CONTENTS

List of Illustrations
Acknowledgments

Introduction: Terroir and the Culinary Roots of French Identity
1 • Rabelais's Table and the Poets of the Pléiade
2 • The Plantification of People
3 • Courtside Purity and the Académie Française's Attack on the Earth
4 • France's Green Evolution: Terroir's Expulsion from Versailles
5 • Saint-Évremond and the Invention of Geographical Connoisseurship
6 • Terroir and Nation Building: Boulainvilliers, Du Bos, and the Case of Class
7 • The Normalization of Terroir: Paris and the Provinces
Conclusion: Terroir and Nation: From Geographic Identity to Psychogeography

Notes
Bibliography
Index

Introduction

TERROIR AND THE CULINARY ROOTS OF FRENCH IDENTITY

IN 1962, IN A BOOK ENTITLED *Les Mots du Général de Gaulle,* Ernest Mignon sketched the personality of the first president of France's Fifth Republic with a variety of anecdotes. One illuminating quotation conjured an image of de Gaulle in a comparatively humble light, asking, "How can you be expected to govern a country that has 246 kinds of cheese?"[1] The phrase not only resonated among the French, who must have nodded their heads knowingly, thinking about the intractability of their regional neighbors, but also captured an international audience (*Newsweek* republished the same quote later in the year, disseminating the idea widely to its middle-class readers).[2] Since then, though the number of cheeses invariably changes with each retelling, the quote has become a well-worn cliché, representing a sort of truism in France and abroad: the French are finicky and opinionated about their food. Moreover, that culinary persnicketiness is iconic of the very character of a people who possess at least as many different ideas about what is "right" in politics as they do about tastes in cheese. Ironically, although the assertion is that the French are as locally varied in tastes as Babel was in tongues, France's food-centric diversity is the one thing that the nation seems to agree on unanimously, paradoxically carving out a sort of national unity through its culinary multiplicity.

While still good for a chuckle today, the sentiment that gave rise to de Gaulle's quip was far from novel when it was published by Mignon. The tradition in France of linking the food each person consumes to his or her character dates back to theories on the humors popular throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. The practice became all the more common when Renaissance France began to construct a part of the country's cultural identity by evoking the causal power of land to create differences in food, language, and people. How and why the phenomenon resonated so strongly in France is a complicated question, but a lot can be understood by examining the nation's notion of *terroir.* That unique concept and word have served for hundreds of years in France to describe how flavor and personality in a product are determined according to its specific region or origin. This book sets out to examine the idea of terroir, demonstrating how its early evolution reveals something about the construction of a specifically French identity, the

birth of culinary distinction and connoisseurship, and the sorts of regionalist and nationalist sentiments that appear above in the quote from de Gaulle.

The word *terroir* is today most prevalent among culinary enthusiasts, who use it to map a food or wine to its specific place of origin. The taste of terroir *(goût du terroir)* is understood as the spectrum of appreciable flavors or fragrances created by the unique physiographic constitution of the plot of land where a given product was grown and produced. Various rudimentary definitions existed already in the seventeenth century, when the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* defined terroir as "earth considered with respect to agriculture," specifying that one who indicates that a wine has a *"goût du terroir"* means that the wine has "a certain smell, a certain taste that comes from the quality of the terroir."[3] This description in turn evolved from a set of precedents and values that the following pages set out to unpack, revealing how the notion has become central to the French culinary experience. Indeed, France became so convinced of the reliability of place-based eating that the country began making regional quality control laws in the early twentieth century, staking out boundaries, articulating intrinsic characteristics, and rigorously defining agricultural products according to terroir.[4]

These efforts culminated in 1935 with the inception of the French Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (INAO), a governing organization that regulates foods and wines according to their terroir. Since then, the number of products marketed, conceived, and appreciated according to their origin has grown into a list baffling for those unacquainted with the notion. It includes wine, cheese, salt, prunes, olive oil, ham, honey, and red pepper, to name a few, but also anchovies, oysters, and mussels (whose characteristics are influenced by different areas of the sea or the *"merroir"*). In each case, specific environmental factors in tandem with a set of agricultural practices and a culturally determined method of perceiving flavor profiles allow the informed taster to trace a product to its provenance.

The INAO has physically delimited the growing area of each of these products with the designation *appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC) or *indication géographique protégée* (IGP). Such designations ensure, for example, that the AOC Comté cheese of the Jura is produced from the milk of Montbéliarde or French Simmental cows free-ranging on the flora from the mountain meadows of the Jura massif in the summer and on hay cut from the same fields in the winter, thus granting it flavors that cannot be imitated elsewhere. The connoisseur uses these guidelines to add an intellectual framework to gustatory and sensorial experience, formalizing the culinary moment by means of a judgment about geographic authenticity. Indeed, no small part of the enjoyment of such a product lies in the taster's determination as to how its taste corresponds to the taster's mental construct of the region in question.[5]

That a food's taste may be determined and appreciated according to its origin is easy enough to understand, but historically the French took it further. They posited that terroir affects not only the cheese *but also* the cheesemaker, not only the produce but also the farmer. This phenomenon

is what the following pages set out to investigate, submitting that terroir's genesis and evolution can be used to reveal something about France's changing political, cultural, and philosophical identity. Quite simply, in many ways the French approached tasting their food in the same way that they went about perceiving people, using climatic determinism to depict normative behavior in both categories. Instead of considering itself a melting pot where flavors come together to add seamless dimension to the "plate" as a whole, France has historically found its unifying aspect in its diversity, characterized by starkly different, sometimes contrasting regional ingredients. The French consciousness of this diversity manifests itself not only in material food culture, but also in reflections on language, literature, and philosophy, reminding people of who they are (or who they *think* they are) on a daily basis.

Terroir's broad applicability in French culture allows it to function as a unique measuring stick by which to judge questions of taste and identity in relation to the influence exercised by origin. This concept is so characteristically French that other countries do not possess equivalent terms for "terroir" and resort to using the French word untranslated.[6] Indeed, no other nation in the world's history has developed the notion to the degree the French have. The results of an inquiry into the concept are both important and surprising. They tell the story of a wide-ranging essentialist relationship between humans and the earth in France. Adherents embracing terroir as a model for people included within it modalities for understanding such varied "objects" as the work of an author, an artist's painting, and even a woman's beauty. Early iterations attempted to conceptualize nations, classify languages, and make laws using the earth's influence as a gauge for normalcy and authenticity. Ironically, these nonculinary reflections evolved back into new expectations in the connoisseurship of wine and food, in a dialogic relationship with the world of cuisine.

FIGURE 1. This early twentieth-century advertisement for a cocoa and chocolate product depicts the regional specialties of the Loir-et-Cher *département* with caricatures that are half people, half food or

wine. The patriotic overtones are summed up by the title: "*La France Gastronomique*."

As the layers of terroir's history are peeled back they reveal a longstanding ambivalence toward the concept. That is, despite a trend to equate both human beings and their agricultural products with terroir, the French have demonstrated a steady counterpressure to "liberate" people, their thoughts, their physical attributes, and even their foods from the influence of the earth. At certain times, this has led segments of the culture to redefine how they perceive foods and characterize flavors in a *negative* relation to terroir. Still, even as aspects of terroir were held in low regard, the concept was paradoxically reinforced through pejorative uses. Indeed, it gained as much definition from being cast into opprobrium as it did from being held in esteem, and this tension entrenched it all the deeper in the French imagination.

FROM EARLY ORIGINS AND DEFINITIONS TO RECENT STUDIES

The concept known today as terroir derived from a variety of terms and influences, and the notion's complex genesis explains this book's approach. First, the word's own origin extends beyond agriculture strictly defined. Terroir evolved from a way of thinking about land that dates to antiquity, and derives from the Latin *territorium,* signifying the land round a town, that is, a domain, district, or territory.[7] In other words, it combines the social construction of space (town, district, etc.) with the agricultural role of land. Although some authors from antiquity, including Varro and Columella, focused on *territorium* in a more limited agricultural context, others, such as Virgil, employed the concept with greater emphasis on social space.[8] The French, from the Renaissance poets to the early modern writers of agricultural treatises, incorporated both of these senses into the country's ever-expanding development of the notion.

Among the several plausible reasons why the concept of terroir found such fertile ground in the French imagination, three stand out. First, France has historically been Europe's most developed agricultural and wine-producing country, providing ample opportunity for terroir to expand in importance literally and metaphorically in the course of being evoked in everyday life.[9] Second, both royalty and religious groups such as the Cistercian monks in Burgundy in the twelfth century and the popes in Chateauneuf-du-Pape during the Avignon papacy made certain wine regions famous, creating an association among specific vineyards, power, and social prestige. To take another early example, the *Battle of Wines* (1224) by Henri Andeli recounts in verse the legendary contest held by King Philip-Augustus, in which French and Mediterranean white wines were judged by an English priest. Those held in esteem were retained, while those deemed inferior

were "excommunicated" and henceforth were received in the public mind as inferior.[10] Even at this early moment, terroirs were judged and circumscribed by the country's royal and religious authorities, a trend that would only intensify as both the king and the Church garnered increasing power in the early modern era.

