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Conserving Creativity:

The Roles of Clothing and Cuisine in the French Revolution

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It is challenging to comprehend the significance that everyday choices took on during the French Revolution from a modern perspective. Amid the ongoing political upheaval and the struggle to establish a source of definitive authority, citizens faced the very personal task of reconciling habits of the Old Regime with revolutionary cultural objectives. This undertaking manifested itself in a society-wide transformation that, macroscopically, saw a change in the implications of individual expression within a public context. The process becomes particularly pronounced when examining both the evolution of clothing as well as the progression of French cuisine during this period with the rise of the Parisian restaurant. These components of consumer culture followed a similar path of politicization but, more critically, shared corresponding roles in encouraging and perpetuating distinct outlets of creativity. Although the Revolution certainly challenged long-held traditions of the Old Regime, it simultaneously, and rather paradoxically, managed to preserve powerful notions of individualism and innovation that emerged in the years leading up to 1789, as exemplified by the development during this time of both French fashion and gastronomy.

In any study involving clothing within the framework of the French Revolution, it is immediately important to recognize its far-reaching consequences as a component of cultural transformation marked by strong emotional connotations. The Revolution was by absolutely no means simply political, and its impact on the daily life of French citizens cannot be understated.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the importance of fashion during this period extends far beyond general patterns of politicization.<sup>2</sup> One could argue that the Revolution did not entirely alter clothing practices as much as accelerate particular changes that had begun decades earlier.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the eighteenth century fashion took on growing personal significance for its wearers at all levels of society, and beginning with the upheaval in 1789 it additionally started to accumulate heightened political implications. The decades directly preceding the Revolution saw the emergence of an increasingly prevalent belief that dress was a form of individual expression and thus an inherent channel of creativity for its wearers.<sup>4</sup> However, the Revolution's impact on the progression of fashion is complex and in certain ways contradictory. Examining clothing during the French Revolution requires first an exploration of the general trends that occurred in the decades preceding 1789. In doing so, the remarkable transformation that occurred becomes much clearer. In fact, the evolution of French fashion over the course of the eighteenth century in many ways came to its ultimate fruition with the onset of the Revolution as the nation attempted to reconcile the pressing urge for personal expression with the political ideal of egalitarianism.

The eighteenth century represented above all a major turning point in terms of how both men and women thought about fashion and, more broadly, the connection between what

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<sup>1</sup> Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (New York: Holmes and Meir Publishers, Inc., 1988), 80.

<sup>2</sup> Lynn Hunt, "Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, edited by Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 224.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge [England]: Past and Present Publications, 1994), 148.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

constituted the public and private realms.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps most noticeably, by 1789 dressing fashionably was no longer limited to the most elite members of society.<sup>6</sup> The royal court at Versailles had long provided the main influence in defining French fashion and taste, but this began to change during the eighteenth century as Paris firmly established itself as a source of cultural prominence.<sup>7</sup> Although some critics firmly viewed it as a frivolous endeavor, on the eve of the Revolution fashion was widely acknowledged as an economically important industry.<sup>8</sup> In the eighteenth century, shopping itself became an activity associated with the general expansion of public life in Paris in particular.<sup>9</sup> Commodities such as clothing came to be defined as commercial objects as opposed to works of fine art, yet at the same time the consumer culture had yet to clearly articulate a language of class by the outbreak of the Revolution.<sup>10</sup> As scholars have pointed out, the ability to visibly distinguish the traditional social classes through the clothing that individuals wore became increasingly difficult.<sup>11</sup> This posed challenges to the established hierarchical nature of society that continued into the next decade. By the end of the Old Regime, luxury goods were much more widely diffused throughout society and heavier emphasis was placed on the social expression of appearance.<sup>12</sup> These new levels of consumption, now present throughout many levels of society, encouraged an ideal of change and renewal that in turn penetrated all social classes.<sup>13</sup> Departing from the influences of the royal court, evolving fashion trends in Paris encouraged a preoccupation with continual wardrobe updates that

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<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (Oxford, England: Berg Publishers, 2004), xvii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>7</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 137-8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 114 and 116.

<sup>11</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans. Brian Pearce (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 214.

accompanied the growing notion, and in many ways necessity, of the exhibition of personal preferences through clothing choices.

