenor’s work, may well provide key elements for a more archipelagic culinary world. The concluding chapter summarizes the preceding explorations and examinations of Culinary Man with an open-ended reflection on the potential horizons which might emerge beyond Man.

¹⁵¹ Kennan Ferguson, *Cookbook Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 8

Conclusion: Beyond Culinary Man

In this concluding chapter, I attempt to contribute a few initial thoughts toward theorizing alternative culinary formations which might emerge beyond Man. The central goal of this dissertation has been to provide a mapping of Culinary Man's hegemonic overrepresentation. This project has been intended as a preliminary step toward making space for alternative culinary formations and subjectivities to emerge. While I do not seek to authoritatively decide what culinary futures beyond Man should look like, this chapter nonetheless begins to move toward that horizon by imagining some archipelagic possibilities involving the emergent visibility of non-Eurocentric culinary traditions (seemingly freed from marginalization by Culinary Man). This chapter concludes with a consideration for a few alternative culinary institutions, including one based on an anecdotal case study.

Emergent Marginalized Traditions

As has been explored throughout the preceding chapters, Culinary Man's hegemony leaves very little space within the culinary field for other forms of cooking, particularly in the restaurant setting. This is even more so for culinary modalities which deviate from the white, male, and haute-cuisine European tradition. Thus, if Culinary Man were to relinquish the monopolistic central position which "he" currently occupies, marginal traditions both extant and novel might become more legible within the restaurant kitchen, as well as within the broader gastronomic landscape. This could potentially free the restaurant from Culinary Man's hegemony, although, as discussed below, some risks seem apparent as well. It is impossible to describe in advance all of the possible forms of culinary activity which might rise to visibility

should Culinary Man's hegemony be challenged, but there is perhaps some indication that this kind of shift has already begun to take place.¹ This section examines some of the changing discourses within fine dining which may present certain forms of deviation from the field's tradition of staunchly Eurocentric preferences. However, as is also explored below, these discursive shifts retain strong limitations. Namely, many of the new challenges focus on expanding access to the elite positions within the fine dining kitchen and, in doing so, they leave the brigade system unchallenged. Apart from failing to provide amelioration for the vast majority of stratified and marginalized culinary workers, the move to infuse chef subjectivity with modest measures of diversity and inclusion may also help to sustain Culinary Man's hegemony in the face of rising challenges.

While fine dining remains largely dominated by white male chefs who resemble Culinary Man (in one of its three main forms), there has been a notable influx of non-white and non-male chefs who have risen to prominence more recently. For instance, in 2019, John Eligion and Julia Moskin outlined sixteen Black chefs whom the authors credit with changing food in America while receiving overdue recognition. Eligion and Moskin described this emergent group of chefs as a "new vanguard working to make sure that its ascent is more than a passing moment."² While Eligion and Moskin's assertion of overshadowing (in favor of white chefs) is certainly correct, the phrasing of "vanguard" seems implicitly to suggest a movement which, while deviating from Culinary Man's normative whiteness, retains a hierarchical structure. More recently, in the wake of the highly visible killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd in 2020, popular discourse within the United States has included more emphasis on systemic racism and

¹ This point, explored more toward the end of this chapter, refers to mounting critiques of the fine dining paradigm.

² John Eligion, Julia, Moskin., "16 Black Chefs Changing Food in America." *New York Times*. July 16, 2019.

social justice concerns. The culinary industry has also been subject to these discourses and critiques. Texts such as Marcus Samuelsson and Osayi Endolyn's *The Rise* have emerged to respond to the contemporary racial conjuncture as well as to the long running forms of appropriation, erasure, and disavowal which have largely characterized mainstream (western and white) food culture's relationship with Black culinary traditions.

In the preface to *The Rise*, Samuelsson writes: "The contributions of Black people in this country have always been under documented and undervalued. We can change that narrative. And we must."³ By telling different stories, both through prose profiles of prominent Black food workers as well as through recipes, Samuelsson and Endolyn seek to offer a new descriptive statement (of the culinary industry and field) which can more accurately capture the creative agency of Black culinarians within the United States who often have been written out of Culinary Man's hegemonic narrative. Samuelsson further notes that

The Rise was created to highlight the incredible talent and journey of Black chefs, culinarians, and writers at work today, and to show how the stories we tell can make a more equitable, just industry. I hope this work, and this moment, leads to us raising up Black winemakers, authors, and farmers. I hope it leads to us supporting the next generation of Black chefs and hospitality workers who will change our industry forever. And I hope that this movement becomes a part of a permanent and much broader social change.⁴

Indeed, *The Rise* spotlights numerous Black food professionals whose work has been overshadowed or ignored within some of the most celebrated fine dining restaurants, such as David Zilber (Noma), Eric Gestel (Le Bernadin), and Eduardo Jordan (The French Laundry). Again, while the assertion that these chefs have been eclipsed by their more famous white

³ Marcus Samuelsson, with Osayi Endolyn, *The Rise: Black Cooks and the Soul of American Food*, (New York, NY: Little Brown Books, 2020), xv.

⁴ *Ibid.* xv

counterparts is correct, the focus does not stray far from the echelons of fine dining where, of course, the brigade prevails. As a result, it is not obvious that increasing visibility for certain Black *chefs* will address the broader marginalization of Black people's culinary contributions, as emphasized in Samuelsson's preface.

Additionally, the text highlights Black chefs who direct their own restaurants and, thus, are better able to deviate from the Eurocentric aesthetic norms of fine dining. For example, Eduardo Jordan opened his own restaurant after his tenure at the French Laundry, and he now credits his newfound prominence with providing him a vantage point from which to challenge hegemonic culinary norms. Jordan recalls a childhood memory of feeling alienated from his white classmates due to his love of chitlins, noting:

I kinda stopped talking about it. It was the food we ate. I enjoyed it. But I turned my back on chitlins and never brought it up to anyone again... Things are different now... I have the ability to educate people, to embrace this food, and to re-experience it in my own manner. Being able to cook dishes that my mom and my grandmother cooked is pretty damn cool.⁵

Becoming a head chef-restaurantier allowed for Jordan to redescribe traditional Black southern food in a way which deviates from hegemonic white judgement, while also forging affective connections to familial relations in a manner resonant with Smart-Grosvenor's and Shange's works explored in chapter 5. Similarly, chef Nyesha Arrington's restaurant, *Native*, features dishes from her Black southern and Korean heritage.⁶ *The Rise* profiles numerous additional chefs of color whose status as executives and owners enables them to feature non-European traditions as primary modes of cooking. Interestingly, many of the chefs featured

⁵ Eduardo Jordan, In Samuelsson, *The Rise*, 13

⁶ *Ibid.* 103.

retain some connection to the French tradition as well.⁷ While these chefs sometimes utilize this body of gastronomic technique (Arrington is a good example of this), it often lacks the exalted status which appears in Culinary Man's discourse.⁸ This move seems resonant with Wynter's imperative to combat Man's overrepresentation by relativizing Man as simply one of many forms of the human, rather than as normative model of the human itself.⁹ However, while this might constitute a decent starting place for a challenge, the incorporation of non-European cuisines into fine dining does not, in itself, disrupt Culinary Man's hegemony and/or the brigade form.