Finally, although the historian Florent Quellier has shown that vendors of food used the region of origin as a selling point for fruits and vegetables as early as the thirteenth century, a confluence of factors caused a rapid evolution in the relationship between food, place, and identity in the Renaissance.[11] France's particular cultural and social evolution engaged with the agricultural paradigm in several unexpected ways. One of the most important of these includes the construction of a specifically "French" literary identity during the Renaissance. The invention of the printing press and a proliferation of books in French (instead of Latin) coincided with a moment in which writers sought ways to depict themselves as possessing a separate French linguistic individuality. Using ideas about the determining influence of the French land became a modality for understanding the identity of French language, just as such ideas were beginning to organize how wine and food were categorized.

All of this does not undermine the validity of terroir as an actual causal force, but rather underscores its perception as such. To take up once again the de Gaulle quote, what he is rumored to have said does not primarily concern the history of cheese in France, nor does it make a case for hierarchies of cheese flavors and origins. Instead, it provides a commentary on the ways the French have defined themselves with respect to food and place. By focusing on this optic and the resulting questions of identity, my approach differs from that of other methodologies and studies invoking terroir. The anthropologist Amy Trubek's excellent book *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir,* for example, examines mostly modern food-centric themes of terroir in France and America. For my part, though an account of food culture occurs to some degree in every chapter of the following pages, I take up food in conjunction with terroir only insofar as it is useful in allowing us to understand a specific history of ideas and an early framing of the French nation. The historian Kolleen Guy's approach, also referred to in the pages to follow, takes aim at a series of cultural angles that interest me as well, but unlike me, she mostly concentrated on the modern evolution of the idea of terroir. My goal is not to displace the work of such scholars, but to complement it with a premodern literary, cultural, and philosophical perspective essential to the comprehension of the phenomenon. Other accounts, such as those found in the historian Susan Pinkard's book *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine,* the geographer Jean-Robert Pitte's *Gastronomie française,* and the essays in Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari's edited volume *Food: A Culinary History,* query the history of food and culture in early modern France, but do not focus on terroir.[12] Again, the history of cuisine is not my main concern here: I am

tracing a history of ideas in which food culture is often the yardstick, but not the object.

Finally, a vast array of more purely geographic and geological inquiries into the notion of terroir seek to explain how it physically alters flavors of foods and wines, including works by Emmanuelle Vaudour, more known in France, and by James Wilson and, more recently, Jancis Robinson, Hugh Johnson, and Percy Dougherty, who are better known in England and the United States.[13] Although it is common for such approaches to include a cultural dimension, these scholars too are ultimately interested in what we can know about terroir in an agricultural and food-centered analysis, this time with a more scientific perspective. Such scholars, along with others from adjoining disciplines, will, I hope, discover a new piece of terroir's history in the following pages.

SEEING TERROIR

The chapters below are organized chronologically from the Renaissance on, but I have taken care not to oversimplify by presenting a linear progression of food and identity without contradiction. In fact, there are many contradictions and much ambivalence in the evolution presented and I try to draw attention to both as they arise. Far from presenting an obstacle, these contradictions help strengthen the thesis that terroir was in fact reinforced as a concept by its divisive nature.

More important than the axis of time is that of space. The chapters below reflect on the literal and metaphorical distance that separates phenomena qualified as being influenced by terroir (food flavors, language, social mores, artistic tastes, etc.) and posit that circumstances of conflict have most readily contributed to the concept's evolution. That is, the most instructive points occur where there is friction between qualities being framed geographically. This often arises from a binary essentialism in which one set of attributes is defined negatively in opposition to another set: the qualities of the product of one terroir are known not by what they are, but by what they *are not.* The transition from one set of characteristics to another, the space where this occurs, and the reasons motivating the change ultimately best reveal the concept's nature.

Such a model is easily clarified with the tangible example of wine. The common qualification that one wine has "cherry flavors" magnifies the perceived difference between it and another wine from an adjacent terroir, where the wine taste is, say, "gamey." The way of speaking itself, the term invented to qualify the difference, replaces vaguely perceived sensorial qualities in the taster's mind to create solid, discernible, contrasting identities: "cherries" versus "game." Tasters, through these manners of speaking, suggest and create for themselves, and for others, a greater dissimilarity than might otherwise be perceived if the difference in smells were not qualified by disjunctive words and images. In a circular movement,

these descriptors skew sensorial perceptions, eliciting broader perceived differences than would have been possible without them. Moving from this concrete example to the larger implications of the idea, when the French "taste their nation every day" (or taste a region of the nation), they are also enhancing the mental framework of terroir, further parsing it, and defining it in relation to *other* regions and nations in a way that reifies and reinforces both identity and differences.

It is within these parameters of identity and difference that the metric of taste is relevant. As Pierre Bourdieu famously indicated in *La Distinction* (1979), tastes (both literal and metaphorical) serve as a way of distinguishing individuals within societal hierarchies. Bourdieu's famous categorization in the culinary realm is between the *goût de nécessité* and the *goût de luxe,* with the former, the "taste of necessity," belonging to those who choose their preferences chiefly in terms of the foods that will physically sustain them. Generally speaking, the *goût de nécessité* gravitates toward foods that are heavier, heartier, and more caloric.[14] The "taste of luxury" prefers foods that are lighter, more elegant, and finally less nutritive. By demonstrating the prerequisite "cultural capital" to know about these foods and the financial capital to afford them, discriminating eaters can frame themselves as belonging to a higher economic and intellectual class. When it comes to the cultural construction of terroir, eaters in early modern France made food choices with consideration to how those choices might allow access to higher levels of social standing. Indeed, as the pages of this book will reveal, the birth of geographical connoisseurship in the seventeenth century was predicated on eating for class and distinction.

In order to query adequately the questions raised above, an expanded terminology is necessary. Along with terroir, I examine a small lexicon that functioned as synonyms, near synonyms, and closely related concepts, all of them part of the overarching development of place-based identity. These include most prominently the terms *climat* (climate), *terrain, canton, sol* (soil), and, in several more generalized contexts, *pays* (country), *territoire,* and *province.* In some situations, after terroir had acquired decidedly negative connotations, other terms or circumlocutions appeared in order to express the effect of place without emphasizing the phenomenon in a pejorative way. In other contexts, similar notions were used to describe climatic determinism on the macro-level, accounting for the effect of the general climate on a region's inhabitants. *Climat* in those contexts most often pertains to the qualities of the air (whose effect on people is often detailed only in a vague way) or to the sun and heat (which are typically ascribed as encouraging laziness and libido). I analyze *climat* in its larger sense because it provides an important model, one more often attributed to people than to plants or flavors, in which the developing notion of terroir as a multidisciplinary concept found a parallel, reinforcing application. Indeed, as Bruno Latour has argued, it is in understanding the mediation between different discourses and realms of thought that systems of meaning are created. Science is not "pure" and objectively constructed without the

influence of social forces, nor are social phenomena understandable without grasping the role science has played, either explicitly or behind the scenes. All actors must be accounted for. Expanding my lexicon in parallel with my optic has allowed me to paint a more compelling, accurate, and, I hope, intriguing account of the interplay of factors behind terroir's origin.[15]

Lastly, although terroir is often defined as the flavor of "origin," it is important to draw attention to the fact that a first origin or birthplace is not always what users have in mind when they employ the word. A person or plant can be *transplanted* after birth and the power of the new terroir will take hold. Thus, terroir is sometimes, but not always, synonymous with original provenance.

Other theoretical constructs have been central in informing my treatment of terroir, nation, and identity, ranging from Mary Douglas's work *Purity and Danger*, a perceptive analysis of social wariness toward dirt and disorder that helps me to account for how terroir-based identities fell out of favor, to Norbert Elias's account of the construction of social hierarchy and power in the seventeenth century in *The Court Society*. Lastly, David Bell's *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* has provided a series of distinctions separating the category of "national sentiment," which occurs in the accounts detailed below, from "nationalism," which is a modern construct dating from the years leading up to the French Revolution.

AN OVERVIEW OF TERROIR AND FRENCH IDENTITY

To reveal the relationship between French cuisine and cultural identity in the Renaissance, there is no better place to begin than François Rabelais, one of France's most iconic authors when it comes to carousing and merriment, whose works are the Holy Grail for French literary gastronauts. Chapter 1 explores how the footprint left by Rabelais's fictional giants still pervades France's culinary identity. Through reinvigorated bacchic myth, the giants illustrate Rabelais's broader humanistic vision, foregrounding a tension that has historically been part of the French use of food and territory to qualify people. That is, terroir today speaks of sobriety, a means of lucidly framing and defining the intrinsic qualities of land according to the outward, aesthetic roadmap it projects on its products. Rabelais on the other hand, for all his attention to food, drink, and Loire Valley landmarks, centers his work on the drunken disregard of borders and boundaries in wine, language, and class. He inaugurated a French wine culture that was centered on place almost in spite of himself.