The development of fashion periodicals, especially after 1750, created a new form of widespread communication that laid the foundation for trends of diversification and constant style adjustment, and in doing so allowed the material objects themselves to reflect and spread novel ideology over time.<sup>14</sup> The writing featured in such journals indicates that fashions were rarely distinguished on the basis of class by the end of the century and that the court setting was no longer the sole reference point.<sup>15</sup> New forms of visuals, like the engravings on so-called fashion plates, were central in making the latest fashion styles accessible to wider ranges of social classes.<sup>16</sup> As a result, social distinctions came to rely more on an individual's ability to renew his or her wardrobe to reflect evolving clothing trends, and in this way values of the long-established Christian moral economy were rapidly overturned by a growing emphasis on accumulation, individual choice, and the notion of accessible luxury.<sup>17</sup>

The development of fashion in the years preceding the Revolution is also notable in terms of the different ways in which it directly impacted the lives of women compared to men. Women's consumption patterns, in fact, began to greatly diverge from those of men during this time.<sup>18</sup> As the research undertaken by Daniel Roche has revealed, aside from perhaps among the very high nobility, by the end of the eighteenth century women spent on average approximately twice as much as their husbands on clothing.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, men's clothing noticeably became much more subdued and distinct from the feminine, detailed styles of women after

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<sup>14</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 470-1.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 475-6.

<sup>17</sup> Roche, *History of Everyday Things*, 219 and 220.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 74.

<sup>19</sup> Roche, *History of Everyday Things*, 214.

1750.<sup>20</sup> Even before the Revolution restrictions regarding style had greatly lessened as women in particular sought more freedom in their personal expression.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, by 1789 a great deal of variety had appeared in women's fashion that tended to contrast with that of men.<sup>22</sup> This stylistic difference between men and women carried over into the Revolution to a certain extent as both sexes struggled to define their appearance in politicized terms.

At the same time, however, broad trends within the realm of clothing influenced both genders of all social classes over the course of the eighteenth century. Prior to the outbreak of the Revolution, fashion played a pivotal role within a society that increasingly rejected the hierarchical attitudes of the Old Regime and permitted certain aspects of traditional social nuances to disappear.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps most significantly, out of Enlightenment thought emerged an emphasis on "natural" clothing and a sense of morality of dress, which stood in opposition to the excessive extravagance of aristocratic society toward the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> In fact, even among the nobility in the few years preceding the Revolution, uncomfortable and stylistically excessive full court dress was more frequently worn only in certain exceptional circumstances.<sup>25</sup> The influence of England specifically can be seen in the growing taste for comfort among fashionable French citizens in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> This sense of Anglomania became particularly pronounced in the 1780s and was in many ways linked to the appeal of the perceived simplicity and practicality of English life.<sup>27</sup> In fact, it seems as

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<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 142.

<sup>22</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 504.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.

<sup>25</sup> Madeleine Delpierre, *Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 94.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>27</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 36.

though the trend toward adopting the English model of amplified individualism and freedom in clothing had been fairly widely adopted by the end of the decade.<sup>28</sup>

As the Revolution approached, in many ways the aristocracy itself played a hand in the final leveling of fashion in its decision to opt for simplicity and comfort in attire.<sup>29</sup> Still, however, it must be noted that although the expression of taste became more malleable and less refined, subtle distinctions remained among the social classes and especially between men and women.<sup>30</sup> While changes in production allowed certain styles to become more widespread, different fabrics could still be used to reflect the wearer's purchasing power, even if it was not always necessarily rooted in the basis of traditional social classes.<sup>31</sup> Most interestingly, by the end of the century fashion was able to reflect both the ideals upheld by morality as well as the principles of economic utilitarianism.<sup>32</sup> In the same vein it managed to undermine the norms of hierarchy and privilege that distinguished the society in which it had initially developed. By 1789 a new discourse on fashion had emerged that explicitly supported the economic as well as aesthetic requirements of a society by then thoroughly imbued by Enlightenment ideals.<sup>33</sup>

Most explicitly, the Revolution itself added the element of politicization to clothing with the introduction of new styles and items of clothing.<sup>34</sup> The calling of the Estates-General in 1789 is an important moment in the early chronology of the Revolution, when the Third Estate was forced to wear a simple, subdued black robe that contrasted with the more refined costumes of the other deputies during a moment in which most of French society was gravitating toward the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>29</sup> Delpierre, *Dress in France*, 150.

