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Agrarian Pasts, Utopian Futures: Food, Nostalgia, and the Power of Dreaming in Old Comedy and the New Southern Food Movement

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Drama and Theatre

by

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You never, ever, were stingy. What you gave me you gave whole
But as for telling
Me how to best use it
You weren't a genius at that.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation attempts to answer one very large question: in what political ways do the aesthetics of food function? Throughout this dissertation, I articulate moments in food culture when nostalgia (looking backwards to foods of the past) in fact becomes an idealized model for a utopian future. This conflation of looking backward (nostalgia) and looking forward (utopianism) demonstrates the ways in which time is multiple and multi-directional.

In my current work, I address the relationship between nostalgia and utopian thinking in two case studies: the ancient Greek comedies of Aristophanes and cookbooks from the contemporary American South. In these two examples, nostalgia for food is entangled with utopian rhetoric, and moving back towards an agricultural, pre-democratic government is figured as a utopian turn. This nostalgia often operates as a revisionist history that erases slave labor and scarcity. However, what I call "the utopian turn" also offers both new dramatic possibilities for characters on the Greek comic stage and a more inclusive definition of the South for contemporary chefs and cookbook authors. I argue that in these case studies, one might recoup a kernel of utopian thinking from an otherwise conservative, nostalgic turn to an agricultural past.

The first half of the dissertation outlines the utopias presented in Aristophanes' comedies, which paradoxically both look back nostalgically to a pre-democratic, agrarian society and represent that society as full of urban, imported luxury foods. In the second half of the dissertation, using a horizontal approach across popular media, I examine representations of the South from the New Southern Food Movement in which the South's agrarian past is figured as free from labor, in which southern food is figured as gourmet, luxury food. Ultimately, I conclude that food in performance becomes unstuck in time (moving back to an imagined nostalgic past or forwards towards an imagined utopian future) in order to critique contemporary political crises and create aesthetic solutions that point towards a better future.

Introduction: Be realistic! Demand the impossible.

Always historicize!
Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*

It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago.
William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust*

This is a dissertation about food, and this is a dissertation about time. It's about how dreaming can be separated from dreams. It's about how ephemeral or lowbrow cultural artifacts can carry weighty ideological consequence. It's about fifth-century BCE Athens and the contemporary American South. It began with the question: how does food *do* unique *work*? Which is to ask, in what political ways do the aesthetics of food function? How does food create alternative identities, communities, or modes of knowing, being, or doing? By asking such questions of food, I am adding a distinctly performative line of questioning to the chorus of vibrant inquiry in the field of food studies.[1] "What is healthy?" asks nutrition. "What is the best way to feed this increasingly populated planet?" asks food systems and public policy. "What can modes of cooking and eating tell us about a given society?" wonders sociology. Anthropology of food turns to the foods of particular populations to make claims about cultural and political forms like kinship and nationhood. "How can the history

[1] Drawing on the work of J.L. Austin, I take as a foundational precept within the field of performance studies that language can be constantive as well as descriptive. Austin describes "speech-acts" such as a wedding vow, "I do," as a performative, meaning that "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of the action" (Austin et al. 6). Such a statement has no truth value (cannot be judged true or false) but only effective or ineffective. I situate my work within the much-expanded field of Austin's "performatives," looking at the way that culinary discourse (in print, on the stage, or in the courthouse) constitutes the doing of a deed.

of the sugar trade stand in for the emergence of a global market and colonial power relations?" asks Stanley Mintz.[2] Yet none have asked, to paraphrase Judith Butler, "how is food a doing and not a being?"[3] I am interested in the way food does work, negotiates between individual and collective memory, between the material and the structural, between the past and the future. All of these, it seems, are familiar interventions for the performance studies scholar. All of these, too, seem immanent to the study of food in particular. This dissertation seeks to advance the dynamic work at the intersection between food studies and performance studies.

In this introduction, I will describe briefly the argument of my dissertation, situating it within the field of performance studies. Secondly, I will explain my choice of Frederic Jameson and Ernst Bloch as my primary theoretical interlocutors. I will describe my methodology and choice of case studies—ancient Greek comedies from fifth-century BCE Athens and culinary discourse from the contemporary American South. Lastly, I will situate this project within the field of food studies and describe the argument of each chapter.

Throughout this dissertation, I articulate moments in which food becomes a medium for time to performatively bend, break, and double. In these moments,

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[2] Given the scope of both food studies and performance studies, not to mention the case-study fields of classics and American studies, this introduction will not contain a formal literature review: an interdisciplinary dissertation of this kind draws its strength from the ability to intervene in multiple fields simultaneously. Instead, I feature several shorter reviews at moments within the dissertation where a purview of a smaller subfield is required.

[3] (Butler, *Gender Trouble* xv). Here I add Butler's definition of the performative to Austin's: "the mundane way in which social agents constitute social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign" (Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 519). Butler goes on to note that such a definition of the performative (for her, a performative gender identity and here, performative culinary meaning-making) requires repeated social actions over *time*: requires "a conception of a constituted social temporality" (Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 520).

nostalgia (looking backwards to foods of the past) in fact becomes an idealized model for a utopian future. This conflation of looking backward (nostalgia) and looking forward (utopianism) demonstrates the ways in which time is multiple and multi-directional. Scholars and theatre practitioners know well that time in performance has a unique charge. At the heart of this, perhaps, is Richard Schechner's oft-quoted dictum, "Performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to the *n*-th time. Performance is 'twice-behaved' behavior" (Schechner 36).[4] In this dissertation, I focus on the unique power of culinary nostalgia to ignite these performative transformations of time.