Mashama Bailey, chef and partner at *The Grey* in Savannah, Georgia, presents a unique perspective on the relationship between Black food and French tradition. Expounding upon fine dining's racialized representational deficit, Bailey notes: "[Black food] being represented in the restaurants was important to me because it meant that no one was really eating our food. I never thought of Black cooking as cooking that could sustain a fine dining restaurant...because I didn't see it."¹⁰ Here, Bailey succinctly describes Culinary Man's overrepresentation within the restaurant, although it is, again, not clear that enhancing aesthetic diversity within fine dining menus will upset the brigade's labor form.

Bailey further describes traveling to France for an externship and discovering points of resonance between Black food and French cooking. Bailey writes: "There was a line between how my grandmother cooked and how these grandmothers in France cooked. That's when I

⁷ Often this is the result of undergoing institutional education (culinary school) in the west.

⁸ Arrington's recipes and dishes feature elements of French technique, and she was the first female finalist in the prestigious French "Bocuse d'Or" competition (sometimes referred to as the "Culinary Olympics", representing the U.S. team in 2021. Still, French technique is one of several culinary resources which Arrington and other contemporary Black chefs utilize, rather than being a "master" technique.

⁹ Wynter, McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 31

¹⁰ Mashama Bailey, in Samuelsson, *The Rise*, 225

realized that my family had something to say in the culinary world.”¹¹ Jacques Pepin offers a similar observation from an inverted perspective as he recounts his first days in New York as a recently arrived immigrant. Pepin was unable to find certain staples of the French tradition (namely, offal) until he happened upon a small grocery store in Harlem where, despite his inability to speak English, he was delighted to find kidneys, liver, sweetbreads, and so on. Pepin concludes:

it seemed that the culinary African American culture had common roots with French country cuisine. Both traditions originated among poor rural people who wasted nothing. Everything had to be used, and over time, the resulting dishes became part of a culinary tradition. I may not have been able to converse with these people, but I felt an immediate affinity for their way of looking at food.¹²

While there are, of course, particular differences between these two traditions (and the historical experiences associated with their respective emergences), both Pepin’s and Bailey’s accounts speak to something like an archipelagic relationship. That is, a set of horizontal resonances seems to exist across Black American foodways and certain French traditions. By contrast, Culinary Man’s discourse tends to collapse all forms of French cooking into Haute or Parisian fare—which, crucially, necessitate the brigade form—and then to elevate this cuisine above all other gastronomic forms. When Bailey opened *The Grey*, she “tried to link [together] her family’s seasonal cooking, her time in France (and later Italy), and her training in New York.”¹³ While Bailey’s experimentation resulted in the eclectic assemblage of several traditions, her primary grounding remained in her family’s Black, southern cooking. With regard to her culinary school training, classical French knowledge, and other “professional white ways of

¹¹ Ibid. 225

¹² Pepin, *The Apprentice*, 144

¹³ Ibid. 225

cooking,” Bailey reports that “none of it impressed her grandmother.”¹⁴ This commentary, particularly the focus on Bailey’s grandmother’s decidedly non-professional (non-brigade) sensibilities, offers the potential to move discursively beyond Culinary Man by centering marginalized Black culinary forms as well making visible some of the French tradition(s) which are eclipsed by haute cuisine. Unfortunately, it would seem that *The Grey* constitutes instead an attempt to ameliorate the brigade’s form, rather than a way to deviate from it.¹⁵

Many of the expositions featured in *The Rise*, such as those above, describe the different forms of engagement with “classical” fine dining traditions through which chefs of color have been able to make interventions into Culinary Man’s field of discourse (and the restaurant more broadly). However, the comingling of Black (and other non-European) culinary traditions with the fine dining restaurant might present risks of appropriation or incorporation *into* Culinary Man’s hegemonic field, rather than a disruption of it. For instance, Jason Sheehan contributes an illuminating mediation on French cuisine which demonstrates the subtle forms of domination or lingering coloniality which might inhabit culinary approaches to “fusion.” Describing a newly developed menu, Sheehan writes: “it wasn’t just French, but French *colonial*, which we thought of as a stroke of genius...French colonial was truth told in food; was the record of food’s travels on the back of politics, war, and national expansion. Thus, ours would be a French menu that allowed for excursions into Vietnamese and Southwest Asian cuisines.”¹⁶ While Sheehan insists

¹⁴ Ibid. 225

¹⁵ The restaurant’s website lists a “staffing philosophy” which reads as follows: “The Grey is committed to success by providing the restaurant’s team with the tools required to achieve that success. The Grey has not only been building a competent staff but creating a family of like-minded professionals to whom self-reliance and teamwork go hand-in-hand. This manifests itself as a great working environment of which we are all proud...” Additionally, the job application listed on the website allows potential applicants to designate positions which correspond to the traditional brigade form (dishwasher, prep, line cook, etc.). *The Grey Restaurant.com*

¹⁶ Jason Sheehan, *Cooking Dirty*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2009), 168

that his menu offers the appropriated dishes “their own places of honor,” the explicit embrace of coloniality troubles his rosy celebration. Continuing the description, Sheehan notes

there would be hints of North Africa, touches of the Caribbean. If one could imagine a French chef packing his kit one day back in, say, the early 1950s and traveling for years to every corner of the world where a French flag flew, ours would be the menu he came back with. There was *pho* on the menu; there was *tagine*, couscous and jasmine rice alongside *steak-frites*...¹⁷

An uncritical embrace of inclusion as an antidote to histories of imperial violence and appropriation undergirds Sheehan’s celebration of colonized people’s cuisine on an otherwise French menu. While likely well meaning, Sheehan’s colonial cuisine demonstrates the type of work that inclusion can actually do to alleviate critical pressure on hegemony. Wynter’s work highlights the fact that Man has frequently responded to moments of contestation by adapting and folding these ruptures back into hegemony.¹⁸ While Wynter would not disavow the useful or positive aspects of the inroads Black chefs have made, as explored above, it is worth remaining suspicious of Culinary Man’s ability to creatively capture social demands and to use them in furthering its hegemony.¹⁹

One can perhaps read a sense of concern regarding Culinary Man’s potential ability to neutralize and incorporate challenges against the regime in Samuelsson’s prefatory note above, particularly as he articulates hope that the moment might lead to more enduring social change. The particular phrasing (“moment”) recalls theories of social movements which emphasize the

¹⁷ Ibid. 168

¹⁸ See Wynter’s discussion of the 1960’s in which Man’s epistemic and hegemonic regime “had been briefly challenged by the range of anticolonial as well as the social cum intellectual movements of the sixties, before these movements were re-coopted...” Wynter, Sylvia. *Unsettling*, 270.