<sup>30</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 147-8.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 328-9; Delpierre, *Dress in France*, 47.

<sup>32</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 498.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Wrigley, *The Politics of Appearances: Representations of Dress in Revolutionary France* (Oxford, England: Berg Publishers, 2002), 15.

preference for diversification of clothing.<sup>35</sup> Many deputies openly protested the dress regulations, and Mirabeau promptly announced that he planned to wear his own clothing “to preserve his character and his liberty.”<sup>36</sup> Other members of the Third Estate followed suit in ignoring these court-imposed rules.<sup>37</sup> On October 15, the Estates’ different official costumes were formally suppressed in the new National Assembly’s meetings and ceremonies, and thus the revolutionaries established an important early precedent perpetuating independence in dress.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, in several respects the Revolution quickened the pace of fashion trends already present before 1789.<sup>39</sup> The tailored, unadorned English styles worn by the middle class during the preceding decade became the clothing of the revolutionaries, while cotton and linen came to replace the silk associated with the aristocracy.<sup>40</sup> Proponents of Rousseauianism desired “natural dress” in a society without representation, a notion that was reflected in the clothing of many members of the upper classes who sought out simplicity and elegance in personal style upon the outbreak of the Revolution.<sup>41</sup> Many ascribed to the belief that returning clothing to its “original” purpose and supposedly inherently egalitarian characteristics would align with the new revolutionary spirit.<sup>42</sup> In this way, the outbreak of the Revolution initially reinforced the notion that fashion could be “natural” as opposed to frivolously artificial and could express one’s own inner taste.<sup>43</sup> Important to realize is the relentless need for change and self-expression that accompanied the Revolution in its early days.<sup>44</sup> As such, visitors to France at the time were

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<sup>35</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 46.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Wrigley, *Politics of Appearances*, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 140.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>41</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 512, 506.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 180.

<sup>44</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 19.

shocked to observe the great deal of variety and individualism displayed by Parisians through their clothing.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, fashion journals remained important early on in the Revolution, and can be analyzed in terms of the way in which they created a crucial connection between fashion and current political events.<sup>46</sup> Thus, key components of clothing as a form of public cultural expression persisted, and in many ways expanded, directly following the beginning of the Revolution.

At the same time, however, following the onset of the Revolution there was a quick move by some to renounce and replace styles thought to reflect the symbols of the Old Regime, although successfully removing these emblems from the public space entirely was never quite feasible, and the process of implementing new signs to symbolize equality and virtue linked to the Revolution was difficult.<sup>47</sup> Thus, while new objects such as official revolutionary badges were introduced to represent an individual's allegiance to the new order, they were promptly challenged by independent forms of political costume and badges created by clubs and other groups.<sup>48</sup> Revolutionary festivals in particular ultimately served to encourage individual forms of dress although their actual aim was to assert a sense of national unity and common purpose.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, revolutionary attire was not as widespread in terms of practical wear as one might expect, although clothing nevertheless came to signify the most visible indication of one's adherence or resistance to new social and political principles.<sup>50</sup>

On July 23, 1790, the National Guard uniform was ordered to be regularized, although later required reinforcements of this decree serve as strong evidence that there were a variety of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>46</sup> Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 494-5; Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 188.

<sup>47</sup> Wrigley, *Politics of Appearances*, 59 and 70.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>50</sup> Hunt, *Freedom of Dress*, 224.

local variants and inconsistencies that necessitated subdual by the state.<sup>51</sup> It was through the National Guard's uniform and by means of broad dissemination that the cockade entered public life, and it remained an important Revolutionary symbol throughout the last decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Still, upon its introduction the cockade was met with different attempts to define its physical as well as symbolic meaning that should not be ignored. The Legislative Assembly first ordered all men to wear the cockade in July 1792, but it continued to stand as an emblem of an ideal of unity that was, realistically, largely elusive in practice.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the liberty cap was not widely worn until 1792, but it was also denoted with a great variety of different meanings among its wearers that were often in tension with one another. Indeed, liberty caps were initially associated with different political clubs and factions, and there was much disagreement over what color they should be and what they should represent as political objects.<sup>54</sup>