Just as I define nostalgia as a performative bending in time, I define utopia as the bleeding of the future into the present. "Tomorrow," William Faulkner opines, "began a thousand years ago." That is, I see the utopian function of imagining the future in the present as interconnected with a nostalgic project of embedding the past within the present. Cleanth Brooks writes on time in Faulkner, "Faulkner believed that to isolate the past from the present was to falsify the very nature of time…The present as such is an abstraction—an arbitrary knife-edge, over which time future constantly movies into a condition of time past. How long is the 'present'? A year, a week, a day, a half hour, a split second?" (Brooks 268). Such a view defines utopianism quite differently than a "standard" assumption that utopias are defined by formal qualities. Instead of defining utopia as a place (or a no-place) with clear cultural rules, I define

[4] I share Bert States' sentiments on this matter: "Schechner's notion of restored behavior seems to me an almost unassailable criterion for performance, even if one wishes (as I do) to extend the range of behavior that gets restored" (States 18). Such a criterion draws a limit case for those who would complain that within this rubric, everything is performance.

utopia as a blurring of the present and future that mirrors the blurring of present and past inherent to nostalgia. Moreover, the temporal dislocation of utopia into the past through images of Arcadian agrarian plenty marks this utopia, like nostalgia, as unstuck in time.[5] The way in which these seemingly laborless "past" Golden Age utopias chart an inverse of present values, geographies, and politics has long been immanent to discussions of utopia.[6][7]

In short, I begin this project with a definition of time that is performative and fluid. Tracking culinary performances between the temporal bookends of nostalgia and utopia provides an axis for locating cultural work that food does. I argue that the cultural work done by food transcends merely culinary interventions; tracking the way in which culinary scenarios bend time towards the past or future demonstrates the ways in which these culinary scenarios are imbricated in much larger cultural and political concerns. I argue that scenes of cooking and eating within my two case studies can be read as aesthetic interventions into a historical conflict over the past and future of agriculture. That is, I see my act of interpretation as "an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 10). Here, I define this

[5] I define Arcadia as a "lost" realm of natural abundance situated in the past in which humans live close to the land and there is no conflict. The term itself derives from ancient Greek mythology but the resonances with Eden are strong. I use Thomas Hubbard's distinction between a nostalgic Arcadianism and a forward-facing Utopianism more fully in Chapter Two (Hubbard, "Utopianism and the Sophistic City in Aristophanes").

[6] From the primary literature: Thomas More's utopia makes explicit the ways in which utopia functions as an inverse of contemporary politics by complaining about modern social ills before providing utopian solutions in his second chapter.

[7] Because I am largely interested in performative time and agrarian/culinary utopian spaces, I have drawn less attention to the "no-place-ness" of utopia. Thus, the spatial dynamics of utopia at the edge of society (for Greeks, a study of *peirata gaies* in Homer or Herodotus, for example) are outside the scope of this dissertation. So, too, is utopia's heterotopic potential for Foucault and others.

"master code" as a historical concern over the role of agriculture and agricultural and culinary labor. By re-writing these performed scenes (either in theater or performative writing) along an axis between a laborless agricultural past (nostalgia) and a laborless agricultural future (utopia), I trace these texts' political interventions in a much larger ideological debate over fading agrarian modes of production.

For a short time, I thought that I had invented the theory that the aesthetic combination of nostalgic pasts with laborless futures might in fact form an aesthetic solution to an ideological crisis about the role of labor in both "late democracies" I describe. Then I reread *The Political Unconscious*. This dissertation would not have been possible without the collected works of Frederic Jameson as inspiration and guide. The double-sided use of nostalgia and utopia in texts I explore is itself merely a temporal axis along which to trace food culture's ideological relationship to agriculture and culinary labor. This temporal axis between the imagined past and imagined future functions as a structure that demonstrates the ways in which historical agrarian modes of production from the past are re-imagined as laborless and utopian in the future. Part of my project, then, is unearthing this ideological work in order to create a revisionist history that might tell a truer story about agrarian labor, especially slave labor. While this is not a historical study, pointing to the sites at which antihistorical nostalgia *performatively* bends time and erases labor might be one step towards telling a fuller story.

I argue that culinary nostalgia functions as an antihistory not in reference to an objective past, but as opposed to a narrative of history that foregrounds the experience of labor. Culinary and agricultural labor is essential to the human survival, yet such

labor is also consistently performed by those with the least power and thus consistently undervalued.[8] In my two case studies in particular, the work of farming and cooking has historically fallen to slaves. While the pleasures of eating and farm life are encoded within the nostalgic narratives I describe, the experiences farming in the sun or standing over a hot stove are uniformly elided. Food fantasies both in the Attic comedies of Aristophanes and in contemporary southern food cookbooks reorganize history along a continuum of pleasure. Jameson reminds us:

> History, in the bad sense—the reference to a "context" or a "ground," an external real world of some kind, the reference, in other words, to the much maligned "referent" itself—is simply one more text among others, something found in history manuals and that chronological presentation of historical sequences so often called "linear history." [Althusser] does not at all draw the fashionable conclusion that because history is a text, the "referent" does not exist. (Jameson 35)

In both of my case studies, history does exist: the embodied realities of cooking and eating that are immanent to food culture. The embodied experiences of farming, cooking, and eating cannot be erased from history even as they are performative and outside of language. Through Jameson, then, these chapters offer a rereading of history that includes these ephemeral and forgotten experiences of farming, cooking and eating. Such a reading is able to demonstrate the ideological work that the merger of nostalgia with utopia, the past with the future, does to erase the material present. While there is no "correct text" to serve as a referent for history, there are the material

[8] Thus, it is often the work of the culinary historian to revalue and reclaim this labor. The ways in which so-called "labor-saving" innovations in fact created more work for female homemakers in the midcentury United States is a particularly well-researched site of such inquiry (Shapiro, *Something from the Oven*; Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*; Inness).

traces of agricultural and culinary labor too easily ignored by dominant ideological fantasies.

In sum, using Frederic Jameson's theory of the political unconscious, I argue that these performances are not *merely performative* in any traditional sense: they do political work. To return to speech-act theory, these culinary scenarios are not merely *descriptive* detail but *constantive* of ideological work in the texts I explore. That is, rather than look towards instances of food within theatre productions, I look to food as performance in all of performance's ideological potency. To put it another way, I read the performance of cooking and eating within theatrical, cinematic, culinary, and even legal texts against the grain.[9] Reading against the grain for the texts' political unconscious can make visible the political and ideological constraints of the texts themselves. The way in which these texts turn to the past and future speaks to the modes of production of the texts themselves; the way in which these texts turn to an agrarian past and a future marked by culinary luxury speaks to the increasing alienation of citizens from agriculture *in the present*. Reading against the grain shows the ways that cooking and eating scenes become particularly nostalgic for agrarianism within troubled democratic presents. In this dissertation, I read against the grain the tension between the history of agrarian labor and a fantasy of life without it.