¹⁹ On Wynter’s view, challenges against Man represent something akin to “unfinished progress” even as they are often captured. The broader phenomenon of Culinary Man’s incorporation of critiques is explored in the previous chapter’s engagement with Culinary Man 3.

challenge and necessity of translating “moments into movements.”²⁰ There is a danger that the somewhat recent interest in social justice on the part of the white, hegemonic culinary industry will fade before it materializes into more trenchant or concrete forms of change.

Without dismissing the cultural contributions, narrative exposure, and enhanced visibility celebrated by books like *The Rise*, it should be noted that the inclusion of Black chefs into the upper ranks of the kitchen leaves the brigade form intact. Furthermore, the advancement of certain members of marginalized groups into the governing ranks of hegemony does not necessarily offer much concrete improvement within the lives of the vast majority of stratified workers of color. For instance, the subordinated position of the racialized dishwasher, as explored in chapter 1, is not altered merely by the existence of a non-white chef. Culinary Man has historically excluded marginal groups from its normative center, but the inclusion of a select few individuals (particularly if they possess other “elite” attributes, such as institutional privilege, mastery of French technique/knowledge, and so on) could help to sustain Culinary Man’s hegemonic project in the face of popular social challenge. Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò warns that “treating such elite’s interests as necessarily or even presumptively aligned with the broader group interests involves a political naivete we cannot afford...[which] functions as a kind of racial Reaganomics: a strategy reliant on fantasies about the exchange rate between the attention economy and the material economy.”²¹

²⁰ See Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2016). Chapter 6 of Taylor’s book, “Black Lives Matter: A Movement not a Moment” takes up this theme explicitly and outlines certain preconditions and/or goals for sustaining a broader social movement, including facing containment and contestation from the white civil society and the state (169), organizing and mobilizing masses of people (175), articulating concrete demands (181), and forging solidarity with groups such as organized labor(185). Much of Taylor’s work underscores the short temporal window of mainstream interest which events such as the killing of Michael Brown open up before moments of protest are contained, demolished, or co-opted.

²¹ Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (And Everything Else)*, (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2022), 74

Ultimately, it is not for me to decide which approach to navigating inclusion, hegemony, and representation within the culinary field might best serve the interests of marginalized groups.²² But the path of inclusion risks flirtation with a form of neoliberal diversity which is likely to neutralize and co-opt critiques of racialized and gendered stratification. Still, one also cannot exclude the possibility that this kind of reform (that is to say, including more marginalized groups into Culinary Man's normative center) can matter for the people most affected by hegemonic stratification and/or can open up avenues toward substantial change, as Samuelsson hopes might be the case. The next section concludes this study with a brief meditation on alternative institutions and offers an anecdotal exploration of one potential approach to experimenting outside of Culinary Man's established forms and norms.

Alternative Institutions

This section examines potential ways for less hegemonic modes of culinary subjectivity to be formed by constructing different kinds of culinary institutions which deviate from (or evade entirely) the brigade form. Once again, it would be undesirable to prescribe a "blueprint" for what should come in the wake of a reduction of Culinary Man's overrepresentation. Still, it is worthwhile to consider some examples of non-brigade formations which can emerge out of alternative culinary projects. After a brief consideration of a general approach to building different forms of culinary institutions, this chapter concludes with a meditation based on an anecdotal case study in experimental culinary formations.

²² In this, I follow Michel Foucault's thoughts regarding the practical ethics of analysis and positionality as outlined in the introductory chapter.

The Pop Up

While the previous section engaged with attempts to alter the restaurant form by diversifying its demographic composition among elites, others have engaged Culinary Man differently by attempting to depart from the restaurant form itself. For some marginalized cooks and chefs, the one-off guest appearance known as a “pop up” seems to offer a mode of cooking which escapes the restaurant’s typical forms of exclusion. As Jaya Saxena notes;

Traditionally, most chefs have had to rise through the kitchen ranks to gain the respect of the higher-ups and enough of a reputation to attract investors for their own potential restaurants. Temporary pop-ups or chef residencies...allow chefs to bypass some of that gatekeeping, and to put themselves in front of a new audience, work with and learn from other chefs, and build a following, seemingly without the overhead. For BIPOC chefs in particular, these opportunities can be an invaluable way to pursue a career in an industry that has typically ignored them.²³

Indeed, the pop-up does seem to present one way of circumventing Culinary Man’s exclusionary grip over the restaurant. At least, this is the case for those who have reached the position of chef. This strategy is more or less resonant with Flynn McGarry’s less traditional path into the culinary industry, as mentioned in the introductory chapter.²⁴ However, one should recall that this situation did not prevent McGarry from adopting brigade practices and principles and from commanding “his” subjects.

Since 2020, many culinary residency and pop-up programs have explicitly featured chefs of color in response to mounting critiques of the industry’s norms. While the pop up provides an opportunity for marginalized chefs to produce food without working within a brigade, it also

²³ Jaya Saxena, “For Marginalized Chefs, Are Pop-Ups the Path to Success?” *Eater.com*, Dec. 21, 2022.

²⁴ McGarry’s young age rendered him unable to take up the “traditional” path to chefdom which involves joining the brigade and attempting to move up. Instead, McGarry was able to capture publicity, interest, and investment for himself by hosting various pop-ups at high end New York restaurants.

frequently still involves a traditional restaurant as well as a Culinary Man who will likely receive positive publicity from the ostensibly benevolent act of temporarily lending the spotlight, kitchen space, and perhaps even the brigade to a chef of color. Thus, the pop up is vulnerable to similar forms of capture, appropriation, and superficial (neoliberal) applications of diversity and inclusion. For instance, Omar Tate, a Black chef who has participated in various culinary residencies in addition to operating his own pop up project focused on Black culinary history (“Honeysuckle”), notes:

I don’t have the answer to whether or not each individual corporation or restaurant is doing this[featuring marginalized chefs in pop ups] in earnest, or is it a media ploy, or is it both or none?... The conversation that we have at Honeysuckle is how do we operate outside of the gaze and benevolence of those who are in power? It’s hard. It’s really challenging²⁵

As Tate’s comments suggest, the ever-present possibility of Culinary Man’s appropriation presents difficulties. The pop up may provide an alternative venue thanks to which marginalized cooks can perform culinary work without working up through the brigade ladder, but only on a temporary basis. Additionally, apart from projects such as Honeysuckle or Preeti Mistry’s “Shifting the Lens” series, a sense of contingency on Culinary Man’s benevolence and resources often remains present.²⁶ Furthermore, while the pop up elides the restaurant’s fixed (and rigid) set up, it also trades a certain stability in favor of nomadism. Depending on one’s resources and capacities, this arrangement will vary in terms of sustainability or viability for the pop up chef/cook. In a fairly similar mode, the food truck has emerged as a modality which may allow marginalized cooks to bypass the restaurant form. However, this approach can be limited

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Mistry’s series, like Honeysuckle, is directed by people of color with a focus on spotlighting marginalized cooks as well as their social voices. Mistry notes: The chefs that we picked are not just like, oh, this is like a Black or brown person. We wanted to be very clear about the chefs that we picked, that they really have something to say.” Ibid.

by various regulatory and legal frameworks which, while they vary from place to place, can actually complicate food truck operations.²⁷ Additionally, food trucks tend to constitute riskier economic ventures.