Bacchic images were polyvalent in the Renaissance, and the period also saw the rise of a naturalistic trend toward terroir in the group of contemporaneous poets known as the Pléiade. In their verse, Bacchus appears both as an inebriation that obviates borders of time and space, and also as its contrary, a georgic fascination with the power of the soil to define human character according to place. The evolution and establishment of terroir in the French imagination at this point occurred primarily not in respect to

wine, but rather in respect to regional pride and poetry. This poetry and prose together created an ethos around wine that would influence agricultural manuals of the time and endure to the present day.

As Renaissance France began to frame itself as a country, anthropological considerations of the influence of place on human behavior become frequent outside the culinary context. Authors such as Michel de Montaigne, France's most prominent essayist, and Jean Bodin, often referred to as France's first major political theorist, illustrate this trend clearly at the end of the sixteenth century. Chapter 2 demonstrates how these considerations, along with the literary influences examined in chapter 1, rival in importance more strictly agricultural reflections on the influence of the earth. After being normalized with respect to humans, meditations on the still inchoate concept of terroir returned to the world of plants at the end of the century in Olivier de Serres's *Théâtre d'agriculture,* France's most famous agricultural manual.

Chapter 3 reports on the much different trajectory of terroir in the seventeenth century, where it was once again central to questions of identity. Examining the influence of important language theorists, such as Vaugelas and Bellegarde, demonstrates that as much as language helped give rise to the concept of terroir in the sixteenth century, it also spurred great ambivalence toward it in the seventeenth century. The very identification with terroir that the poets of the Renaissance had glorified was now widely debased. That shift has much to tell us about societal values at a time when France was reaching its historical apogee of prestige and world influence. During that moment, anything described as "tasting of the terroir" became a sign of rusticity and impurity. That is not to say that origins were not important markers of prestige at the time. Indeed, the very factors that served to make terroir a dubious attribute were also instrumental in cementing the concept in a French society that cleaved to hierarchies. Those who were not rustic *needed* others to "smell of the terroir" in order to distinguish themselves as pure and unblemished. Modern connoisseurship, born at this point, did not arise as much from a love of food and wine as from a need for social distinction.

During this recalibration, considerations of the role of terroir spread from language to the aesthetics of the garden, with Versailles as its epitome. The new emphasis on rationality bolstered an urge not to coexist with but to *control* nature through science, and reinforced a trend in taste in which the "natural" was broken into two categories: "high nature," or nature as it should exist, and nature as it actually existed, riddled with imperfection and altered by the contingencies of life on earth. Chapter 4 examines how nature was "denatured" as individuals sought to perfect it, notably in the gardens of Versailles, where the machinations concerning plant life were foils for the lives of human beings.

Chapter 5 outlines how seventeenth-century French society helped reinforce food and class identity at a socially charged moment in its historical evolution. The practice of connoisseurship was indelibly shaped by Saint-Évremond, the most famous food snob of the seventeenth century. His proclivity for the wines from Champagne hinged on many factors, including

new iterations of Hippocratic and Galenic understandings of health and humors. The medical discourse on humors was already mostly obsolete in late seventeenth-century science, yet remained central when it came to social debates and the politics of class.

Chapter 6 bridges the divide between social class and political identity, explaining how circumstances combined to bring terroir to center stage in an attempt to save France's bourgeoning concept of national unity in a debate early in the eighteenth century between proponents of the *thèse nobiliaire* (advocating the legitimacy of the nobles as a ruling class) and those of the *thèse absolutiste* (supporting absolute rule by the monarch). Led by the writings of the Count de Boulainvilliers, disenfranchised nobles questioned the unchecked absolutist jurisdiction of Louis XIV and Louis XV, arguing that as nobles they had hereditary rights to power and higher social standing. The response to this threat came from one of the eighteenth century's most respected aesthetic theorists, the Abbot Du Bos, who, using terroir as a tool, dismantled the exclusionary ideology brought to the fore by Boulainvilliers.

Chapter 7 reflects on how, in the years leading up to the Revolution, terroir came to be a part of what made a French person French. In other words, terroir returned to fashion in certain circles just in time to redefine and cement French roots, through a definition that framed nationhood. This novel turn in terroir's evolution was born out of considerations removed from food mores, but, as the chapter brings to light, terroir soon made its entrance back into wine and food. Here, in what one might describe as the rebirth of a terrestrial nation, it is possible to underscore the pre- and immediate post-Revolutionary consequences that this development would have in the food world and the world at large.

The conclusion provides a short account of how this complex and polyvalent history exercises influence on modern ideas about terroir. To this end, I offer a reflection that begins in the early years of the twentieth century when terroir became highly visible in the French public eye. I present a panoramic perspective of the concept's use through two optics: terroir as it radiates from the land toward expectations concerning its produce, and terroir as it is perceived from the outside inward, allowing tasters to experience and *live* the land indirectly through its fruits. This demonstration will, I hope, incite my readers to conclude with me that twentieth-century practices of tasting terroir began hundreds of years ago and were shaped as much by considerations in the realm of literature, language, and national identity as by a priori "scientific" discourses. In the end, I submit that, just as the French appreciate the diverse fragrances of a wine by knowing a little something about its origin, we will better understand French culture itself if we grasp terroir by its historical roots.

ONE

Rabelais's Table and the Poets of the Pléiade

BOTH FRANÇOIS RABELAIS'S sixteenth-century mock epic in prose and the writings of the group of poets known as the Pléiade provide great insight into how fictional representations of food and wine linked origins to identity.[1] Consider the two influences in juxtaposition: on the one hand, Rabelais presents depictions of regional, cultural, linguistic, and culinary boundaries in order to transgress them, building walls only to break them down and create harmony among readers. On the other hand, the poets of the Pléiade use language on wine to reaffirm territorial distinctions, establishing identity and harmony by forming communities *within* regional walls. These influences in the realm of fiction created an important dialogue that dovetailed later in the century with a burgeoning corpus of wisdom texts on wine, farming, and food to mark the beginning of terroir's modern evolution. This chapter details that phenomenon, elucidating the literary contributions behind a specifically French brand of culinary aesthetics and regional identity in the Renaissance.

RABELAIS: TRANSGRESSING BORDERS IN BODY, LANGUAGE, AND SPACE

There is no better place to begin a discussion on the role of food in France's cultural imagination than Rabelais, who remains widely known for the extravagant culinary exploits depicted in his writing. Besides recounting epic culinary consumption, his five-volume complete works invite readers into a bawdy and biting satire of religion, a criticism of unjust war, and a hilarious yet profound representation of humanist values initially centered around the adventures of two giants: Gargantua and his son Pantagruel. The second book of the series, which I examine closely below, *The Very Horrific Life of the Great Gargantua, Father of Pantagruel* (1534), precedes the first in terms of the narrative's chronology, and begins with the birth of Gargantua to his parents Grandgousier and Gargamelle.[2] Even though the term *terroir* appears only once in the work (in chapter 49 of the third volume of the series), Rabelais succeeds in taking food, place, and identity center stage throughout his opus.

Ironically, Rabelaisian food descriptions construct place in the opposite way from what one would expect: just as often as he uses geographical features to create individual identities, Rabelais elides distinctions by conflating food and people from different areas. Far from causing the significance of the provenance to disappear, this tactic has just the opposite effect, reaffirming the importance of origin as an object of transgression. Nowhere is this more evident, as I will show immediately below, than when initially stark representations of place and cuisine are challenged by linguistic tropes and depictions, blotting out the credibility of regional connoisseurship through comical images of an indiscriminate, all-consuming body.

From the beginning of *The Very Horrific Life,* even before the birth of Gargantua, Rabelais brings these strategies to bear, providing an example of the importance of food in a "bodily" description of the giant's father, Grandgousier (the name signifies "big throat"), that doubles as a characterization of France's culinary wealth:

> Grandgousier was a great joker in his time, loving to drink hearty as well as any man who was then in the world, and fond of eating salty. To this end, he ordinarily had on hand a good supply of Mainz and Bayonne hams, plenty of smoked ox tongues, an abundance of andouilles in season and mustard salted beef. Backed up by botargo, a provision of sausages (not those of Bologna, for he feared Lombard mouthfuls), but of Bigorre, of Longaulnay, of La Brenne, and of La Rouergue.[3]

The accumulation of meats and sausages suggests geographic diversity humorously in the fatty, intestinal offerings from the four corners of the country (roughly speaking, Mainz or "Mayence," though now in Germany, was historically one of these corners, Bayonne another, Brittany and Provence, represented in the list of sausages, the two others). These copious preparations speak to the variety of France's offerings and terroirs, while casting Grandgousier as an icon of France as he symbolically incarnates the country's collective wares by enthusiastically ingesting them. Yet, though the passage constructs terroirs in the reader's imagination, it also breaks them down, as the regional specialties are assimilated indifferently in Grandgousier's belly.