[9] I have borrowed this phrase from Terry Eagleton (perhaps an odd pairing given his views on Jameson in his volume *Against the Grain*). A survey of the practices of resistant reading or deconstructive poetics would be far outside the scope of this dissertation. However, one definition of "reading against the grain" might be: to read in a way that renders visible that which was hidden within the text by brushing it another way. Or another, to read a text as "saying many different things which are fundamentally at variance with, contradictory to and subversive of what may be…seen by criticism as a single, stable 'meaning.' Thus, a text may 'betray' itself" (Cuddon 189). Cuddon's description is particularly apt for the work I do in the first two chapters to show the ways in which the conclusions of *Birds* and *Acharnians* contradict the central message and ideological work of the plays as wholes.

Reading against the grain also forces me to consider texts outside their generic categories (cookbooks as performance, for example), to take seriously what might be considered ephemera (off-handed remarks within the 2013 Paula Deen deposition), and to read very old plays (Old Comic fragments, for example) in ways that are, hopefully, quite new. On this last point, I hope that my readings of Aristophanes' (politically unconscious) desire for agrarian utopias will productively intervene in what I consider a stalemate regarding the political efficacy of Old Comedy. Through its ability to instantiate fantastical twists, turns, and utopian feasts onstage, Old Comedy shows the validity of culinary longing as a *politics*, as a way of participating politically, a definition of the political that clearly extends beyond a political critique that merely leverages one politician or faction above another.[10]

The project, in sum, provides a theoretical model of what I call the performative power of food to bend, break, and double *time*: nostalgia toward the past and utopia toward the future. This theoretical model traces how theatre and culinary discourses like cookbooks draw us into conversations about living closer to the land. Agriculture and bountiful foods are often described in these nostalgic accounts as free from the actual labor of farming or cooking. By calling food *performative*, I focus not on its inclusion within theatre spaces, its citationality or volitionality. I mean that the culinary work done by actors in front of audiences (whether co-present or implicit) is

[10] Which in turn raises the question, "what is politics?" When I refer to the text as a politics, I mean that it creates an *alternative ideological model* for the organization of a society. I posit that the ideological conflicts in *Acharnians* between an agrarian past and an imperial polis-at-war are based on real antagonisms but transcend them through the dramatic form: fantasy. That is, the text does not merely represent politics but does *active ideological work* on the question of what it means to live in a democracy.

ideological. I claim that this ideological work inheres in food's ability to both consolidate cultural memory and dream of a better world: bleeding the past into the present and the present into the future in a way that is uniquely performative.

Why utopianism?

Pointing to food's temporal play is not solely a fault-finding exercise. Again, this is not an historical account attempting to set "the record" straight; history is "not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form," (Jameson 35). Part of my project is pointing to this temporal play in order to demonstrate the way in which food allows for utopian dreams of a better world. Utopian thinking is a powerful gesture for political change: demand the impossible! In his book of essays with the same title, Slavoj Zizek reminds us that this is not a question of pure dreaming or idle fantasy. Realistic demands only seem impossible given the confines of our current imaginations. They are impossible due only to the confines of "the realm of necessity" in which we now live. In Aristophanes, protagonists who demand the impossible—a less bureaucratic life—find utopian solutions that highlight the ways in which urban Athenian democracy is a "realm of necessity." What I call the "New Southern Food Movement" paints the farm as a site of innovation and pleasure, imagining a utopian farm-to-table future for the South (even while drawing attention away from plantations as sites of national trauma).

Jameson's insistence on the political work done by formal qualities of the text (as a political unconscious) itself has an anticipatory quality that links this early theory with his later work on science fiction and utopia. I take Jameson's axiom as my own:

that literature aims to “wrest a realm of freedom from the realm of necessity” (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 19). A current of utopianism thrums underneath: a message of liberation in which texts might be marked by freedom rather than a politically unconscious engagement with a struggle over the role of agrarian or culinary labor. This “realm of freedom” is, rather than a blueprint for utopia, a “spirit of utopia” that I wish to capture from texts. I draw a distinction between this spirit of utopia and what I call “blueprint utopianism”: formal literary or cultural utopias that often do negative or dangerous political work.

A utopian turn also marks this dissertation as both in line with and a critique of Marxism. As Marcuse cautions, “Marxism must risk defining freedom in such a way that people become conscious of and recognize it as something that is nowhere already in existence" (Marcuse 68–9). The theorists on whom I lean heavily believe—more firmly than I—that Marxism is the master code that will unlock the vaults of history for the future. However, my focus on utopianism, particularly a functional utopianism that figures cooking and eating as dreaming of a better world, marks a serious departure from Karl Marx’s own opinions about utopia. I argue that utopianism is not idle wish-fulfillment nor escapist fantasy that allows structural oppression to continue unchecked.

Quotidian acts of cooking and eating can, to borrow from Marcuse, define freedom in such a way that people recognize it as something nowhere already in existence. Or, since I depart from Marcuse’s description of the present as wholly free from utopianism, a celebration of cooking and eating might wrest a realm of freedom and pleasure from contemporary political and economic structures that seem to have

no space for these pleasures and freedoms. As Jose Muñoz reminds us, "a critical investment in utopia is profoundly resistant to the stultifying temporal logic of the broken-down present" (Muñoz 12). I argue that the utopian function, then, can be diagnostic of problems with the "realm of necessity" even as the solutions offered fail. Even agrarian nostalgia, then, can be a form of utopian thinking: it imagines a better world.

To address this paradox between the conservative work done by nostalgia and the utopian potential of dreaming, I turn to the second theoretical guide for this project: Ernst Bloch. While a fuller explanation of my use of Bloch's utopian function follows in Chapter One, I pause here to briefly introduce Bloch's contributions to the field of "utopian studies." A lengthy summary of *The Principle of Hope* will explain the ways in which his choice of evidence has inspired my own methodology, particularly in the second half of the dissertation in which I refer to the Buford Highway or the New Southern Food Movement as utopian enterprises.