Collective Kitchens

The collectively owned and horizontally organized establishment presents another form of alternative culinary institutional model. By curtailing the formation of a brigade, collectively run kitchens can potentially replace Culinary Man's hierarchical authority with a mode of democratic governance and, often, egalitarian pay structures too. Baltimore's "Red Emma's," a collectively run kitchen and bookstore founded in 2004, offers one such example. Matthew Sedacca describes Red Emma's by noting that

every position, be it a dishwasher or line cook or barista, starts at the same wage—currently \$15 an hour, with raises based on tenure. Menu items are developed collectively by bartenders or kitchen staff based not only on taste but labor, time and ingredients' costs. And when it comes to changing store hours—or leasing out the kitchen until moving into their new location—worker-owners decide by consensus.²⁸

The co-op form seems also to offer traditionally marginalized workers a much greater degree of freedom, agency, and protection from Culinary Man's normativity. A 2021 study from the U.S. Federation of Worker Collectives reports that "nearly 60 percent of people employed at worker co-ops identify as people of color, and more than 64 percent as women or nonbinary."²⁹ While there are quite a few examples of co-op restaurants and kitchen collectives, these formations still remain marginal, and they can be difficult projects to develop

²⁷ For discussions of both the avenues opened up by food trucks, particularly for marginalized cooks and cuisines, as well as the challenges posed by municipal and state governance, see Julian Agyeman, Caitlin Mathews, Hannah Sobel (eds.), *Food Trucks, Cultural Identity, and Social Justice: From Loncheras to Lobtsa Love*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

²⁸ Mathew Sedacca, "Co-op Restaurants: Pipe Dream or Practical Solution?" *The Counter.org*. Oct. 10, 2021.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

and maintain.³⁰ While the capital required to launch even modest restaurant projects is disproportionately held by privileged elites, financial access also favors the discrete individual over the collective agent. In other words, the bureaucratic world of business loans, building contracts, and rental agreements is not geared toward projects with a multitude of co-owners.

Kate Khatib, one of Red Emma's co-founders, explains that lending institutions suggest "that you choose the 3 people who have the best credit or the most assets, and apply for the loan in their name."³¹ However, this arrangement disrupts the horizontal distribution of stakeholding sought by collectives. As Khatib notes: "that introduces a really nasty disparity into your cooperative, because suddenly some people have more on the line than others."³² Red Emma's has been able to survive by patching together small loans, grants, and the support of the Baltimore community. However, it stands to reason that other collectivities may not be quite as successful as the errand of going against the grain of capitalist hegemony remains a precarious and risky move.

As another form of engagement with global capitalism, dispersed political and social organizations such as "Food Not Bombs," which produce and distribute free food, constitute an additionally vital, if also marginal, alternative culinary institution. Food Not Bombs (FNB), which redistributes donated and discarded food while delivering explicit political critiques of militarism and capitalism, has existed at least since 1981.³³ Groups such as FNB are often associated with or structured by anarchist tactics which avoid centralized organization and

³⁰ For additional examples, see the many cookbooks published by "The Moosewood Collective," or Momo Chang, "13 Cooperatively Owned Restaurants, Bakeries, and Markets in the Bay Area." *Eater*. March 17, 2022.

³¹ Sedacca, "Co-op Restaurants..."

³² *Ibid*,

³³ On March 26, 1981, Food Not Bombs performed its first food distribution in the form of a protest outside the Bank of Boston. *Foodnotbombs.net*.

strive to carry out internal governance decisions horizontally. For instance, local chapters of such groups are easy to start and require no authorization from a central representative or governing body. Membership in FNB is constituted by many who are already on the social and political fringes, and it tends to resemble a “revolving door” of eclectic, temporary, and loose associations. While this association of volunteers in flux perhaps presents an obstacle to consistency, David Boarder Gilles describes FNB as a set of “fluid, heterogenous forms of material solidarity,” which nonetheless constitute “an unstable yet effective political object.”³⁴ Furthermore, the attraction of marginal political identities makes FNB an archipelagic collection, something which Gilles refers to as a “confederacy of nomadisms.”³⁵

While organizations such as FNB may provide effective forms of nomadic resistance against the state, they often become targets of intensified repressions for this very reason.³⁶ As Gilles and others have noted, the state’s legal apparatus (municipal codes, regulatory health agencies, enforcement by police, and so on) frequently cracks down on public programs of food distribution through both direct and indirect means (such as public education campaigns to dissuade the practice of giving items to unhoused people or bans on camping and “obstructing” public areas).³⁷ Often, the state is quite effective in repressing and disrupting organizations such as FNB, and so these operations can be precarious too. However, at least

³⁴ David Boarder Gilles, *A Mass Conspiracy to Feed People*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 6

³⁵ Gilles writes: “Many of these deterritorialized lives and practices find a home in the ranks of FNB: cultural dislocations, from downward economic mobility to queered gender identity; geographic displacements, from itinerancy to labor migrancy; economic marginalia, from dumpstered gift economies to off-lease informal housing arrangements. Of the homeless volunteers, train-hopping anarchists, underemployed locals, uprooted university students, broke musicians and artists, ephemerally housed punks and hippies, domestic and international labor migrants (low waged and well-paid alike), and activists visiting from abroad who often compose Food Not Bombs, it may be said that we comprise a confederacy of nomadisms.” Ibid. 171-172

³⁶ Gilles cites Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the “war machine,” which always sits in tension with the state’s “apparatus of capture,” in relation to his discussion of nomadisms.