Throughout 1791 and 1792, as the political environment became increasingly radical and the Jacobins later assumed political power, it was dangerous to appear too extravagant or stylish in clothing.<sup>55</sup> Even in the few months leading up to the Terror, it became clear that the concept of fashion itself was under attack.<sup>56</sup> The debates over whether women should wear the cockade demonstrate the contradictions that lingered beneath the surface of the revolutionary egalitarian rhetoric.<sup>57</sup> Women were not required to wear the cockade until September of 1793, and while that same year the National Convention ordered that citizens could not be forced to dress in a

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<sup>51</sup> Wrigley, *Politics of Appearances*, 64.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> Hunt, *Freedom of Dress*, 225; Wrigley, *Politics of Appearances*, 113.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>55</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 67.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>57</sup> Wrigley, *Politics of Appearances*, 122.

particular way, all were still required to wear the cockade.<sup>58</sup> In this way, the inconsistencies behind the supposed radically-minded ideals of political leaders became increasingly pronounced over the course of the Revolution as it moved into the final decade of the eighteenth century. Although the liberty cap and cockade are perhaps the most well-known items of clothing that emerged out of the Revolution, the debates over their appearance, their meaning, and who should and should not wear them reflects the tension that resulted as citizens and leaders alike attempted to balance individualistic notions of the Old Regime with the ideals of the new nation.

It would be erroneous to argue that most revolutionaries envisioned an ideal world without distinctions of any kind; they instead wanted to create, theoretically, a system in which individuals were distinguished by their public virtue. As the actual revolutionary chronology proves, however, successfully establishing and maintaining such a system on a national level was never completely achievable. Indeed, even when the Committee of Public Safety in May 1794 appointed the artist David to create designs for a national civil uniform to be worn by all citizens, these plans were never actually carried out.<sup>59</sup> An ultimate consequence of the disintegrating forces of the Revolution was, in fact, a loss of confidence in the notion of a uniformity of aesthetic belief.<sup>60</sup> Despite the relentless challenges made to it over the course of the early years of the Revolution, the upheaval that began in 1789 ultimately served to preserve the trend developed throughout the eighteenth century asserting that, above all else, fashion was a statement of personal freedom and individual expression. Clothing certainly took on a newfound political significance during this time, yet as a whole the nation succeeded in preserving notions of creativity and independence that were in fact products of the late Old Regime. While it may

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<sup>58</sup> Hunt, *Freedom of Dress*, 225-6.

<sup>59</sup> Delpierre, *Dress in France*, 123.

<sup>60</sup> Ribeiro, *Fashion*, 19.

initially appear contradictory to link the beginnings of such “revolutionary” concepts to the hierarchical regime that was itself overthrown beginning in 1789, the role played by clothing within the historical narrative of the Revolution demonstrates how certain cultural beliefs can withstand even when confronted with full-fledged political turmoil.

The development and expansion of French cuisine during this period represents another noteworthy instance demonstrating the exhibition of personal expression in a newly politicized public context. The eighteenth-century restaurants of Paris stand as examples of institutions that initially arose as a consequence of cultural trends and later became inevitably associated with the political upheaval of the Revolution. While one could argue that the first restaurants were simply the retreat of gastronomical Parisians with money to spare, they were in fact important establishments for a much broader portion of society. Following 1789, these eating spaces could not avoid being transformed, at least to a certain extent, into politicized public spaces.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, however, in many ways there remained a degree of continuity in terms of the cuisine served and the atmosphere of the restaurant itself once the Revolution was put into motion.<sup>62</sup>

Understanding the role of restaurants during the upheaval of the Revolution requires a prior examination of the culinary trends that arose throughout the century. The ongoing transformations of the restaurant were never neither entirely disrupted nor stalled following 1789, and each step of its course of development was far from predictable. If only one thing is certain, the rise of the modern restaurant signifies the culmination of broader social changes that would carry over into the next century once the Revolution had finally reached its conclusion.