The same phenomenon occurs linguistically: the passage reflects culinary variety in the food catalogued, mixing common French vernacular terms with strange names and places (e.g., the un-French sounding word *botargo,* a Mediterranean caviar preparation made from red mullet, and the Breton place-name Longaulnay).[4] Just as with foods, the names serve as often to destabilize identity as to frame it. As the Rabelaisian narrator himself later points out, the name of one of the primary characters, the giant Pantagruel, unites two linguistic groups and two lands: *panta* means all in Greek and *gruel* signifies thirst in Arabic.[5] Gargantua, for his part, is baptized both for his enormous throat (*garganta* means throat in both Spanish and Portuguese) and for the name's resemblance to the bodily function *gargouiller* (to gurgle), a noise that in medieval French mixes connotations of ingestion and excretion,

since it can just as easily apply to the throat as to the intestines. Finally Gargamelle, Gargantua's mother, has a Langdocien name signifying throat *(gargamello)* that originally derives from the Arabic for the same word.[6] Like the meat items above, specific countries, regions, and linguistic heritages are summarily evoked only to be immediately subsumed in the all-assimilating umbrella of Rabelais's prose, inviting readers to leave pretensions about their own geographic identity behind in favor of collective merriment.

This breaking of boundaries is mirrored in the stories' fascination with the excess of physical quantities and the overstepping of limits. Although the giants' prodigious anatomies and unerring drive for culinary satisfaction make them convincing gourmands (Gargantua is born shouting an imperative, "Drink, drink, drink"), they are less credible as gourmets. Indeed, Grandgousier, Gargamelle, and other characters, such as Panurge and Frère Jean, who appear in the later volumes, tend toward indiscriminate eating, pleasure, and song. This bacchanalian atmosphere is constantly recalled by the language play of the passages, which seems to suggest the importance of excessive drinking over measured enjoyment: the text is peppered with maxims such as "it is to me an eternity of boozing and boozing for eternity," "always drinking," "forever watering," and "keep drinking, you'll never die."[7] Each quote accentuates excess by omitting any mention of chronological borders or physical limits, implying the triumph of an all-encompassing gluttonous, corporal inebriation over mindful consumption.

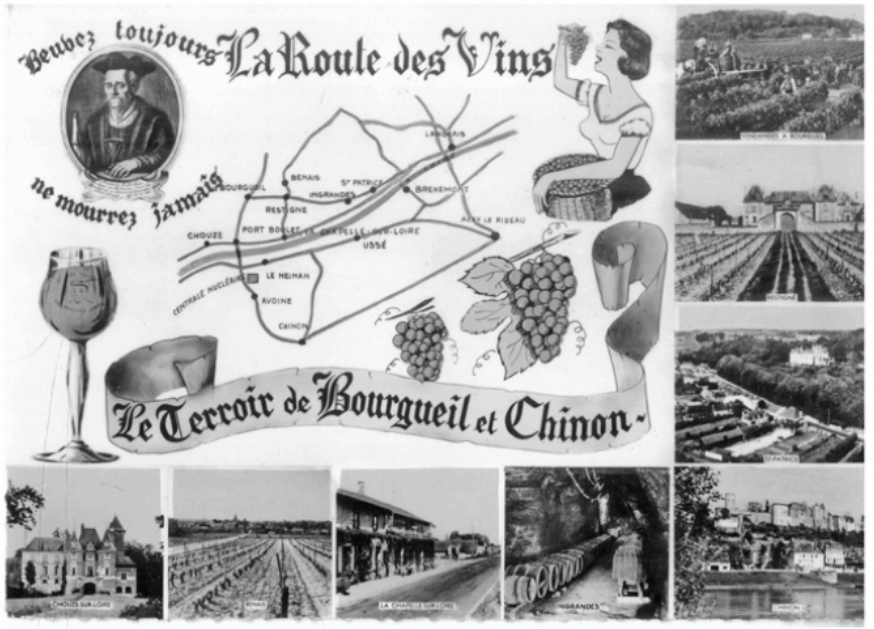

FIGURE 2. This 1950s postcard features the "Keep drinking, you'll never die" quote from *Gargantua*. The design both reaffirms the individual identities of the wine-producing towns, in the separate photos and map, and elides them, in the excessive hedonism suggested by the quote and in the visual blending between the palpable bunches of grapes, the woman's curvaceous breasts, and the similarly curvy glass of wine.

Nowhere is Rabelais's excess presented more clearly than when the narrator describes Gargantua's table manners in the first book. The studied appreciation of foods and origins through moderation and refinement could not be further removed from this graphic, bodily depiction:

> Meanwhile four of his men threw into his mouth, one after the other continuously, mustard by the pailful. Then he drank a horrific draft of white wine to relieve his kidneys. Afterward, he ate according to the season, food to suit his appetite, and he stopped eating when his belly was dilated. For drinking he had no end nor rule, for he said that the bounds and limits of drinking were when, as the person drank, the cork in his slippers swelled upward a half a foot.[8]

Between the doses of mustard, the images of kidneys and bellies (the choicest cuts always get less emphasis than the entrails in Rabelais), the gulps of wine, and the distended midsections, the reader realizes readily that these exploits at the table hardly symbolize culinary refinement. The real key lies in the last sentence: *For drinking he had no end nor rule.* The rest of this book will show that connoisseurship, as it took shape in France, consisted in drawing limits and cataloguing flavors according to the specificity of alimentary origins in a discerning and mindful way. The Rabelaisian character doles out counterexamples: he exists in a world of excess where the bounds and limits evoked are most often the ones his unrestrained ingestion breaks.

One of the most bawdy—and *bodily*—moments of the five books illustrates this point perfectly. The scene in question is one where Rabelais evokes wine in the context of excretion rather than of discriminating culinary appreciation. As Gargantua and Grandgousier are discussing the merits of various swabs for wiping behinds (the suggestions range from goose necks, to cats, to velvet), Gargantua's father praises and encourages his son for his prodigious findings and rewards him with the promise of wine: "Oh," said Grandgousier, "[. . .] go on with your ass-wipative discourse, I pray you. And, by my beard! For one puncheon you shall have sixty casks, I mean of good Breton wine, which does not grow in Brittany, but in that good Véron region."[9] The humor lies not only in the excessive amounts of wine given in recompense but also in its specificity, and the emphasis on its goodness in the unpalatable scatological context. More importantly, the misnomer *vin breton* constitutes a telling sign of the territorial ambivalence and language games that run throughout Rabelais's work: there is a disjunction between the name of the wine and its origin. The wine is from Véron, a very small place-specific viticultural town close to Chinon, but it is here named for the Bretons, who were known for their excessive consumption of Loire wine, shipped upriver for their personal use.[10]

Such transgression of borders (both geographical borders and the social borders of good taste) ultimately reaffirms the existence of the identities those borders frame. This is apparent in Rabelais's modern legacy in the Loire Valley, where most of the fictional exploits take place. That association is a source of pride in the Touraine region, where a recent festival sponsored by the local *Maison des vins* and tourist office offered a conference about

Rabelais's imprint on the collective local imagination.[11] To give a particularly compelling example, despite the ambiguity and the "ass-wipative" context in which the reference to *vin breton* occurs, the tourist board of Véron continues to cite that passage today in its website documentation of the region, using Rabelais's cultural capital to bolster Véron as a perennial wine-producing terroir distinct from other regions.[12]

RENAISSANCE BACCHUS AND THE LITERARY CONSTRUCTION OF WINE CULTURE

When it comes to framing French Renaissance wine culture in both prose and poetry, there is no element quite so central as the mythological character Bacchus. Half man and half god (his Greek analogue, Dionysos, is the son of the mortal Semele and of Zeus), Bacchus was the protector of vines, overseeing viticulture in a rational, naturalized context. He was also the god of drunken revelry and excess. Renaissance literature inscribed these multiple aspects of the myth into its pages and, in so doing, created a broader meaning for wine that continues to endure in French culture. Indeed, literary fiction helped reinforce images of wine as a beverage with a purpose beyond either mere sustenance or the medicinal ends that otherwise preoccupied the period's wine writing.