³⁷ See Chapter 4 of Gilles’s book, “Eating in Public” for a discussion of municipal governance as an adversary to FNB in Australia and elsewhere. Ibid. 128.

for now, the state's imperative to fully disrupt, disperse, and repress organizations like FNB remains incomplete. Additionally, through its mission to reappropriate food, FNB opens up a different understanding of "waste" which challenges capitalist logics of production and consumption.³⁸ Key arguments offered by Giles assert a situation in which waste, generated by the excess of capitalist production and consumption, produces the scarcity which is essential for the circulation of commodities.³⁹ These dynamics are important for Wynter as well, as one of contemporary Man's key features is his status as a "masterer of natural scarcity," something which allows him to successfully compete and accumulate within the field of neoliberal capitalism.⁴⁰ Culinary Man is expected to master scarcity as well, in the sense that the normative chef must be shrewd with regard to maximizing profit and minimizing losses.⁴¹ Thus, alternative institutions which decommodify food, destratify food production through voluntary associations, and engage in explicit political critiques of the state can constitute important culinary technologies against Culinary Man's normative operations, production imperatives, and hegemony, among other things.

One question which often arises in discussions of decentralized or horizontal political formations is that of limits. It is sometimes argued that horizontal formations face certain

³⁸ Giles offers that "the imperative to expend and abandon surplus is often primary, even in the face of collapsing markets. Waste represents a cultural logic unto itself, with the potential to drive the expansion and evolution of capital...the neoliberal capitalism of recent decades has only accelerated this waste-making, assuming an unprecedented capacity to mediate life itself and translating the barest of human necessities (food, shelter, water, health)." Ibid. 39-40.

³⁹ Ibid.45.

⁴⁰ Wynter writes: "Seeing that if at one level Man2 is now defined as a jobholding Breadwinner, and even more optimally, as a successful "masterer of Natural Scarcity" (Investor, or capital accumulator)... Wynter, *Unsettling*, 321. Wynter's argument also has important implications for the subjugated archipelago of "human otherness" who, in more modern eras, are subsequently defined again Man as economic "losers," rather than as creatures of evil, the irrational, or the enslaved

⁴¹ This expectation generally coincides uneasily with the aesthetic norms of fine dining production which, through the need for more expensive ingredients, tools, and labor, drive costs up. The actualities of the restaurant industry's difficult margins—made considerably worse by the pandemic and subsequent interruptions in global shipping chains—make the economic imperatives pressing and often are used to justify the low wages meted out the brigade.

inherent logistical challenges (notably, the absence of a strong organizational—vertical—structure and leadership) which reduce their scope and/or capacity to act.⁴² Indeed, while the brigade may be vulnerable to many critiques about its disciplinary or even tyrannical character (as explored in chapter 4 in the case of Culinary Man1, particularly), it is a unit of organization which is quite productive. This question of practical limits, particularly as it relates to a model of voluntary labor, was raised within the adventures of “dishwasher Pete” (Pete Jordan) introduced in chapter 1.

At one point, Jordan worked at an anarchist café where “everyone was the boss, or, better yet, *no one* was the boss” (this episode is a rather short one in Jordan’s narrative).⁴³ In this context, Jordan raises the practical question of voluntary labor more directly while describing his stint working with an intentional community. Framing his narrative around a discussion of the “utopian” literature of thinkers like B.F. Skinner and Emerson, Jordan notes: “in any discussion of utopian societies, it’s the thorniest of issues: who will pick up the trash? Who will dig the ditches? And, most important, who will wash the dishes?”⁴⁴ Upon arriving at the intentional community, Jordan quickly realizes that, while other jobs seemed to be shared among the community evenly and easily, dishwashing was a task that no one desired. As a result, the community’s kitchen situation was challenging and unsanitary:

The sinks were filled with the pots that were so conveniently absent at Walden Two. The pit was so disorganized, and everything was so squalid, I couldn’t distinguish between what was *waiting* to be washed and what already *had been* washed! Unmissable, though, were the country cockroaches. From wee young’uns to fat grannies, they strutted back and forth along the counters and walls. They must have been spared harm by the commune’s back-to-the-woods pacifists because the pest

⁴² For a discussion of the critiques of horizontalism, an overview of this historical debate (put crudely, “horizontalism vs verticalism”), as well as a theory of moving beyond the impasse often featured within it, see, Rodrigo Nunes, *Neither Vertical nor Horizontal: A Theory of Political Organization*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2021)

⁴³ Jordan, *Dishwasher Pete*, 158. Jordan simply notes that “it wasn’t enough to keep me in Seattle.”

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 290

roamed the dishwashery with the same impunity that allowed sacred cows to roam the streets of Calcutta.⁴⁵

Jordan's vivid imagery underscores the intentional community's organization in terms which may indeed suggest a problem with voluntary horizontalism. Despite his avowed stance against authority (explored in chapter 1, too), this situation leads Jordan to assert that: "what was needed was someone to take charge—not a *head* dishwasher, mind you, but a *stable* dishwasher to coordinate the operation and organize the pit."⁴⁶ Jordan recounts that those who did volunteer to fill dish shifts almost always failed to show up, leaving him as the sole dishwasher night after night. Anti-authoritarian ethos notwithstanding, Jordan's conclusion reiterates much of the practical virtues which feature as justifications for hegemony within Culinary Man's discourse—from the *mise en place* system's protection against chaos explored in chapter 2 to Culinary Man's logistical prowess extolled by Andrés in Chapter 5. Culinary Man's answer to the practical question is, of course, the rigidly defined and well-disciplined brigade. The last section explores an experiment in attempting to avoid brigade hierarchy while also satisfying basic conditions of sanitary food handling and fulfilling the routine (some might say menial) work within the kitchen.

Ursula's Café

"Ursula's Café" is a "donate what/if you can" restaurant and community arts space which my wife, Ami Trowell, and I officially opened in September of 2022.⁴⁷ We began Ursula's with the intention of responding to food insecurity while constructing an alternative performance

⁴⁵ Ibid. 295

⁴⁶ Ibid. 295

⁴⁷ Overall, this model, sometimes called "pay what you can," works in the same manner as "normal" restaurants. However, "customers" can decide on the amount which they wish to donate for a meal. There are suggested donations for each menu item which give some indication of what would be useful to recoup in order to sustain operations, but no one is required to donate in order to receive food.

space for art, music, and community events.⁴⁸ Having both worked in many restaurants which embrace Culinary Man's hegemonic model, we wanted Ursula's café to constitute a different kind of culinary atmosphere. While the café project is not without its limitations, some of which are discussed further below, it is my hope that a more archipelagic culinary space might emerge through detaching the restaurant from Culinary Man's economic imperative (here, by making everything essentially free), thus altering the brigade's division of labor, and by abandoning aspirations of aesthetic and technical mastery in favor of practices of care.

Archipelagic Relations

Beginning with the most obvious difference, the "donate what you can" model espoused by "Ursula's Café" seeks to de-commodify food by offering it free of charge to everyone. In this respect, we share the commitments held by organizations like Food Not Bombs. Everything at the cafe, from comedy events to the food itself, is accessible to all, including to those who do not have money. At the same time, those who would like (and are able) to donate can do so in order to help support the space. Unsurprisingly, many of the unhoused, unemployed, and food insecure people who enter the space are often very eager to offer up whatever they can in order to help provide for others to eat as well. These typically small donations reflect a deep sense of care and solidarity which emerges from an embodied sense of shared, if not identical, experience.