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<sup>61</sup> Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 239; Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>62</sup> Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 134.

These changes were intricate in nature, shaped in many ways by conflicting perceptions of the place of luxury in society and driven, in any respect, by a ceaseless competitive incentive for originality. Indeed, the French restaurant, emerging during the years preceding 1789 in conjunction with evolving cultural preferences, underwent transformations over the course of the next decade that signaled the desire for continued innovation even in the tumultuous political context of the Revolution.

The middle of the eighteenth century saw the entry of cuisine into intellectual debate.<sup>63</sup> Following its arrival as a talking point of Enlightenment discussion, food took on a new degree of importance spanning far beyond its role as a source of nourishment. Philosophes, supported by prominent doctors, firmly subscribed to the view that the diet of ancient peoples was epitomized by simplicity, a quality they believed modern society should emulate.<sup>64</sup> Rousseau was particularly important in influencing popular trends regarding what was fashionable to consume and the way in which it should be prepared, and his emphasis on the connection between man and nature led to a heightened interest in rustic ingredients and recipes.<sup>65</sup> Many Enlightenment thinkers, influenced by Rousseau, argued that only overly decadent, frivolous cultures viewed cookery as a form of art, a tendency they believed France should actively aim to avoid.<sup>66</sup> So-called *nouvelle cuisine* emerged around 1740 as an influential mode of cooking that largely reflected these Rousseauian ideals of simplicity.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, other new styles of cuisine mid-century impacted by the Enlightenment preoccupation with mechanism and systematic technique emphasized the scientific components of cooking, drawing on new forms of

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<sup>63</sup> Pinkard, *Revolution in Taste*, 155.

<sup>64</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 50.

<sup>65</sup> Pinkard, *Revolution in Taste*, 155.

<sup>66</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 44.

<sup>67</sup> Pinkard, *Revolution in Taste*, 155.

innovation in terms of food preparation.<sup>68</sup> The wide variety of recipes featured in mid-eighteenth-century cookbooks such as *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine* suggest the culinary inventiveness of the time, while the increasingly widespread use of the *potager*, a predecessor to the modern stove, demonstrates how new forms of culinary innovation managed to influence the lives of those in the middle and lower classes in addition to those of the elite.<sup>69</sup>

At the same time, however, during this period the division between the cuisine of large and small kitchens also grew, as did the contrast between tables of the aristocracy and those of the well-off non-nobility.<sup>70</sup> It was within this context that food preferences increasingly became a way to reflect individual tastes and attitudes. Indeed, while nobles dined on simple meals to align with Rousseauian sensibility, the bourgeoisie chose to consume increasingly outdated “aristocratic” style food as a form of emulation.<sup>71</sup> In fact, towards the end of the Old Regime, members of the elite actually tended to avoid eating in public.<sup>72</sup> Before the establishment of the first restaurants, those without their own means to prepare food for themselves depended on inns, cook shops, and wine shops for meals, which were organized into twenty-five different guilds dictated by the state.<sup>73</sup>

With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that the study of the history of cookery in France almost inherently falls under the broader category of an examination of the diffusion of luxury. In other words, those who most clearly directly contributed to the early innovation and development of cuisine were certainly not those among the masses struggling to find food simply

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983), 200; Jean-Robert Pitte, *French Gastronomy: The History and Geography of a Passion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 97-8.

<sup>70</sup> Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 194, 232.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> E.C. Spary, *Feeding France: New Sciences of Food, 1760-1815* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 25.

<sup>73</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 8.

to survive.<sup>74</sup> Still, however, it would be a mistake to ignore the full extent of the influence of these culinary trends among all levels of social classes in the decades preceding 1789. By the time of the Revolution, knowledge and a sense of cultivated discrimination regarding cuisine had become an expectation among elite social circles,<sup>75</sup> but this elevated interest in diet was by no means entirely limited to the upper classes as time went on. In this sense, when the restaurant did emerge, it was surely not exclusively a phenomenon of the elites, and all looked to its establishment as a promising new mode of culinary consumption.