In the pages of Rabelais, Bacchus is a force not only of inebriation and folly, but also of conviviality, universality, and great wisdom. In the group of sixteenth-century Renaissance poets known as the Pléiade, Bacchus often connotes enjoying friendship and maximizing the pleasure of daily life. But there is another element at play. Through representations borrowed from the Virgilian tradition of didactic poetry, Bacchus appears in a naturalistic register of farming and place-specific wines, deployed not to celebrate culinary culture in itself, but to create linguistic identity and foster poetic inspiration. Instead of standing for a force of inebriation, he represents lucidity; instead of defining terroir in negative terms, he circumscribes it positively in a discourse on place and the origin of language. Renaissance French bacchic culture at once transcends and frames terroir as a trope for literary and culinary identity.

In *Gargantua,* bacchic references, specifically to Silenus, traditionally the tutor of Bacchus, and the donkey that almost always accompanies him, appear in the opening lines of the prologue. There, the narrator invokes Bacchus by way of the passage in Plato's *Symposium* where Alcibiades likens Socrates to Silenus.[13] Glossing Plato, Rabelais invites readers to "consume" the pages that follow, assimilating the reading with the practice of having a cool drink. In other words, the consumption in question is not the highfalutin stuff of pompous literary pronouncements, nor of highly discerning culinary choices for that matter, but a refreshment that comes easily and naturally in a sort of literary inebriation that Rabelais invites his readers to share.

In fact, after the first pages, one might conclude that in order to read Rabelais seriously, one must paradoxically read him for fun, as if enjoying a glass or two of wine.

> Most illustrious drinkers, and you, most precious poxies—for you, not to others my writings are dedicated—Alcibiades, in Plato's dialogue entitled *The Symposium,* praising his master Socrates, incontrovertibly the prince of philosophers, among other things says he is like the Sileni. Sileni were in olden times little boxes, such as we see nowadays in apothecaries' shops, painted on the outside with merry frivolous pictures [. . .] but inside they preserved fine drugs [. . .] and other valuables.[14]

In Greco-Roman mythology, Sileni are half-man and half-goat followers and companions to Bacchus. That mix of human and animal forms foreshadows Rabelais's overstepping of linguistic, terrestrial, and social borders, but it also offers another, more important lesson. As the prologue explains, Alcibiades makes the comparison because Socrates, though ugly on the outside, contained infinite wisdom on the inside. This representation offers one of many contradictions that will endure throughout the work: drunken excess on the exterior ultimately leads to wisdom, virtue, and sobriety on the interior.[15] As Rabelais points out, the boxes of pharmaceuticals are a metaphor for the book itself. The work is like a vessel holding great wisdom that the reader taps into through enjoyment. Laughter leads to an epiphany and to "superhuman understanding." For Rabelais, the understanding in question is not to be found in the end, but in the joyous means of the investigation. As the author hastens to add, borrowing and reversing the sense of an adage Erasmus applied to Demosthenes, his pages were composed with "more wine than oil." In other words, bacchic inspiration from wine contributed to the work's genesis more than labored travails completed with late-night lamp oil. Accordingly, readers are enjoined to consume the pages with joy.

This ethos pervades the five books of the series and provides a clear example of how a Rabelaisian ideal seeped into French culinary culture. In France today, there is a class of wines that are for easy drinking, referred to as *vins de soif,* or "wines for thirst." These wines hold no pretensions toward being the object of "serious" analysis and are intended to create flowing conversation and conviviality. To take one relevant example, the Loire Valley wine producers Catherine and Pierre Breton offer a "Cuvée Trinch," a direct reference, the label explains, to Rabelais. They bill it as fruity wine made with young vines, to drink without compunction or afterthought during a spontaneous lunch, in contrast with their more serious, contemplative "terroir" wines that need to be aged. The focus for the Trinch wine is on social communion rather than connoisseurship.

But there is far more to Bacchus in Rabelais. True to the prologue, the reader's journey is filled with lavish eating and carnivalesque depictions whose topical signification quickly gives way to a more sustained philosophical or social meaning. This is the case throughout the five-volume series, but it is the last volume that offers some of the most compelling

scenarios concerning wine and identity.[16] Diverse images of Bacchus emphatically suggest wine as a panacea when Pantagruel, joined by Panurge and Frère Jean, nears the completion of his journey to find the oracular Divine Bottle *(la Dive bouteille)*. This bottle, for all of the pomp associated with it, is destined to foretell only whether or not Panurge will be cuckolded if he marries. Despite its triviality, the quest for the bottle gives rise to several instances where representations of Bacchus and Silenus simultaneously reinforce and undermine wine's specific terrestrial identity.

The first important moment occurs as the trio make their way to the doors of the subterranean temple where the Divine Bottle lies and discover, inscribed in gold letters in Greek, the sentence "In wine is truth." The maxim, originally attributed to the Greek poet Alcaeus, greets the travelers as they proceed. Since it was a common Renaissance theme to suggest that the truth dwells beneath the earth, the oracular placement of the Greek adage seems all the more plausible.[17] A further auspicious sign combines wine, truth, and the specificity of place: the text indicates that the Divine Bottle lies buried beneath the soil of the Loire Valley wine town Chinon, which is also Rabelais's birthplace. The prestige of the place and the "realness" of it in terms of the author's biological origins suggest that great truths should be around the next corner.

The jocular image of Bacchus, however, quickly reemerges and drowns out any serious analytic ponderings about telluric verities. Instead of accentuating the notion of terroir or of a specific origin for the Divine Bottle, the text evokes origin and identity only to trample over it. Notwithstanding the place-specificity of Chinon, the temple entrance lies beyond a mixed vineyard whose heterogeneous vines hail from diverse regions, countries, and even different time periods: "Approaching the temple of the Dive Bouteille, we had to pass through a great vineyard formed of all kinds of wines, such as Falernian, Malmsey, Muscadine, Tabbia, Beaune, Mirevaux, Orléans, Picardent, Arbois, Coussy, Anjou, Graves, Corsica, Véron, Nérac, and others. The vineyard was planted long ago by Bacchus, with such a benediction that in every season it bore leaves, flowers, and fruits like the orange trees of San Remo."[18] This description both reinforces the oenological identity of these places by naming them and dismantles them, in the same sort of hodgepodge of diversity that characterized the sausages in Grandgousier's belly. The famous wines of the Renaissance world confuse culinary identity in a senseless communal vineyard where northern latitudes mix with southern, wet with dry, cold with warm, old with new, and prestigious with mundane. The description collapses wine's natural boundaries and, instead of valorizing the qualities of the earth, accentuates the occult influence of Bacchus by transgressing geography and chronology alike: the physical medley of appellations bear fruit from every place in every season.

The ongoing abrogation of limits appears with the most resonance when Panurge finally drinks from the Divine Bottle near the end of the last book. The group is confronted with the oracular bottle, which cracks in the

fountain waters in which it is immersed and begins to boil. As it rends, there is a gasp, "Then was heard this word: *Trinch.*"[19] Panurge is called upon to gloss the wine as he drinks it, and as he is invited to combine textual interpretation and wine consumption, the situation seems propitious at last for the analytic experience to take precedent over hedonistic revelry. The Divine Bottle *ought* to yield through rational analysis a concrete message of wisdom. Yet when the opened bottle finally reveals itself from the fountain as a mythical Falernian wine shaped like a book, it does something different.[20]

Instead of volumes of insight pouring forth, the bottle rewards the band with just a droplet of a word: *trinch.* The sound is inauspicious, but the result is more meaningful than it would first appear. Bacbuc, the group's initiatress and guardian of the bottle (her name derives from the Hebrew word for bottle), explains: "*Trinch* is a panomphaen word celebrated and understood by all nations, and it means 'Drink' [*Beuvez*]. Therefore we maintain that not by laughing but by drinking does man distinguish himself. I don't say drinking simply and absolutely in the strictest sense, for beasts drink as well as man, but I mean drinking cool delicious wine. Take note, friends, that from wine we incline to the divine [*de vin divin on devient*] [. . .] for power it has to fill the soul with all truth, all knowledge, and philosophy."[21] The oracle thus utters a universally understood word for conviviality, further distancing the imagery from any sort of geographical precision in order to affirm an all-inclusive humanist truth. The awareness of each individual as part of a pan-geographic togetherness continues to hold sway through an inebriated sort of poetic ecstasy, as Panurge launches into the peroration of gibberish in senseless rimes and verse that closes the book. The entire scene colorfully reenacts the message the Rabelaisian narrator had already summed up perfectly in the *Quart livre:* "By the aid of Bacchus (that's the good tasty delicious wine) are the spirits of humans raised high, their bodies evidently lightened, and what was terrestrial in them is made supple."[22] Bacchus both represents the earth and acts as a conveyance for transcending earth's physical holds in placeless, universal joy.