Additionally, the space has begun to bring together dispossessed individuals, the formerly/recently incarcerated, workers in various informal economies, drug users, immigrants,

⁴⁸ My wife's professional background in theatre and comedy facilitates much of the artistic programming. In combining these offerings with the provision of free food, we seek to enable something akin to Wynter discussion of the ethical politics of Rastafarianism which asserts a natural right "not only to secure the material conditions of existence, but also, and above all, to be able to realize [oneself] spiritually /creatively." Sylvia Wynter, "We Know Where We're From: The Politics of Black Culture." *We Must Learn To Sit Down Together And Talk About A Little Culture: Decolonizing Essays, 1967-1984*. Edited by Eudell, Demetrius (Leeds, UK: Peepall Tree. 1977 [2022]),493

those experiencing mental illness and/or disability, and otherwise stratified, invisibilized, and abandoned (by Man) genres of humanity. This reflects a microcosm of what Wynter refers to as a global formation of “the damned archipelagoes of the Poor, the jobless the homeless, the ‘underdeveloped’,” and so on.⁴⁹ Quite often, we have witnessed that people within the space share advice, tips, stories, and other forms of knowledge about how to survive within a fairly hostile municipal environment. Apart from this, the space allows for the sharing of affect, conversation, and other forms of sociality. Thus, forms of practical, affective, and relational solidarity flourish amidst these heterogeneous archipelagos.

For this model to remain sustainable, among other reasons, we have cut many of the costs of running a “typical” restaurant, including the maintenance of a large labor force, extensive menus, and the pursuit of haute aesthetic creations. The food is quite simple and largely devoid of the kinds of specialized technique and knowledge which, as explored in previous chapters, often enable (or even constitute) Culinary Man’s performance of mastery. With regard to a labor force, Ursula’s is currently run entirely by volunteers.

This situation has at times resembled Pete Jordan’s report of volunteers who fail to show up or to carry out tasks. As a way of ensuring that necessary tasks can still be completed, the cafe has been simplified such that my wife and I can carry out all of the duties whenever necessary. We serve a very small menu and currently have limited hours/days of operation. Thus, while cooking is a something of a shared process comprised of an assemblage of volunteers, I am designated as responsible for maintaining the kitchen’s operations and ensuring sanitary food handling, serving, and storage practices.⁵⁰ At Ursula’s, we serve mainly soup and salad while

⁴⁹ Wynter, “Unsettling...,” 317

⁵⁰ I write “something of a shared process” because the food production at Ursula’s is, on a weekly basis, distributed across a few regular actors. There are a few bakers who contribute semi-regular contributions and others who have

also offering various packaged snacks, drinks, coffee, tea, and (usually) baked goods. The food materials derive from a heterogenous network of contributors, including regular donations from local farmers, grocers, and coffee producers. Baked goods, which are usually donated weekly, are primarily contributed by a retired social worker with a penchant for baking and a belief that all deserve to eat.

While my brigade training has been useful in various ways, particularly when the volunteer presence is low, learning to cook in a space such as Ursula's has involved a much different kind of education. Culinary Man, particular the "artist variant," does not typically spend much thought on the average customers who populate fine dining establishments. Rather, as we have seen, Culinary Man's focus is on the haute cuisine dish as an object of technical and aesthetic perfection. While many techniques, recipes, and food handling procedures which I learned from various versions of Culinary Man have remained useful, overall, the formal training I have undergone has not quite prepared me to cook for vulnerable populations and using such limited space, tools, and resources. For instance, mise en place is a helpful system, but it is no substitute for the improvisational technology provided by System D when the space quickly becomes crowded while I am working alone. Cooking with donated produce on a tiny budget often means assembling whatever arrives in an impromptu manner which also resembles Vibration Cooking (described in chapter 5) far more than a Culinary Institute of America textbook. Overall, mastery of technique is no substitute for strategies of care when many of one's regulars are generally dispossessed and/or unhoused.

occasionally helped with prepping and cooking before. However, most often the work of cooking falls to me and my wife. Again, this situation is manageable because of the limited scope of the restaurant. We serve two soups each week, and I often make one while my wife makes the other.

In this way, the culinary work of the Black Panthers is a more instructive model for Ursula's Cafe than Thomas Keller's breathtaking aesthetic creations. For instance, Judy Juanita, a former Black Panther member who worked on the party's celebrated breakfast program for kids, laughs as she recalls: "we panthers came in, we manned it, we did the grunt work, we cooked the food—I'm laughing because oftentimes the children would complain 'there's eggshells in my scrambled eggs' or what have you..."⁵¹ Juanita's anecdote emphasizes the descriptive statement of food held by the Panthers, which asserts that supplying food is a critical act of care needed to support human life.⁵² This conception of food lends itself to a vastly different (and more humbling) form of culinary subjectivity than does Culinary Man's performance of mastery and pursuit of glory—can you imagine Marco Pierre White laughing off imperfectly cooked eggs? Cooking with care is not something which I have ever learned much about from any of the various "Culinary Man" types I have known and worked for.

Instead, I have to spend time sitting and talking with (and listening to) the people who come into the café to find out what might best serve them. In return, our regulars ask what they can do to help and contribute as well and, in doing so, become collaborators. These interactions, several of which have spawned genuine friendship, also serve as important moments of archipelagic connection which my time in other restaurants (and my relatively privileged life) would not otherwise provide.

⁵¹ Judy Juanita, In conversation with Melinda, Hemmelgarn. *The Food Sleuth(podcast)* Ep. 572. June 19,2020.

⁵² "We recognized that in order to bring the people to the level of consciousness where they would seize the time, it would be necessary to serve their interests in survival by developing programs which would help them meet their daily needs...these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community but they are not solutions to our problem. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution." Huey P Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1974),104

Ultimately, there are limits to what a space such as Ursula's can do with regard to the problems of Culinary Man and, especially, in response to the widespread social misery of food and housing insecurity. It would be naïve to overstate the impact or importance of an operation which, at least for now, is quite limited in size. However, as my own well-disciplined culinary sensibilities, procedural habits, and attachments to brigade "commonsense" shift, I can feel the voice of Culinary Man growing a bit fainter within my own head these days. It is unclear what effects this might have on others or to what extent this alternative restaurant form will constitute a departure from Culinary Man's hegemony, but I am grateful for the possibility of forging an alternative "mode of subjection."⁵³ In the next and final section, I consider how the different labor formation of Ursula's Café might further disrupt the logic of the brigade.