In many respects the first restaurants initially sprang up as a response to demands linked to changing culinary preferences that developed throughout the eighteenth century. It remains imperative, nevertheless, to avoid visualizing the restaurants of the time in the same way one thinks of their modern successors.<sup>76</sup> The initial rise of the restaurant was in fact intrinsically linked to the desire for Rousseauinian simplicity.<sup>77</sup> In the last two decades of the Old Regime, one would go to a restaurant to drink bouillons that were thought to have healing properties, just as coffee was associated with cafés.<sup>78</sup> These bouillons were marketed as a liquid substance that those too weak to eat and chew normally could consume.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, early restaurants were distinctive for providing highly individualized service in addition to menu items designed to promote health and well-being.<sup>80</sup> For many years before 1789, there was no French equivalent to the English tavern. Indeed, Grimod de la Reynière remarked that it was the popularity of “all things English” in the fifteen years leading up to the Revolution that partly led to the

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<sup>74</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 113.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 35.

<sup>77</sup> Pinkard, *Revolution in Taste*, 239.

<sup>78</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Pinkard, *Revolution in Taste*, 206.

development of the restaurant.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, a reflection of the more general Anglomania of the time can be found in some restaurants' advertisements announcing that they served English-style dishes in the decade prior to the Revolution.<sup>82</sup>

*Traiteurs*, a component of the guild system standing as rough equivalents of modern caterers, and the privileges they enjoyed long stood as obstacles to the development of French cuisine in the sense that they could essentially sell wholesale meat products yet refuse to sell individual portions for consumption on their own premises.<sup>83</sup> In this way, they prevented the development of an institution similar to the English tavern in France. However, as early as 1765 *traiteurs* began to lose hold of their monopoly, as demonstrated by the Boulanger case, which allowed the merchant to sell a dish similar to the ragouts of cooked meat normally monopolized by *traiteurs*, and this appears to indicate the decline in the guild system that was already occurring in the decades preceding the Revolution.<sup>84</sup> It is clear, at the very least, that pushes toward eliminating the guild system were implicit before the Revolution, while a growing preference for the healthful benefits and personal attention provided by the new restaurants demonstrates the formulation of new public tastes.

Rebecca Spang attributes the "invention" of the restaurant to Mathurin Roze de Chantuseau, whose personal culinary establishment was the creative outcome of a new market that encouraged emphasizing qualities of hospitality and taste.<sup>85</sup> In this way, those who first opened the doors of Parisian restaurants in the eighteenth century were able to synthesize new ideas about dietary change to propose an entirely new institution altogether, and they seemed to

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<sup>81</sup> Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 137-8.

<sup>82</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 53.

<sup>83</sup> Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 138.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 12-13.

promise to emulate the inherent goodness of the rural countryside in an urban setting.<sup>86</sup>

Restaurants also differed sharply from other institutions associated with the eighteenth-century public sphere in their focus on the personal preferences of their customers.<sup>87</sup> One of the most distinguishing aspects of the restaurant was the fact that it presented its patrons with a clear choice, and thus put them in a position allowing them to express their own taste.<sup>88</sup> The new concept for a menu, developed in the 1770s, permitted those eating at a restaurant to make a selection from a list of available options that was, in a way, a personal statement differentiating his or herself from other diners.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, restaurants changed the way people conceptualized meals by serving in a simpler, modern style that gave each customer a single dish at a time as opposed to the more elaborate traditional style *à la française*.<sup>90</sup>

In June 1786 the Paris *Parlement* ruled that restaurants could stay open one hour later than other public providers of food and drink in the city, and soon the establishments were known for their erratic, late-night hours that allowed customers to be served at nearly any time of day.<sup>91</sup> They provided the eater with a new kind of personalized treatment, giving unprecedented attention to the individual customer.<sup>92</sup> By the outbreak of the Revolution, restaurants catered to individual tastes as opposed to simply providing healthy soups for the weak, and their emphasis on service and personal attention reveals their recognition that taste might be an individualized component that varies from person to person.<sup>93</sup> As a result, in the years leading up to 1789 the novel institution of the restaurant managed to successfully establish itself in Paris as an important

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 16, 63.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>88</sup> Pinkard, *Revolution in Taste*, 207; Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 60.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>90</sup> Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 89.