FRENCH VERSE AND THE VINE: FROM SKY TO EARTH IN THE POETRY OF THE PLÉIADE

Variations on Rabelaisian themes that promoted Bacchus as a force paving over difference in favor of unity made their way into French poetry of the 1540s and 1550s, while other images did just the opposite.[23] Both aspects of the poetic testimony in question came from the Renaissance poets of the Pléiade, which included most notably Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, Jacques Peletier du Mans, Remy Belleau, and Jean-Antoine de Baïf. The Pléiade made use of images of wine and the vine as it endeavored to accentuate the distinctiveness of the French language, using the latter as a base on which to build an entire national identity. Most prominent in this mission was du Bellay's *Defense and Illustration of the French Language,* which appeared in 1549.

The significance of this work from du Bellay with respect to agriculture and identity is unmistakable, but the transition to wine as building boundaries through language, instead of breaking down barriers, is not as abrupt, and the poetry of the Pléiade conveys both messages. Similar to Rabelais's depiction in the *Quart livre,* several poetic representations of wine positioned it as working to deliver earth to the heavens and heavens to the earth in the form of inspiration and communion with the gods.[24] In Pierre de Ronsard's *Hymne de Bacchus,* wine initiates the drinker to a repast in the heavens that dissolves earthly differences and invites mortals to rub elbows with immortals:

With you, Father, replete with your sweet ambrosia
We lift human fancy to the sky
Carried in your chariot, and of vicious men
Purged from your liquor, we dare rise to the heavens
And sit at the great Jupiter's table.[25]

Along with harmony and communion, the poets of the Pléiade offered even more fundamental reasons to partake: the abstemious person is "mired in sadness," while those who tipple are united in good health, joy, and dance. Such representations are not far from the depictions of wine in Rabelais, but they also derive from the advent of new elements nuancing bacchic representation.

The source of one such nuance was Henri Estienne's rediscovery of pseudo-Anacreontic poetry, which Estienne mistakenly thought dated to Greece's Archaic period, in the fifth or sixth century bce.[26] Estienne had, in fact, discovered third century bce imitations of Anacreontic verse (later called Anacreonta). He and the Pléiade construed the work, which included a large series of bacchic songs, to be from the earliest reaches of classical Greek civilization and thus to incarnate pure human expression and naturalness before it had been "corrupted" by time and successive layers of cultural patina. This supposed naturalness in verse was thought to be one of the greatest gifts antiquity could bestow upon the Renaissance poetic endeavor, and the Pléiade, likening it to unadulterated agricultural produce, sought to appropriate it as a linguistic model for the bourgeoning French language, which the poets valued for its relative youth and purity.

Pseudo-Anacreontic verse lacked the prodigious excess of Rabelais, but was explicit in promoting themes of good company, abundance, and corporal gratification. Perhaps the most important notion associated with it was that of *carpe diem,* a theme that came about in large part from the influence of Horace, but which the Pléiade poets also viewed as having been a central component of wine and writing in Anacreon.[27] Happiness was not hopelessly mediated away from the "here and now," relegated to the vagaries of the afterlife, but known instantly—and naturally—through writing, drinking, and other terrestrial pleasures. One poem by Ronsard reunites these features strikingly, expressing the amicable spirit of wine and the ambiance sought in the poetic endeavor. Evoking *carpe diem* in addressing Corydon, the

stock poetic name for a shepherd, Ronsard depicts Bacchus as whiling away the summer under the shade of a trellis. The verse encourages readers to live day by day, enjoying rural life, friendship, and the fruits of the earth, but also equates drinking to literary production, suggesting that the two are joined in an organic process:

Man after his ultimate death
No longer drinks or eats over there,
And his barn that he left
Full of wheat before his demise,
And his cellar full of wine
No longer enter his mind.
Hey, what benefits does anxiety bring?
[. . .] Pour and repour some more
Into this great golden goblet.
I am going to drink to Henri Estienne,
Who gave us from the underworld
The sweet Teian lyre
Lost by old Anacreon.
To you, graceful Anacreon,
The cup owes its pleasure,
And Bacchus owes to you his bottles;
Venus owes to you her companion, Love,
And Silenus owes to you to drink away
The summer under the shade of the trellis.[28]

Everything in this poem mediated by Anacreontic verse lends itself to portraying the friendship and conviviality that went with French Renaissance wine culture. The georgic images of a barn and wine cellar, the invocation of familiar names, and the informal verb in the second person imperative bring the gods to the ground in a natural register.

More than drinking is going on here, though. In addition to the invocation of a lyre, the instrument of poetic inspiration, from the Ionian city Teos, the birthplace of Anacreon, the language unites words and wine. Specifically, the "pour and repour some more"—*verse et reverse encore*—doubles as a word game in French, with the imperative *verse* reminiscent of the verb *versifier,* to compose verse. Moreover, *vers* both means verse in French and also would have suggested its homonym *verre,* or drinking glass. The repetitive drinking (*reverse* meaning repour) and the successive lines of poetry go hand in hand, inviting the reader into the happy world of wine consumption and joyous literary creation.

Most importantly, although the representation is not place specific, it *is* specific in linking literary inspiration to the ground and to a summer day under a trellis, evoking a natural relationship between the poet, the earth, its produce, and its seasons. Instead of blurring the latter, as Rabelais had done, the author brings time and place into sharp focus. Such changes were soon to

combine with another important evolution as the Pléiade began to present a rationalized depiction of Bacchus with a personal and poetic identity defined by specific places. Once again, the impetus for the characterization came from antiquity: not from Plato as was the case in Rabelais, but from Virgil.

VIRGIL'S INFLUENCE ON FRENCH RENAISSANCE LAND, AGRICULTURE, AND LANGUAGE

In 1636, when the English poet John Dryden purportedly referred to Virgil's *Georgics* as "the best poem by the best poet," he reaffirmed what many in France already believed. Ninety years earlier, members of the Pléiade such as Peletier du Mans and Ronsard, deeply inspired by Virgil's didactic style and thematic content, had roundly heralded his poetry for its perfection.[29] Virgil's *Georgics*, divided into four books that mimic the natural cycle of the seasons, bills itself as an educational poem on agriculture and working the land. Yet despite the apparent simplicity of its subject, the *Georgics* is often termed the most inscrutable of Virgil's works, clearly destined for educated audiences with little experience getting their hands dirty farming.[30] Readers perceived early on that the *Georgics* doubled as a parable on social and political life, employing agricultural metaphors to convey far-reaching messages.[31] Virgil's poem encourages the reader on both practical and ethical grounds to toil in order to survive and to benefit from nature, which could be either a positive or a hostile force. To prevail and find solutions, Virgil posits, his reader needs to think logically and find the determining causes of natural phenomena. In the *Georgics,* those causes and the resulting solutions are often located in the soil.

Book 2 of the *Georgics,* summarily titled *On Trees,* delivers a detailed account of viticulture that captivated the imagination of French Renaissance writers in particular. Its proem begins by spotlighting fields and stars and ends with Bacchus not drunk but diligently working in the winemaker's vat:

> Thus far the tillage of the fields and the stars of heaven: now you, Bacchus, will I sing [. . .]. Come hither, Lenaean sire, strip off your buskins and with me plunge your naked legs in the new must.[32]

Bacchus is heralded as a king ("sire," translated from the Latin *pater*), and there is an oblique reference to his theatrical tradition through his buskins and the epithet "Lenaean" (the Lenaia was a classical Greek festival celebrating Dionysos and included the production of plays).[33] In stripping off his shoes, however, the actor also strips his façade and is reborn without pretension in the "new" must of the wine. Indeed, the reader is astounded to see Bacchus joining in physical labor, slogging barelegged in the vat to crush grapes. Rather than communicating boundless silliness or endowing the poet with wings and sending his creative spirit aloft, Bacchus exalts the toils of the earth. "Nature lies under the soil" *(solo natura subest),* exclaims Virgil several lines later, and we are given to conclude that an explanation of the working

of the world will come from an understanding of and communion with the earth's soils, not from the mysteries of the gods.[34]

Jacques Peletier du Mans, one of the early members of the Pléiade, owes a tangible debt to Virgil in his poem *L'Automne.* There he contradicts the whimsical insouciance of Rabelais's representation of wine, borrowing directly the image of Bacchus descending from the skies to help in the vat. As the name suggests, the poem is based within the framework of the natural cycle of the earth. This time, however, Bacchus's role is even further "grounded" than in Virgil, in a celebration that unites humans, nature, and technique:

Winey Bacchus readies his hoops,
Prepares wine presses, and repairs vessels.
The harvester has his feet completely soiled
From stamping and squashing the grapes.
And this first run *(mère goutte)* taste
That the pressed grape gives,
In an undulating torrent
Flows into the vat,
And the large barrel works hard, and groans
In a torturous embracing of the must.[35]

The poem expands Bacchus's role in its technical representation of presses, barrels, and grape must. The lexicon of labor is central, complete with the sounds of groaning. Bacchus thus finds himself on the human side of things, wrapped up in the nitty-gritty of winemaking. Not only will he stomp grapes, but he will also be involved in the specialized procedures of readying the winemaker's equipment for the process. The poem in French evokes the *mère goutte* not merely as specialized wine vocabulary meaning free-run juice, but as an image of the "earth mother." We are unequivocally in the context of naturalized mythology, in a celebration based on the Virgilian model. This fact is further confirmed when Peletier du Mans takes up a conversation on grafting roots several lines later, integrating yet another of the defining characteristics of the *Georgics.*[36]

Virgil's reception by the Pléiade reveals an evolution of thought in which perceptions of Bacchus remained poeticized, but also became progressively more rationalized, with wine and the vine taking hold of the French imagination as a science in which elements of divine inspiration joined rational labor. The trend of mythology being rationalized and naturalized in Virgil's *Georgics* is here distilled into a French vision of wine, language, and identity vastly different from that of Rabelais. It blends references to the god into a lengthy discussion on soils and microclimates in an ordered, rational discourse on the culture of vines and wine. Even more importantly, members of the Pléiade used the rationalized vision of wine provided by Virgil to describe how poetic language could be created, not as a product of

drunken inspiration, but as a regional, agricultural product with an identity determined by the poet working in harmony with a specific place.