> In *The Principle of Hope* Bloch provides an unprecedented survey of human wish pictures and daydreams of a better life. The book begins with little daydreams (part I), followed by an exposition of Bloch's theory of anticipatory consciousness (part II). In part III Bloch applies his utopian hermeneutics to the wish pictures found in the mirror of ordinary life: to the utopian aura which surrounds a new dress, advertisements, beautiful masks, illustrated magazines, the costumes of the Ku Klux Klan, the festive excess of the annual market and the circus, fairy tales and colportage, the mythology and literature of travel, antique furniture, ruins and museums, and the utopian imagination present in dance, pantomime, the cinema and the theater. In part IV Bloch turns to the problem of the construction of a world adequate to hope and to various 'outlines of a better world.' He provides a 400-page analysis of medical, social, technical, architectural, and geographical utopias, followed by an analysis of wish landscapes in painting, opera, and poetry; utopian perspectives in the philosophies of Plato, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Kant, and the utopianism implicit in movements agitating

> for peace and leisure. Finally, in part V Bloch turns to wish pictures of the fulfilled moment which reveal 'identity' to be the fundamental supposition of anticipatory consciousness. Once again, the sweep is breathtaking as Bloch ranges over happy and dangerous experiences in ordinary life; the problem of the antinomy between the individual and the community; the works of the young Goethe, Don Giovanni, Faust, Don Quixote, the plays of Shakespeare; morality and intensity in music; hope pictures against death, and man's increasing self-injection into the content of religious mystery. (Hudson 170)

As Wayne Hudson summarizes, Bloch's concept of a utopian consciousness is associative and evocative rather than scientific and exclusive. Bloch sees wishing in every field of human life, from the aesthetic to the political and—importantly for this project, in between. Bloch's interest in minutia and ephemera has been hugely influential on my choice of evidence. Roland Barthes concurs: "the mark of utopian is the everyday; or even: everything every day is utopian: timetables, dietary programs, plans for clothing" (Barthes 17).

At the same time, this definition of utopianism directly abuts one of utopia as temporally and spatially dislocated. In this dissertation, I argue that this "islands and trenches" approach to utopianism is directly and productively opposed to the way in which utopian thinking is enmeshed with the quotidian.[11] I trace this particular paradox in the first chapter, first situating these temporally and spatially dislocated utopias within Greek literary history. I survey Arcadian images of geographic displacement and self-producing food from Hesiod to the Old Comic fragments. Thus, this project also begins a conversation about Aristophanes' place in the history of archaic utopian literature. Aristophanes references Greek "Big Rock Candy

[11] Here I refer to Jameson's treatment of nineteenth century formal utopianism, especially in the works of Louis Marin (Jameson and Marin).

Mountain" utopias, for example, located in an Arcadian past with laborless and unlimited food—only to reject them as mere inverses of Athenian politics.

Why these case studies?

This dissertation creates a theoretical model for which I've included two case studies, but could include many more. Indeed, the choice of fifth century BCE Athens and the contemporary American South might seem arbitrary. In choosing case studies over 2,000 years and half a world apart, I do not mean to suggest comprehensiveness. Neither do I mean to suggest continuity. I have chosen these two case studies quite simply because cooking and eating function similarly, in both cases, to form a critique of the standing social order by turning, nostalgically, to a fantasy past to imagine a better (utopian) future. Both the comedies of Aristophanes and cookbooks from the New Southern Food Movement create aesthetic solutions for an ongoing conflict between agrarian modes of production and democratic politics. Thus, most importantly, both these two case studies respond directly to the challenges of democracy by mapping nostalgia for an agrarian government onto a utopian future.

My choice of popular culture—the civic theatre of ancient comedy and films and cookbooks from contemporary America—speaks to the ways in which even conservative or lowbrow performances can perform utopian cultural work. Jameson draws on Ernst Bloch in his analysis of *Jaws*:

> I will now indeed argue that we cannot fully do justice to the ideological function of works like these unless we are willing to concede the presence within them of a more positive function as well: of what I will call, following the Frankfurt School, their Utopian or transcendent potential—that dimension of even the most degraded type of mass culture which remains implicitly, and no matter how faintly, negative and critical of the social order from which, as a product and a

> commodity, it springs. At this point in the argument, then, the hypothesis is that the works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well: they cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be so manipulated. (Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" 144)

I argue that my two case studies, scenarios of cooking and eating in ancient comedy and contemporary food culture, both do ideological work to bend time towards the agrarian past. This ideological work might indeed be conservative in both cases: anti-democratic in the case of Aristophanes and erasing the history of slavery and economic oppression in American history in the case of the cookbooks. However, these two case studies are "implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well": offering a "fantasy bribe" of a better and more delicious world.

The choice of these two case studies also marks this project as interdisciplinary. This study encompasses both historical sources that have been overlooked by performance studies (Greek comedies) and contemporary sources that are sometimes ignored by the humanities (Paula Deen's recent deposition and oral histories of chefs). Despite the disciplinary discontinuity between the two case studies—from Classics and American Studies, my methodology and theoretical framework falls squarely in line within fairly traditional lines of inquiry in the humanities, particularly in performance studies.

Methodologies

Indeed, this theoretical project came about fairly *organically* from the content: initially, from a study of food in the plays of Aristophanes. I see Aristophanes, then, as not only a dramatist under my microscope but a philosopher, theorist, civilian and

dreamer himself. From my conception of Aristophanes as a Gramscian organic intellectual representing the class interests of wealthy, anti-democratic farmers came the theoretical paradigm that led me to the contemporary case study.[12] By calling Aristophanes an organic intellectual, I note that Gramsci first describes "organic intellectuals" as non-professional intellectuals who disseminate hegemonic values before he admits that organic intellectuals with radical, counter-hegemonic interests can spring from the working class. Likewise, I turn my attention to contemporary organic intellectuals invested in the praxis of making food—farmers, chefs, and food bloggers theorize their practice of foodways every day.[13] According to Gramsci's definition, these thinkers are not a specialized class of intellectuals but rather theorize from the ground up—and speak alongside those who share their political and class interests.