<sup>91</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 75 and 68.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 75-6.

cultural element, providing a new accommodating public space that allowed its patrons to exercise personal choice and express their own individual taste in a powerful, creative way.

Although the Revolution cannot necessarily be credited with “inventing” the restaurant, it nevertheless marked a turning point that greatly influenced how French citizens ate. Gradual changes to the guild structure and the development of the commercial public sphere over the course of the eighteenth century surely helped to begin to alter the culinary world, but the Revolution greatly accelerated their pace.<sup>94</sup> In any regard, the Revolution may have interrupted culinary institutions but by no means eliminated them.<sup>95</sup> As such, restaurants adjusted to meet the new cultural demands of the Revolution while continuing to serve their core purpose as institutions catering to personal preference and expression, now simply in a more politicized context. To a certain extent, one can also think about the table during this time as a symbolic battleground for debating the heated political issues of the time.<sup>96</sup> The role and representation of restaurants during the early months of the Revolution serves to demonstrate the significance of this particular development. Following the calling of the Estates-General in 1788, for instance, numerous popular prints were released, often featuring three men representing the three estates situated at either a café or restaurant telling the owner that they plan to split the bill, a clearly metaphorical means by which to articulate the early controversy over privileges pertaining to tax exemption.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, upon the opening of the Estates-General the arrival of deputies from provinces outside Paris directly and immediately impacted the popularity of restaurants.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Jennifer J. Davis, *Defining Cultural Authority: The Transformation of Cooking in France, 1650-1830* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 113.

<sup>95</sup> Pinkard, *Revolution in Taste*, 232.

<sup>96</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 91.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>98</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 139.

Deputies tended to dine together in restaurants after meeting during the day, and this new connection between parliamentary life and restaurant culture established a new trend for Parisian diners. The influx of representatives also brought in new provincial dishes to Paris, further diversifying the menu offerings of restaurants.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, restaurants helped meld the connection between individual appetite and the idea of social cohesion as a cultural force, a process they had spurred in the late years of the Old Regime.<sup>100</sup> As such, the way one dined became a reflection of an association with a particular social or political group similar to the role that clothing took on during this period. Not even the king was exempt from this, as the popular prints surrounding his June 1791 flight to Varennes demonstrate. In several of these images depicting Louis XVI, he is shown seated at a restaurant in Varennes in the process of being presented with a “bill” that is, of course, a symbolic representation of the warrant for his arrest.<sup>101</sup> The king was not actually arrested at a restaurant, but these illustrations clearly served to make this important moment tangible and understandable to the public by placing it in terms of a diner who is greedily attempting to “overeat” without paying his proper dues.<sup>102</sup> Such depictions highlight not only the ubiquity of the restaurant as an institution by this point in time, but also the changing attitudes toward it in politicized terms.

As the Revolution progressed, other forms of dining, such as political banquets and fraternal suppers like the *Fête de la Fédération* in the summer of 1790, directly contrasted with restaurants in their ideals of uniformity and unity.<sup>103</sup> These new approaches to public meals became more pronounced over the course of the decade as they were more vigorously

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 91.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 132-33.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 92-3.

encouraged by revolutionary leaders. When the guilds were abolished in 1791, restaurant owners attempted to demonstrate to diners that their institutions could assume the guilds' function of reassuring quality products while providing customers with the authority to define and articulate their own culinary tastes.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the destruction of the guilds spurred competition and prompted many chefs who had previously served the now-exiled aristocracy to utilize their talents in new ways attending to a much broader clientele.<sup>105</sup> This influx of chefs to Paris served ultimately to encourage culinary creativity that would thoroughly manifest itself in the nineteenth century with the full establishment of modern *haute cuisine*. Although certain revolutionaries set out to abolish all symbols of the Old Regime, gastronomy managed to retain its recently established public prominence and remained tied to political power.<sup>106</sup> Undoubtedly, however, restaurants were increasingly the targets of radicals who saw their presence as dangerous, if not outright antithetical, to revolutionary ideals. The *sans-culottes* relentlessly demanded police action to force restaurants to serve more standardized fare, and like the aristocrats before them, restaurants were accused of hoarding food during the Terror.<sup>107</sup>

Simultaneously, street festivals of the *sans-culottes* in the spring and summer of 1794 were encouraged by the state whereby citizens would share the same meal.<sup>108</sup> These civic meals actually forced and demanded that people dine in the streets, with all participants contributing some amount of food. In doing so they necessitated that all modes of differentiation and sense of self should disappear.<sup>109</sup> Radicals viewed these types of gatherings as the ultimate model to convey patriotism and carry out one's civic duty to the state. Still, not all citizens idealized this

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<sup>104</sup> Davis, *Defining Cultural Authority*, 142.