Joachim du Bellay explains in his *Défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549) that France, like Virgil's Rome, provides an auspicious climate to produce a rich harvest in both words and agriculture. Du Bellay elegizes France by borrowing directly from book 2 of the *Georgics,* in a depiction that first seems to be praising agricultural abundance only, but that in fact uses a discourse on the richness of the countryside to describe the potential of the French language. The text shows how the Pléiade used the *Georgics* metaphorically to assimilate agricultural and linguistic production. Du Bellay writes, "I will not speak here of the temperateness of the air, of the fertility of the earth, of the abundance of all sorts of fruits necessary for the comfort and upkeep of human life, and of innumerable other commodities [. . . .] I will not speak of all the large rivers, the many beautiful forests, towns no less opulent than strong, equipped with many weapons for war [. . .]. What is more, the enraged tiger, the cruel brood of lions, poisonous grasses and all of the other plagues of humanity are far from here."[37] This passage, which pertains France's potential to develop its own language on par with Latin, is taken directly from Virgil and appropriates explicitly the metaphor of the "cruel brood of lions."[38] France, like Virgil's Rome, is unencumbered by savage beasts and provides an auspicious climate to produce a rich linguistic harvest. Shifting seamlessly from agricultural bounty to linguistic richness, du Bellay uses an extended comparison of plants, fruits, and roots to explain how the Latin language became so rich in the first place, reminding his readers that cultivation goes hand in hand with abundance when it comes to culling the maximum either from fruits or from a language.[39] The agricultural metaphor from Virgil attests to a practice and a nationalistic set of aesthetics that the Renaissance would apply to both language and the vine, reinforcing agricultural standards through linguistic ideals.

In fact, du Bellay goes on to remind his readers that abundance comes only from diligent cultivation in fruits and words alike.[40] Using the Romans as a model, he refers to wordsmiths as "agriculturalists," who carefully use reason to choose a civilized terrain in order to give rise to a healthy plant, acculturating what was formerly a wild product: "But they [the Romans], acting as good agriculturalists, first transferred language from a wild place to a domestic one; then so that it would bear better fruit sooner, they cut from around it the useless sprigs, and put in their stead native cultivated sprigs, masterfully taken from the Greek language, which were so well grafted and integrated into the trunk that they henceforth no longer seemed adopted but natural."[41] Using pruning, grafting, and other agricultural techniques allows the writer to interact with, tame, and domesticate nature, integrating the characteristics of the land (nature) and the work of the poet (culture) into the final linguistic product.[42]

Ronsard took the use of Bacchus and agricultural metaphors one step further in *Les Plaisirs rustiques, à Maurice de la Porte* (1554). Again, allowing pastoral images to take on a specifically georgic thematic, he appropriates and

localizes the god, casting him as watching over a specific geography, lending verisimilitude and naturalism to the representation by including physical landmarks from the shores of the Marne river in the French town of Meaux. Here, Bacchus is no longer a distant image casting a general regard, but rather looks benevolently upon specific vines, which are favorably compared to those of Ay, one of the most prestigious wine-producing towns in the Champagne region of the time:

Meaux that a caring Bacchus has taken watch over
And whose slopes he surveys with a friendly eye,
Slopes rich in a wine whose succulent bounty
Is not surpassed by the wines of Ay.
Bacchus is not the only one to favor them,
But also his female companion and the pastor of Amphrysus,
The former turning his stalks blond,
The latter turning the abundance of grasses green.[43]

Even if several elements of the depiction are owed directly to Virgil (Amphrysus, for example, is an epithet for Apollo taken directly from the *Georgics*), there is an important difference between Ronsard's work and most bacchic poetry predating the Pléiade.[44] Bacchus, transplanted from the ancient context, is not only naturalized here, but precisely *localized* in Renaissance France, with references to specific places in the French countryside.

In other words, for Ronsard and du Bellay, localizing the French language became an aesthetic construct, as both poets emphasized the specific "flavor" that came from the communion between the poet and his home terrain. In *À sa muse,* Ronsard explains how his fields inspire and shape his language, an influence he in turn cultivates in his writing. The poet, immortalized by his verse, then flies from the earth, conveying to the world his Vendômois origin:

I will fly spritely through the universe,
Eternalizing the fields where I reside,
Covered and honored by my glory
Gained from having joined the two different harpers
With the soft twittering of my ivory lyre,
Which became Vendômois through my verse.[45]

Although Ronsard takes inspiration from Horace's Ode 2.20 in invoking the winged poetic bird, the connection with the earth and the mark of the terroir are original to the French vision, representing a proclamation of the power of land to determine and "flavor" the poet's language or verse. As Peletier du Mans had put it several years earlier, summing up the relationship between landscape and language: "A mountain, a river, and just a bit of distance/ Make the language of neighbors completely different."[46] To put it simply, the poets of the Pléiade shaped the French imagination of regional wine culture

by using vines as a metaphor for language production. Words, like wine, are initially shaped by the terroir and subsequently cultivated by the labor of the writer or vineyardist.

FROM FICTION TO NATIONAL "TRUTHS": PLACE AND IDENTITY IN RENAISSANCE WINE WRITINGS

The attitudes of Rabelais and the Pléiade quickly left the pages of literature to inform early French agricultural writings, ultimately further assimilating place, agriculture, and identity. The wine culture that appeared in Rabelais makes its influence felt as early as Jacques Gohory's 1549 *Dissertation on the Vine, Wine, and the Harvest,* the first technical book on wine written in the French language. The work, published under the pseudonym Orlando de Suave, appears as a mix between a practical manual on viticulture and winemaking, an apology for wine itself, and a joyous fictional foray of consumption.[47] As one scholar puts it, "the preface [. . .] owes entirely to Rabelais, and especially to his prologues."[48] Along with Rabelaisian-like word games (the phrase *envie d'envie en vie*—"craving to crave in life"—is inscribed in the frontispiece with Bacchus serving wine freely to an impish nude), other direct borrowings include inviting the reader to "consume" the manual instead of simply reading it, and a reference to wine being as important as oil in the writing process. But it is the prolonged accent on the pleasures of drinking that rings most clearly of Rabelais's fiction. Indeed the book, comprising a fictional dialogue between the author and two other characters (Perdrix and Plance), offers a convivial picaresque journey with wine and food along the way. Things are lively from the start as the characters banter about wine, acknowledging its dangers and (mostly) praising its merits. Along with themes from Rabelais, there is also much recourse to influences that shaped the Pléiade's wine writing. Not only are there many passages in verse exalting the benefits of wine, but Perdrix refers to wine as a gift from Mother Nature, including references to Virgil and Hesiod, while charging, as Horace had in Epistle 1.9, that no good poetry was ever written by water drinkers.[49]

What is striking is the degree to which Gohory romanticizes wine, positioning it as a vehicle that connects the drinker to a natural world whose hidden qualities are as powerful as they are marvelous. Perdrix, the protagonist and wine's chief apologist, describes the good smells of the vine in flower as more fetching than those of violets, roses, carnations, and jasmine. They are so alluring that "venomous snakes cannot stand the sweetness." These smells are transmitted into the wine and provide such powerful corporal sustenance that they not only protect the drinker against evil, but hold the soul in the body a little longer at the end of life, keeping it from leaving through death's door.[50] Dithyrambic exclamations aside, Gohory also provides pragmatic information in a place-specific optic, as the characters walk from the outskirts of Paris to a vineyard in Issy-les-Moulineaux (where the Gohory family had vine holdings). All the while, the author bolsters wine's reputability by bringing to the fore scientific and

Although Gohory's nationalistic tone and debt to literary sources did much to set the precedent for the way cuisine would come to be tied to identity in France, one cannot conclude that this dialectical vision of French glory welling up from a mix between exquisite regional produce and its burgeoning language was the only impetus for the establishment of terroir as a construct in the country's collective imagination. The poetic and patriotic element in Gohory was far from France's most influential Renaissance agricultural writing: sixteenth-century medical science also had a primary role in underscoring the notion of terroir. The physician Charles Estienne, in particular, published in Latin in 1554 a volume that was translated into French a decade later as *L'Agriculture et la maison rustique*. This French edition, supplemented by writing from Estienne's son in-law, Jean Liébault, was popular enough to be reedited five times during the sixteenth century alone.[55] In it, Estienne and Liébault draw out in great detail wines from various regions in France and, to a much lesser extent, certain other parts of Europe, commenting on their longevity, force of character, and potential impact on health. Although Estienne and Liébault paraphrase Homer and Plato regarding the virtue of wine taken in moderation for its capacity to expel worries and inspire the soul to virtue and honesty, the prose is largely clinical and completely at odds with the style of Gohory.[56] For the most part, wines in *L'Agriculture et la maison rustique* are simply listed according to their suitability for various health concerns and different human constitutions.