But first, always historicize! Aristophanes' organic philosophy of utopian solutions for politically conservative problems does not exist in a vacuum to transpose at will. As always, I heed James Davidson's caveat upon approaching ancient sources:

> We are entering a very different world, very strange and very foreign, a world inconceivably long ago, centuries before Christ or Christianity, a century or so before the Chinese emperor's model army, a world indeed without our centuries, or weeks or minutes or markings of time. These

[12] Organic philosopher: "It can be observed that the "organic" intellectuals which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part "specializations" of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence" (Gramsci 113). While the concept of the organic philosopher has been central to my methodological understanding of both Aristophanes and my interview subjects, I do not engage systematically with Gramsci in this dissertation: in Chapter Three I explain why I prefer Raymond William's understanding of hegemony and Jameson's definition of mass culture.

[13] Foodways: "The traditional customs or habits of a group of people concerning food and eating" (OED). Or "If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed" (Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal").

> Greeks will sometimes seem very familiar, very lively, warm and affable. Occasionally we might even get their jokes. We must be careful, however, that we are not deceived by false friends. (Davidson xxvi)

Aristophanes' professional career began alongside the beginning of the Peloponnesian war and Pericles' radical democratic reforms: increased pay for participation in government service and an expanding of the court system. Aristophanes' comedies reflect the fact that culture is rapidly changing in this time period. They reflect his own investment in this shifting class structure, as in Gramsci's description of the organic philosopher; Aristophanes is not a disinterested comic critic but uses absurdist comic scenarios to lambast personal, political, and poetic opponents. These rich comedies certainly comment on the material circumstances of their making (for example, naming politicians and policies). Yet they do other work as well: the comedies I use as my first case study both roast recent changes in Athenian politics and imagine fantastical utopian worlds.

I argue that the contrast between these textual horizons[14] offer a deeper and more systematic commentary— on the change away from the agricultural wealth of Cimonian Athens to the poverty of defeated Athens. One might read these plays along an explicitly political horizon of policy suggestions and political satire, or along a second horizon of social conservatism and ideological celebration of un-meddlesome (*apragmon*) farmers. Beyond these two horizons lies a third: a glimpse of "that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly

[14] "Not so much an interpretive code of a distinct type, as a certain type of attention of the reading mind toward one particular order of textual phenomena, "a sequence of contexts or relationships in which the whole work of literary art can be placed such that this particular context determines a particular type of interpretation " (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 71).

antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 95). Tracking food in these plays offers that glimpse: to a structural antagonism between agrarian governance and democracy. Feasting in the worlds that Aristophanes creates is always heightened: it's both political and absurd, both nostalgic looking back at the past and utopian imagining a better future. Aristophanes also shows how this entanglement of nostalgia and utopian fantasy responds directly to a political crisis: these plays take place under the shadow of a very real war (the Peloponnesian war, in which Athens fell from being a major imperial democratic power to an impoverished oligarchy with seriously curtailed civil liberties). Given this political context, Aristophanes' fictional heroes navigate very real political issues even in fantasy utopias onstage. Though the first two chapters of this dissertation handle purely fantastic theatrical texts, and the second two discuss cinematic, legal, and culinary texts, I argue that both are intensely connected with the conditions of their own production and share equally high stakes.

Again, I came to my project from close, against-the-grain reading of these ancient plays. Aristophanes himself articulates the relationship between nostalgia for agrarian government and utopias with self-producing foods. It is for this reason that I refer to Aristophanes as an organic philosopher. Since Aristophanes' philosophy seems to articulate both a longing for Cimonian politics that is both politically conservative and a longing for a more pleasurable future, I looked to other organic philosophers who through "culinary performance" articulated the same nostalgic interest in the past paired with utopian dreams of culinary pleasure.

My second case study is the "New Southern Food Movement" that has grown in the last ten years. My personal investment in this food movement was, first, as an enthusiastic proponent of its reaches outside of the South. As southern food became more visible and legible as national gourmet cuisine, I started bringing pies instead of cookies to potlucks. I learned where to get a great ham biscuit in Brooklyn (Egg, if you're wondering). After a few years, it seemed that southern food was everywhere, even outside the South. It was in cookbooks, it was on blogs, on *Top Chef*. As country ham in New York became a cliché, I started to think critically about the explosion of southern food culture on the international gourmet scene. In what ways do these chefs and cookbook authors conjure a vision of southern history that undervalues or erases African American culinary and agricultural labor? In what ways does situating the South as a site of pleasure allow the region to move past its history as the site of national trauma and present as the nation's poorest region? These bubbling questions about my own investment in the New Southern Food Movement, which so closely echoed the questions I was asking about agrarian nostalgia in fifth-century BCE Athens, led me to choose this burgeoning culinary movement as my second case study. Again, these case studies both combine nostalgic pasts with laborless futures to form an aesthetic solution an ideological crisis—that of the role of agricultural labor in democracies that seem to be shifting away from agrarian values.

I define the parameters of this the "New Southern Food Movement" more fully in Chapter Four. The New Yorker profile of Charleston, SC chef Sean Brock offers a good introductory summary: "His restaurants are like cleverly argued revisionist histories: they appeal to your nostalgia while reversing your expectations" (Bilger).

On the one hand, Brock is an obsessive seed saver who showcases heirloom ingredients at his restaurant Husk.[15] On the other, he makes the foams and gels that characterize playful, elite modernist gastronomy at his restaurant McCrady's. Brock's seed saving is, in fact, a synecdoche for the larger New Southern Food Movement. Seed saving looks backward to a more biodiverse and delicious past: Sean Brock believes that "the Rice Era (1680-1930) was when food was most delicious" (Bilger). In seed saving, too, there is a turn to the future and an insistence on the power of dreaming: seed savers tend to wax poetic both about the delicious lost tastes of past cultivars and about the power of heirloom fruits and vegetables to change the world. Perhaps the metaphor of the seed itself is too utopian to ignore: "there is no despair in a seed. There is only life—waiting… to be set free" (Ray xii).