<sup>105</sup> Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 86.

<sup>106</sup> Pitte, *French Gastronomy*, 118-19.

<sup>107</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 108.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

form of dining, and alternate approaches to republican hospitality remained, restaurants among them. While restaurants certainly lost some of the unmistakable prominence they had enjoyed during the transition from the Old Regime to the Revolutionary period, the Terror failed to eliminate them from public life entirely. In this way, they continued to present cooks as well as diners with the task of determining the path of French culinary nationalism,<sup>110</sup> even in the midst of turbulent political upheaval.

Although it has been argued that the restaurants in Paris did not fully expound upon the modern conception of *haute cuisine* until after the coup against Robespierre in July 1794,<sup>111</sup> they continued to evolve throughout the early years of the Revolution, providing patrons with an alternative public space that permitted them to make individualized choices with a significant and palpable manifestation. It was the Revolution, certainly, that accelerated the process of the democratization of cuisine that would fully develop in the nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, it was during this period that certain legacies of the Old Regime were able to fuse with new national ideals to produce truly ground-breaking cuisine through the restaurant as a vehicle of the latest modes of consumption.<sup>113</sup> While the restaurant has only recently garnered scholarly attention regarding its role during the Revolution, its politicization and unwavering advocacy of individualism, even in the most tumultuous moments of this process, is nothing short of remarkable. Studying restaurants brings to light not only what the revolutionaries ate, but also how what they *chose* to ate impacted the way in which they viewed themselves as free-thinking individuals possessing creative capability within the context of an entirely new political regime that increasingly challenged the public display of personal expression in any form.

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<sup>110</sup> Davis, *Defining Cultural Authority*, 168.

<sup>111</sup> Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 138.

<sup>112</sup> Pitte, *French Gastronomy*, 135.

<sup>113</sup> Davis, *Defining Cultural Authority*, 168.

In spite of the fact that it is most convenient to simply accept the argument that the French Revolution entirely overthrew the culture of the Old Regime as a peripheral consequence of the transposition of the established political order, the shallowness of this analysis reveals itself in a more thorough examination that demonstrates the more subtle ways in which pre-1789 societal trends managed to carry over into the new era. While certain aspects of society underwent very obvious drastic changes following the outbreak of the Revolution, other cultural components shared a more complicated relationship with the ongoing political transformation as France struggled to fully define itself as a nation. As the development of both French fashion and cuisine over the course of the eighteenth century demonstrate, the Revolution was not unlimited in its ability to overturn every single legacy of the Old Regime. The gradual evolution of clothing and food during the final decades of the century was, in fact, explicitly linked to neither the Old Regime nor the Revolutionary period alone, but to the crossover of cultural and political interplay between the two. The growing move toward Rousseauian refinement, innovation, and individualism emerged in French society in the crucial years leading up to 1789, yet these notions were only able to fully develop, establish, and sustain themselves as a result of the Revolution. Contradictory as it may initially appear to place the root of abstract ideals normally associated with early Revolutionary rhetoric within the cultural framework of the Old Regime, it was in this environment that the restrictive, increasingly irrelevant traditions of a problematic corporatist society began to give way to new forms of personal expression in the public sphere that ultimately emerged from the Revolutionary era largely unscathed.

*About the author*

Karis Stubblefield is a junior at Brown University double-concentrating in history and Egyptology. Her scholarly interests include the study of everyday life in Ancient Egypt as well as more modern revolutionary movements around the world. She has spent the last two summers interning at the San Antonio Museum of Art in her hometown, where she worked in the director's office and served as a curatorial assistant for various exhibits, including a collection showcasing Indian painting under the Mughal Court. At Brown she is involved with various clubs and organizations, including serving as a writer for a student-run course review published each semester.