Labor

As noted above, Ursula's is a nonprofit, volunteer organization with no paid staff. While we are working on finding and training more volunteers, it is often just me (or my wife when I am not there) working in the kitchen. In addition to the one person staff, the physical space itself is barely large enough for two people to occupy at the same time, much less a full brigade.⁵⁴ While this arrangement helps to guard against the formation of the most extensive and recognizable iterations of the "classical" culinary army, there likely still are points of resonance with Culinary Man's brigade. The central presence of a white, male decision-maker who runs the

⁵³ This phrase derives from elements of Foucault's later work which explored, among other things, ethical practices by which an individual might attempt to understand and transform their own subjectivity. While this should still be understood in the context (and, generally, with the influence) of regimes of disciplinary power/knowledge, Foucault's later explorations of subjectivity emphasize the individual's role in the process of subjectivity production. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*. Translated by Robert Hurley, (New York, NY: Random House, 1985),27

⁵⁴ . Marco Pierre White articulates the connection between physical space and social stratification as he recalls "The kitchen at Harveys was also too small for the traditional French-style chef's hierarchy. White, *The Devil in the Kitchen*, 102.

kitchen, even if there are no additional workers to discipline and dominate, is one such resonance. Of course, the modern military notion of the “army of one” reminds us that military formations can take multiple shapes and forms. Thus, reducing the size of the kitchen does not automatically constitute an abolition of culinary militarism, although it may be helpful.

Occasionally, regulars in the café will volunteer to help out and, contra Pete Jordan’s problem at the intentional community, they usually gravitate toward washing dishes.⁵⁵ This situation also comes to resemble Culinary Man’s mode of production at times, particularly if I am preparing food while a volunteer washes dishes. In the context of seeking departures from Culinary Man’s usual order of business, this parallel division of labor certainly gives me pause, particularly when vulnerable and/or marginalized people are performing the dishwashing work, as has been the case at times. While production at Ursula’s is geared toward a set of ends different from those of the fine dining restaurant (feeding people rather than accumulating profits or pursuing aesthetic mastery), discussions of José Andrés’s work, as explored in chapter 5, make clear that colonial relations of exploitation and domination can and do occur within spaces of nonprofit/humanitarian service and that good intentions do not guarantee practices of care.

At Ursula’s, we make it a point to try to dissuade anyone from feeling as if they are obligated to donate or to work in return for food. Thus, I have concerns that accepting dish help might create a dualism such that those without money to donate might feel compelled to perform menial work instead. At times I have considered not allowing others to help in the kitchen as a strategy of avoiding (or at least reducing) relations of domination. Paradoxically, this move

⁵⁵ Generally, this is due to the fact that there are usually dishes to wash but not always other work to be done. Additionally, volunteers report feeling more comfortable with washing dishes—Ursula’s has no special commercial dishwashing equipment and so the process resembles everyday dishwashing more closely than in other restaurant settings.

might risk further centralizing my own presence (and authority) in the kitchen, and it also seems to constitute a form of ethical retreat rather than engagement. Furthermore, those who volunteer generally communicate a strong desire to help out. Early on, I raised these concerns with an unhoused white man in his late 50's named Davey⁵⁶ who has been one of the more consistent volunteers at Ursula's. Davey reported back to me that he enjoys washing dishes and was grateful to have "something to do" with the long stretches of unoccupied time which, at the time, defined his day-to-day life. At times, Davey would even stop me from washing plates so that he could do them himself, and he has volunteered to join me on "deep cleaning days," an event which most would not find appealing.

The conversation with Davey seems to indicate that, while the material practices involved with volunteer dishwashers can resemble the brigade's stratification, the discursive positioning or descriptive statement can be altered in ways that translate into different kinds of subjectivity formations and relations. In other words, despite carrying out similar work, Davey's understanding of himself as a laboring body hopefully departs significantly from the subordinated dishwashers working in Culinary Man's brigades.⁵⁷

Another regular at Ursula's, a Black, unhoused woman whom I will call Teresa, volunteers to wash dishes occasionally as well. Teresa has similarly provided important insight into the nuances of washing dishes amidst my concerns over replicating brigade discipline. Teresa became one of our earliest friends and regulars at the café and she was the first to volunteer to wash dishes after receiving a few meals. While I emphasized that she was under no

⁵⁶ "Davey," is a pseudonym, as is the case with all of names of café regulars and collaborators mentioned in this section.

⁵⁷ Of course, I can only take him at his word for this analysis. The set of feelings, understandings, and discourses which construct some form of dishwasher subjectivity in this situation is likely a more complicated field, but also one which would be difficult to access.

obligation to do so, she waived me off, citing dishwashing as a relaxing and fun chore.

Afterward, she would continue to routinely come by the café to eat, although at times Teresa stopped by just to check to see if there were any dishes.

During one service, I was in the back of our tiny kitchen putting together salads for a couple of shy college students. One of Teresa's most endearing qualities is her penchant for engaging incoming (especially new) café-goers with particularly warm (and loud) greetings. From the other side of the thin walls, I overheard Teresa conclude her welcome address with an excited declaration of "I'm the dishwasher here!" This proclamation imbues a much different affect into the description of a "dishwasher" than is often articulated. For instance, it might be useful to juxtapose Teresa alongside my anecdote from chapter 1 regarding the manager who advised me (during my days as a dishwasher) to describe my position in the vague terms of "helping in the kitchen," presumably to save me from embarrassment. The title of "dishwasher," for Teresa, signifies her membership as a collaborator and member of the café community, which, as she has expressed, means a great deal to her. Culinary Man is no stranger to this kind of genuine affect. In fact, as explored in earlier chapters, a key function of the brigade is its ability to translate affects of solidarity, camaraderie, and friendship into loyalty to Culinary Man's productivist mission.⁵⁸

However, Teresa's (and Davey's and others') marginalized perspective as an unhoused (and subsequently a frequently abused, invisibilized, and demeaned) person offers a descriptive statement of the dishwasher which departs from the "terminal or steppingstone" binary implemented by the brigade. I would admit that the relationship between Teresa (or any

⁵⁸ Thus, the fact that Teresa feels a sense of membership within the kitchen does not (in itself) guard against the disciplinary socialization and exploitation of the dishwasher under Culinary Man.

volunteer) and I is not a fully horizontal one, as I retain an enhanced capacity to make decisions at the café. Still, it is my hope that the volunteer status might help to define the kitchen at Ursula's in terms which resemble "free association" more so than the classical hierarchy of the brigade.⁵⁹ In terms of subjectivity, Foucault asserts that disciplinary relations do not always imply domination, noting that "of course, there are indeed consensual disciplines..."⁶⁰ Perhaps Teresa's brand of dishwasher subjectivity qualifies as a consensual relation, given that she holds the ability to enter into and depart from the work freely. Additionally, she may choose to do so as part of her own agential construction of selfhood, as is perhaps signaled by her enthusiastic identification with the role (I'm the dishwasher!). Relatedly, Wynter contributes a notion of "anarchic" freedom which emphasizes the ability to pursue "the realization of selfhood, [and] the negation of serving an imposed end."⁶¹ Hopefully, participating as a volunteer allows one to avoid the imposition of the kinds of ends which the brigade is generally pressed into service toward.