Just as I see the work done by Aristophanes as offering a politically unconscious theory of agrarian utopia, I also see this work organically performed by the chefs and authors of the New Southern Food Movement. Thus, this project would not have been possible without the organic philosophy of the chefs I interviewed and the prodigious library of oral histories collected by the Southern Foodways Alliance, which I turn to in the third chapter. Methodologically, oral history seems a fitting choice for a project that sees the case studies themselves as doing the work, requiring only an interpreter to "read against the grain." Oral history also stands at the unique

[15] Seed saving is the process of saving seeds or tubers from a harvest for the next year's planting. The exponential growth of corn, soy, rice and wheat has led to a mass extinction of seed varietals: ninety-four percent of seed varietals commercially available in 1906 were no longer available in 2004 (Ray 6). As such, seed saving becomes an act that privileges crop biodiversity and heirloom taste over convenience and larger industrial agricultural interests.

juncture between past and future: "performance is a promissory act. Not only because it can promise possible change but because it catches its participants—often by surprise—in a contract with possibility: with imagining what might be, what could be, should be" (Pollock 2). As Linda Shopes and Bruce Stave caution in *Remembering: Oral History Performance*, "The stories told, often deeply expressive of history's burdens, lay claim on us for retelling so that history may be known, shared, perhaps overcome. Performance, operating in the liminal space between then and now, you and me, what happened and what someone said happened, is an especially powerful means of doing so" (Pollock xvi). That is, the act of narration inherent in oral history and an immanent utopianism in performance render oral history a fitting methodology for this inquiry into the way in which culinary performances bend and double time.

All of this is to reiterate that I am interested in what food *does*. Food scholarship seems limited by its interest in assessing what food *is*. Food in the social sciences, clearly, is concerned with quanta. More literary analyses trace the representation of specific foods within specific performance or literary traditions. Methodologically, then, I situate food within performance studies to look broadly at the work that food does to rewrite histories without trauma and define the future. Here, I turn to recent works in theatre and performance studies that have addressed the radical potential of utopian thought: Jose Estaban Muñoz' *Cruising Utopia* and Jill Dolan's *Utopia in Performance*. Given the rise of "antirelationality" promising "no future" in the field of queer studies, or Afropessimism stressing the false promise of emancipation and the structural impossibility of Blackness, stressing the radical power

of dreaming might seem naïve, compensatory, illusory, or worse.[16] I draw on these recent works in praise of utopia, and suggest their nuanced case studies to show that utopian critique need not posit a white, straight, male, hegemonic dreamer.

In *Cruising Utopia,* Muñoz puns on "concrete utopias" within literally concrete urban spaces that enable queer commensality and futurity (Muñoz); these queer performance spaces, practices and objects reject the "banal optimism" of mere abstract, wishful thinking (Muñoz 3). Muñoz turns to the "not-yet" as a rejection of "straight time [which] tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life (Muñoz 22). After defining both performativity and queerness as anticipatory, Muñoz then reads examples of queer performance as deeply utopian inversions of "straight time" that surpass mere abstract utopian thinking.

Muñoz writes, "my methodology can be best described as a backwards glance that enacts a future vision" (Muñoz 4). So, too, I have chosen my case studies in response to a dangerous presentism in theatre and performance studies. The ephemerality of live performance gives it powerful thrall in the present, but the power of disappearance need not demand case studies located only in the present.[17] This discontentedness with the present takes two forms: one is a bent towards utopian criticism and the other is my choice of ancient case studies alongside contemporary ones.

Why food?

[16] For antirelationality see: Edelman, Bersani. For afropessimism see: Sexton, Patterson, Marriot.
[17] See Phelan.

Writing about performance and writing about food are difficult for the same reasons: food and performance's immanent sensory, experiential, ephemeral qualities resist the very language one might use to describe them—most of all the scholarly. In his rallying cry for performance studies, Dwight Conquergood eloquently describes this paradox:

> Subjugated knowledges have been erased because they are illegible; they exist, by and large, as active bodies of meaning, outside of books, eluding the forces of inscription that would make them legible, and thereby legitimate (see de Certeau 1998; Scott 1998). What gets squeezed out by this epistemic violence is the whole realm of complex, finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert – and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out.

Thus, writing about food *as* performance highlights the culinary knowledge's status as subjected to the same "epistemic violence" that delegitimizes embodied, intoned, gestured and improvised knowledges. In Chapter Four, I turn to the cookbook as the very site where the tension between foodways that "elude the forces of inscription that would make them legible" enter print culture. Food, then, provides a staging ground for historically central questions within the field of performance studies.

Choosing food, a subjugated knowledge, to trace broader political unconsciousness is my way of "returning to the crossroads" of theory and practice, where Dwight Conquergood calls performance studies scholars to abide. Indeed, my choice of the New Southern Food Movement over other regional cuisines rests, at least in part, in my own investment in this movement as a consumer and enthusiast. Conquergood writes, "At the PhD level, original scholarship in culture and the arts is enhanced, complemented, and complicated in deeply meaningful ways by the

participatory understanding and community involvement of the researcher" (Conquergood 153). For me, this has taken the form of a performance practice as dramaturg, director and performer. But, more importantly, I expand Conquergood's advice to Performance Studies PhDs to include my affective investment in southern food.

In a conversation with Ted Lee, I hedged around my choice of southern food as a dissertation topic:

> LK: When people were skeptical about my choice of the South, I just said, you know, I love southern food. And that's really all I have—
> TL: I don't think you have to explain it any more than that. (T. Lee)

Despite the redemptive power of enthusiasm, the unique socioeconomic and racial politics of southern food make a resistance to carpetbaggers, especially carpetbaggers with recording equipment, uniquely justified. Nonetheless, I believe in the utopian potential of commensality because food and shared meals have had a unique power to bring me into contact with kind and generous strangers of many races, genders, and classes. In my experience, Ted Lee has been right: "I love your food" is usually all the introduction one needs.

Southern food writer John Egerton asserted this in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement: "before schools, churches, sports teams, and even other restaurants in the South got around to lowering the barriers of racial segregation, many of the region's best barbecue pits maintained a thriving interracial trade" (Egerton, *Southern Food* 152). My wallet is full of scrawled suggestions of where to eat in New Orleans, Nashville, Atlanta. Asking "where should I eat next?" begins a complex conversation about race, class, gender and geography that encourages people to whip out their

pencils, not to close off. In the line at Scott's Barbeque in Hemingway, South Carolina, a couple ahead of me gave me the unsolicited tip to ask for a bag of the rinds, kept behind the counter. Others in the line turned and averred. Soon we were all talking gamely about our weekends and hometowns.