It is nevertheless of great relevance that the foremost factor in understanding and determining the constitution of any given wine is not the grape variety, which is rarely mentioned, but the region of origin and the terroir. Estienne and Liébault are clear about the effect of the earth: terroir affects taste. They recommend, following a method espoused by Virgil and Columella, putting the soil of a prospective grape planting site in water and then tasting the water. If the smell and taste of the water is agreeable, the wine from the site will be palatable. As the authors elaborate on origins, they explain how different wine colors make them appropriate for different human constitutions, with specific recourse to the notion of terroir. The categorization of terroirs and wine-growing regions is sometimes quite broad, incorporating what we would today consider as appellations (e.g., Beaune), communes (e.g., Arbois), provinces, or regions (e.g., Anjou). Yet, despite this prevailing lack of specificity, Estienne and Liébault also mention certain sites with much more precision, naming villages, burgs, and the very small locales presently known as *lieux-dits* (said-locations). The authors offer a number of other remarks, considering wine according to its age-worthiness, the changing qualities of different vintages, the moment in their evolution when they are best consumed, and so forth.

Each aspect of these descriptions, from the terroir or soils of the origin, to the color and maturity, has little to do with pleasure and a great deal to do with the effect that wines have on bodily health. Drinking a wine too young, they explain, is likely to stop up the circulation. Drinking a wine that is too aromatic, they advise, will bring excessive drunkenness. Drinking a wine that

is too acidic will likely cause gout, and so on. The descriptors are employed in the context of health, while the aspects of excess, conviviality, or rapture that enliven the pages of Rabelais, the Pléiade, and Gohory are entirely missing. Still, place constitutes identity insofar as earthly humors and an individual's physical constitution are both defined according to the terroir. Estienne and Liébault frame a wine's desirability according to the class, health, and vocation in life of its ideal drinker. They explain that the lighter wines from Paris and the surrounding regions (which the authors single out as the best and most properly "French") are preferable for urbanites, the studious, and those living quiet, idle, and sedentary lives. Wines coming from warmer climates *(païs),* such as Gascony or Spain, on the other hand, burn the entrails and encumber the minds of those who drink them.

The most enduring message here is that humans are what they drink, or at least, they should drink what they are. In other words, according to the Hippocratic paradigm, people share intrinsic qualities with the foods they consume because the two originate from the same terroirs. Infelicitous matches can only bring danger. Unlike Rabelais's humanistic mixing of culinary wares, the authors circumscribe wine in xenophobic terms, warning consumers to distrust foreign wine in spite of any outwardly flattering aromas: "Now, although foreign wines that we have brought from warm regions seem to us flattering on the palate, they must be consumed with as much prudence as possible, so much is the case that in addition to their obvious qualities, they have hidden properties that can truthfully be known and trusted through a sympathy with the inhabitants of the terroir where such wines grow, but to us they are enemies through an antipathy they have with us, who are from a dissimilar land and terroir."[57] This strong relationship between one's origin and one's physical constitution inaugurates a different brand of French regional patriotism. It explains the emotional connection between people and the wines from their home regions, providing a physiological correlate for the affective predilection suggested in the Pléiade's poetry between the poet and vines from his native terroir.

Two other Renaissance medical volumes are of note. The first, *De Re Cibaria,* was written in Latin by Jean Bruyérin-Champier, François 1er's physician, and published in 1560 (it went untranslated in French until 1998).[58] The work goes to great lengths detailing all categories of food, providing their history, and explaining where the best produce originates, both in France and elsewhere.[59] Most of all, the pages make the case for France's culinary richness and agricultural superiority. When it comes to wine, Bruyérin-Champier pointedly dethrones Italy and praises France's temperate climate and soil. He allows that, as physicians and philosophers had indicated, the taste of fruits varies and develops according to the "the variety and nature of the juices of the terroir."[60] France's wines are the most agreeable, healthful, and so forth because of the greatness of it soils. Moreover, vines that have produced inferior grapes abroad lose their unappealing qualities when they are transplanted in France. In fact, the only way it is possible for France to fail in terms of wine is to follow the advice of

the ignorant and not intensively cultivate and care for vines, a practice that will surely make for a botched crop under any circumstance.

De Re Cibaria is not marked by a clear debt to the literary depictions of Rabelais or the poets of the Pléiade, but shares with the latter group and Gohory the palpable influence of Virgil. Bruyérin-Champier quotes robustly from the *Georgics* and considers its author the foremost of authorities concerning wine and the vine. Like Gohory, he strips Italy of the superiority Virgil depicts in the *Georgics.* According to Bruyérin-Champier, Italy only knew the vine because the Romans robbed it from elsewhere and transplanted it to their own country.[61] The bit of patriotism hidden in the slight against Italy notwithstanding, he catalogues France's agricultural greatness without extensively focusing on the aesthetic experience. In other words, he does not wax with the paroxysms of gustatory joy seen in Gohory, nor promote wine as the romanticized encapsulation of the homeland as did Ronsard with his Vendômois fields. The work advances terroir as a concept that explains wines' goodness, and draws on many of the same sources as above, but Bruyérin-Champier does not *taste* French identity through the terroir in the same way that some of his more literary predecessors do.

A third volume of note is that of the Norman doctor Julien Le Paulmier, whose *Treatise on Wine and Cider* was translated from Latin into French in 1589. The work was less popular and original than the *Maison rustique* (many of its observations and some of its entire sentences are taken verbatim from Estienne and Liébault), but it is remarkable in that it contains a nuanced depiction of terroir in a work that specifically addresses wine and cider instead of pertaining to agriculture in general.[62] Although it is packaged under the auspices of a utilitarian guide to good health (Le Paulmier justifies the project to the king by suggesting that it will help his royal eminence live longer), there is a hint that the reader will find pleasure too.[63]

In fact, Le Paulmier provides the century's most modern-sounding description of a "gourmet" appreciation of wine. He describes terroir as one of the governing forces of a wine's merits or defects in flavor and constitution: "The nature of the terroir is a partial cause of the force and generosity or of the weakness and insipidness of wines."[64] Continuing, Le Paulmier indicates that the *"bon gourmet"* is able to discern all of the qualities and defects of a wine or cider, its terroir of origin, as well as its age.[65] Yet despite this relatively modern characterization, the "taste of terroir" itself is presented as a defect.[66] Le Paulmier, like other scientific authors, suggests that while the terroir is responsible for producing wine's different flavors, anything described as "tasting of terroir" in the sense of earth or minerals should be deemed defective, since such elements are dirty, unpleasantly earthy, or lacking in elegance.

Despite the less impassioned treatment of food, origin, and identity in the agricultural and viticultural writings of the physicians Estienne and Liébault, Bruyérin-Champier, and Le Paulmier, by the end of the sixteenth century the correlation between food and wine flavors and their place of origin appeared frequently as a way of staking a claim on the nation's richness and identity.

There were some clear crossovers between the values associating place and identity in terms of wine and of the French language. And the literary influence of Rabelais is made clear in the first properly French technical manual. There was, however, a marked difference between the more matter-of-fact clinical statements of the scientific literature and the impassioned literary constructions. Both drew often enough from the same sources—the omnipresence of Virgil's *Georgics* is the common element binding the two genres together—but the differences are notable. Simply put, the literary sources used wine and food as a signifier for a more palpable aesthetic experience metaphorically extended to language and poetry, while terroir and identity remained more coldly clinical in the technical writings. In other words, terroir as an aesthetic construct conveying a specific regional identity was savored more directly through words and poetry than through wine and food in the sixteenth century.