This anecdotal exploration may offer one possible model of deviation from Culinary Man's normative notion of the restaurant (and its labor force). But there are additional

⁵⁹ I borrow the term "free association" here from the Anarchist tradition's emphasis on voluntary social relations. See Mikhail Bakunin, "The Immorality of the State." *The Political Philosophy of Mikhail Bakunin*. Edited by G.P. Maximoff, (UK: Christiebooks, 2015) or Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Writings*, (New York, NY: Mother Earth Publishing, 1910). New York. Certainly, volunteer work is also not, in itself, immune to critique as labor performed without compensation presents a risk of exploitation as well. As an imperfect consolation (as we are unable to pay Teresa or anyone else), I am also an unpaid volunteer and so there is at least no gap between our respective wages at the café. It is my hope that the ability of volunteers like Teresa to choose whether or not to volunteer and to select tasks and to set a duration of their choosing, while taking breaks (including sitting down, of course) at any time might help to put at least some distance between this mode of culinary work and Culinary Man's brigade. However, a different issue pertaining to the social psychology of guilt, obligation, and debt may arise as well if people feel compelled to volunteer in exchange for food, despite our efforts to articulate otherwise. This issue may be more difficult to engage, given its wide circulation in the general society. See, for example, David Graeber's discussion of the moral presumptions embedded in Western culture and thought around the notion of debt. David Graeber, David, *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, (New York, NY: Melville House Publishing, 2011)

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview." In *The Foucault Reader*, Edited by Paul Rabinow, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1984), 380.

⁶¹ Wynter, "We Know Where We're From..." 489

possibilities, many of which may not yet have been imagined or invented. This dissertation has primarily engaged Culinary Man critically for the purposes of “clearing space” within the culinary field and of attempting to make visible the forms of normative discipline (as well as their political implications) which are enacted by Man. It remains to be seen what might emerge after Culinary Man. However, it does seem that the discourse around fine dining continues to shift.

For instance, critical discussions of fine dining’s practices have sprung up in the wake of the recent news that “Noma,” the Copenhagen restaurant currently hailed as the world’s best, will close in 2024.⁶² Notably, one former Noma intern, Namrata Hedge, bemoaned the many unpaid hours spent producing “fruit leather beetles,” a mainstay of the restaurant’s extravagant aesthetic creations, which was her sole job at Noma.⁶³ Additionally, Hedge underscored that she learned very little about cooking other than the normative brigade expectation of being “quick, quiet, and organized.”⁶⁴ In the realm of pop culture, the fine dining brigade has also received several critical treatments which have underscored its toxic working conditions, the dangerous cult of personality conferred upon the chef, and the difficult lifestyle imposed upon brigade subjects.⁶⁵ If Wynter’s model of epistemological change holds, this moment of intensified

⁶² Many have seized on chef René Redzepi’s admission that the restaurant is “unsustainable.” Various commentators have noted that the restaurant only became unsustainable once critique of labor practices pushed Noma to curtail its reliance on underpaid or free labor performed by those hoping to be hired by restaurant and/or to gain experience, knowledge, and a recommendation from Culinary Man. See Julia Moskin, “Noma, Rated the World’s Best Restaurant, Is Closing Its Doors.” *New York Times.com*, 2023, Or Jon Henley, “‘We Have to Rethink the Industry’: Fine Dining’s Future in Doubt as Noma Calls it a Day.” *The Guardian*. 2023.

⁶³ This process involves: “starting with a thick jam of black fruit and silicone stencils with insect parts carved out. Another intern taught her how to spread the jam evenly, monitor the drying process, then use tweezers to assemble the head, thorax, abdomen and wings. Ms. Hegde repeated the process until she had 120 perfect specimens; each diner was served a single beetle in a wooden box.” Ibid, Moskin.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ For instance, director Mark Mylod’s film *The Menu* satirizes the ultra-elite echelons of fine dining cooking (and its diners). In the film, Ralph Fiennes portrays a celebrated chef whose artistic genius and technical mastery attract diners to venture to a remote island for an expensive private tasting menu. Unbeknownst to the rich diners, they too (and the entire restaurant staff) will perish as part of the evening’s events, which culminate in a “*Most Dangerous Game*” scenario, ultimately leading to a mass culinary murder/suicide. Fiennes’s “Chef Slowik” seems to be a

counter discourse may indeed signal a new stage in the waning of Culinary Man's longstanding hegemony, which might begin to take us past the brigade as the normative form of culinary labor. It seems fitting that Wynter should be given the last words. While meditating on the possibility of Man's hegemony receding, she stated: "But then think of the dazzling creativity of the alternative challenges that would be opened up!"⁶⁶

composite of several different Culinary Man archetypes, although perhaps he most resembles Thomas Keller (if he were a Stanley Kubrick character). Slowik is abusive to his staff, most notably embarrassing and coercing the suicide of his sous chef (40m) and sexually harassing another (60m). He is pretentiously committed to aesthetic performance (ordering diners "don't eat, taste" and serving a "breadless bread plate" (17m, 22m). And his domineering governance over the brigade is scored by choruses of "yes, chef!" uttered throughout the film. Apart from providing a compelling (and humorous) caricature of Culinary Man, *The Menu* captures the unique sense of anxiety which one can read in much contemporary culinary discourse. For instance, early in the film, Slowik notes: "we're always innovating and fear irrelevance" (32m). Beyond this, much of the film's plot is driven by Slowik's aggression against various actors who might pose (or have already demonstrated) some threat against his authority, from aspirational sous chefs to food critics, investors, and foodie nerds. Slowik ultimately murders many of those who might otherwise challenge his singular position of governance in one way or another. Ultimately, in the film's final scene, every part of the restaurant goes up in flames, which is perhaps meant to symbolize the impending destruction of the fine dining industry. Additionally, the FX television show, *The Bear*, features a former Michelin chef who returns to run his family's decidedly non-fine dining restaurant after the death of his brother. In the show's first season, the 3rd episode, "Brigade," features a plot line centered around the unsuccessful attempt to implement the brigade system within the "unruly" group of cooks, mostly workers of color, who initially reject the authoritative imposition of the new white chef. Eventually, the season's central tensions are resolved in a "Deus Ex Machina" moment which is prompted by the Michelin chef finally making one of his late brother's recipes, which he initially rejected due to its unsophisticated technique and use of canned tomatoes. In sum, while there may be some risk of "reading too much" into these two pieces of pop culture, both evince descriptive statements of fine dining which underscore some of the problematic elements associated with the brigade system.

⁶⁶ Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe...", 17

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