Despite food's ability to divide cultures into geographic, gendered, racialized or religious subsets, I am routinely reminded of food's commensal ability to bring people together and instigate difficult conversations about both history and reconciliation. In my teaching, writing, and thinking about food, I draw on the rich legacy of food in sociological and anthropological inquiry that has shed light on the ways in which this "subjugated knowledge" in fact structures commensality all while delineating gender, class, kinship and religion in society (Lévi-Strauss; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal"; Bourdieu). Luce Giard reminds us, "eating, in fact, serves not only to maintain the biological machinery of the body, but to make concrete one of the specific modes of relation between a person and the world, thus forming one of the fundamental landmarks in space-time" (Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 183).

Chapters

Ultimately, by using these two examples, I hope to show that nostalgia for food is entangled with utopian rhetoric, and moving back towards an agricultural-based government is figured as a utopian turn. This ideological turn does work that I consider both positive and negative. Even while nostalgia often operates as a revisionist history or an antihistory that erases scarcity and slave labor, it structures a critique of the present that opens space for utopian dreaming. In the two southern food

movement chapters, I talk to contemporary cookbook authors and analyze cookbooks to talk about the way in which they address—or usually not—the role of slavery in the agrarian history of the South and in southern food. At the same time that these cookbooks privilege nostalgia over history, they also do important work to move southern cooking onto the global stage. What I call "the utopian turn" also offers a more inclusive definition of the South for contemporary chefs and cookbook authors and new dramatic possibilities for characters on the Greek comic stage. So the two very disparate case studies actually come out of a unified question about nostalgia, and the way that food in can tell us about the past and future of culture more broadly.

In Chapter One, I define "utopianism" as a function, rather than a form. I use Ernst Bloch's conception of utopian consciousness from *The Principle of Hope* to establish a utopian heuristic that focuses on the power of dreaming of a better world; I call this "utopian thinking." I then argue that Aristophanes' plays productively contrast utopian thinking with existing Greek Golden Age utopias. After a brief history of the Greek Golden Age utopia, I describe the ways in which utopian thinking in Aristophanes' plays are able to account for both Aristophanes' political conservatism and poetic novelty. I show the way in which the Greek Golden Age negotiates the relationship between nostalgia for an imagined Arcadian past, utopianism set in an indistinct future, and political commentary situated in the present.

I trace the way in which two aspects of Aristophanes' *Birds* separates this utopian thinking from existing Golden Age traditions: *polypragmosune* (meddlesomeness) and urban versus rural life. However, in the final section of the chapter, I offer a caveat: that this fantasy can be destructive. I use *Assemblywomen* as

an example of the way in which the erasure of slavery from Aristophanes' utopian scheme marks the limits of fantasy to describe a better reality.

In Chapter Two, having defined utopianism within a Greek context, I turn to a second case study from Athenian Old Comedy, Aristophanes' *Acharnians*. In this chapter, I offer a dramaturgical reading of one play from beginning to end. Such a close against-the-grain reading of a single text offers a point of contrast to scholars such as James Davidson, whose *Courtesans and Fishcakes* posits Greek life as structurally opposed to excess sexual and culinary desire. I argue that *Acharnians* goes off its own rails to ultimately condemn the solitary utopia its hero creates without satirizing the hero's desire (for food, for a better world). Thus, culinary desire is a generative engine for the play, rather than something to be carefully managed. Rather than critique Foucault's binary between penetrator/penetratee, then, I celebrate his vision of power in which resistance productively generates desire. I argue that *Acharnians* is constructed in a ring structure, in which the central section of the play in which the protagonist breaks with reality is celebrated at the expense of the formal utopia at the end or restrictive depiction of democracy at the beginning of the play. In this chapter, I draw on the work of Frederic Jameson to discuss the way in which Aristophanes' poetic fantasy does political work to create solutions to a political conflict between agrarian and urban life.

In the third chapter, I again define terms: here turning my attention to the American South and a definition of agrarian nostalgia. In this chapter, I define nostalgia within a contemporary southern context as an antihistorical fantasy. As my primary examples, I use Paula Deen's 2012 diabetes announcement and 2013

deposition to describe Deen's ability to unroot southern food from historical time and geographical place. Through these pop-cultural performances, Deen unwittingly figures southern food as pan-American State Fair excess and racial segregation and structural black servitude as ongoing.[18] Thus, Deen's culinary nostalgia located in the contemporary South, performed through television, legal proceedings and recipes, clearly erases histories of oppression and violence. I then read Robert Zemeckis' *Forrest Gump* as an example of another dominant narrative of performative time in the South; I describe the filmic strategies used to imprint this antihistorical fantasy as recursive and outside of linear time. Paula Deen and Forrest Gump's revisionist histories show the ways in which transcending linear time can produce negative effects and compensatory "utopias" that in fact deny plural dreaming of a better world. Deen and Gump's version of history obscure the ways in which progressive politics draw upon histories of oppression by instead substituting fantasy. As a conclusion, I offer an example of a "more utopian utopianism" in southern food culture: the discourse surrounding Atlanta's Buford Highway region. This multi-ethnic enclave might offer a dream of a better Atlanta. In this coda, I discuss the stakes of describing the Buford Highway or fusion cuisine as the future of Atlanta in light of social codes that increasingly privilege the cultural omnivorousness of the de-racialized consumer.

In the fourth and final chapter, I again use a sustained case study to further explore the definitions I have parsed in former chapter. Here, I use contemporary southern food cookbooks as a case study to describe the antihistorical nostalgia I

[18] The analysis of the hegemonic cultural work performed by Paula Deen has required a particularly against-the-grain reading, as it is so invested in dominant nostalgic narratives.

developed conceptually in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I first demonstrate that southern food is shifting from a set of regional, heritage foodways to a nationally recognized cuisine in which southern elements are open for hybrid or simply up-scale reinterpretation. Secondly, I argue that this "new turn" in southern cooking might demonstrate the dangerous power of nostalgia to overtake a historical awareness of African American labor's role in southern food culture— at the same time that this "utopian turn" foregrounds the pleasures of eating southern food in a way that offer a commensal, interracial and more egalitarian vision of the South.

Food's association with commensality and universality enable a scholarly project that is itself explicitly utopian. And so while this is a dissertation about food, it is primarily a dissertation about the way in which food encourages us both to remember and dream. It is only fitting if, at times, my argumentation echoes the utopian work I describe. Such is the polemic that Jill Dolan offers in *Utopia in Performance,* "the experience of performance can provide new frames of reference for how we see a better future extending out from our more ordinary lives" (Dolan 20). Like Dolan, I buy theatre tickets with a thrill of anticipation that a new horizon will open before me. However, my odds of finding hope at dinner table have always been much higher than at the theatre.

In the Pixar film *Ratatouille*, gourmet rat Remy eats a strawberry and is surrounded by an explosion of pink fireworks. He eats cheese and yellow sunbursts pop around him. He eats both, and murmurs in wonder, "something new is created!" Remy smiles as the two synesthetic visualizations combine, a lively tango picks up in the background, demonstrating that the whole of this combination exceeds the two

parts. Here again popular culture, even an animated children's film, articulates a powerful cultural truth. Those who make and eat food can become obsessive in their chase for the horizon beyond, the endless potential of combined flavors. Aristophanes and the chefs of the New Southern Food Movement chase the horizon behind: looking to the past and finding, in the end, something entirely new.

Chapter One: Golden Age Utopias and the Power of Utopian Thinking in Aristophanes' *Birds* and *Assemblywomen*

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains
You never change your socks
And the little streams of alcohol
Come trickling down the rocks
The brakemen have to tip their hats
And the railway bulls are blind
There's a lake of stew
And of whiskey too
You can paddle all around it
In a big canoe
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains,
The jails are made of tin.
And you can walk right out again,
As soon as you are in.
There ain't no short-handled shovels,
No axes, spades nor picks,
I'm bound to stay
Where you sleep all day,
Where they hung the jerk
That invented work
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

Harry McClintock, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*

"Outlines of a Better World": Towards a definition of utopian performance

I grew up with the Big Rock Candy Mountain. In the version from my childhood, Pete Seeger sang of mildly illicit cigarettes and "streams of alcheehol," the very real wish fulfillment of never changing your socks. It wasn't until much later that I heard Harry McClintock's version, and the chilling 1902 song that precedes it on the Smithsonian Folkways album: "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum." McClintock's descriptions of handouts and breadlines drew the axes, spades and picks of "The Big Rock Candy Mountain" into sharp relief. McClintock, I realized, was singing about a fantasy, yes,

but also the grim realities of turn of the century migrant labor. Seeger's folk revival 1957 recording speaks to the legacy of the dust bowl and the devastation of the Great Depression well into the 1950s. This dreamy song, despite Burl Ives' cheery children's version, tracks the histories of both dreaming and suffering over the first half of the twentieth century.

The Big Rock Candy Mountain forms a useful motif for this chapter because it speaks both to the power and politics of dreaming. In this chapter, I hope to show the ways in which a full consideration of agrarian utopianism must also consider utopianism as a function, the function of dreaming of a better world. I use two plays by fifth-century BCE Athenian comedian Aristophanes, *Birds* and *Assemblywomen*, to parcel out this distinction. Within these two plays, I contrast the utopian function of dreaming of a better world with the explicit Golden Age imagery of lakes of stew and whiskey, too. By tracing the literary legacy of these Golden Age tropes, I show the way in which the Greek Golden Age negotiates the relationship between nostalgia for an imagined Arcadian past, utopianism set in an indistinct future, and political commentary situated in the present.

Certainly, utopia is closely associated with its form (whether science fiction novel or commune) and its content (shared labor, or gender parity for example).[19] For a definition of utopia based on form and content, I am drawn to Russell Jacoby's phrase "blueprint utopias" from *Picture Imperfect*, that "map out the future in inches

[19] Here I use Ruth Levitas' hermeneutic of the form, content, and function of utopia as an introductory tool (Levitas 4).

and minutes" (Jacoby xvi).[20] I would also label intentional or religious communities that lay out clear improvements upon current society in their sociopolitical order as "blueprint utopias" for offering a model, enacted rather than descriptive, of a better world.[21]

Indeed, the landscape of much scholarship on utopianism requires careful distinctions between formal and functional definitions—to use Frederic Jameson's terms, between utopian programs and utopian impulses (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 4). As we shall see, such a separation enables a study of the friction between formal and functional utopianism within any one text, as in my analysis of *Assemblywomen* and *Birds* that follow in this chapter and *Acharnians* in the next.[22]

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[20] Although I use his term throughout, Jacoby's theoretical position on such formal utopias is quite condemnatory, as he dismisses this formulation almost as soon as coining the phrase. Jacoby moves on to what he describes as "iconoclastic" utopia, are marked by rupture and connected, by Jacoby, to a strand of Jewish Messianism present in Bloch and Benjamin (Jacoby xvii). I see this first as a false dichotomy between a formal and a functional analysis of utopia and secondly as unduly limiting in a description of the function of utopia, which I see as not only iconoclastic, as I explore more fully below. Thus, I preserve Jacoby's term for its clarity and convenience without using it as a shorthand for his argument. In Ruth Levitas' history of the concept of utopias, she uses the term "liberal humanist utopia" for literary representations of egalitarian commonwealths, but I find her term unwieldy.

[21] Although Jacoby outlines a tension between a utopian impulse in iconoclastic critical/theoretical projects and *only literary* blueprint utopias, I use his term "blueprint utopias" to refer to lived attempts to restructure social life, as well. Thus, I count as "blueprint utopias" utopian approaches to urban planning or architecture—such as David Harvey's response to the "revitalization" of Baltimore as a failure of utopian urban planning in *Spaces of Hope*. *Eating in Eden*, one of the only books on the subject of food and utopia is limited in its approach to discussing the ideological role of food in historical intentional and religious communities.

[22] Each of these plays feature what could be considered a "blueprint utopia" in addition to the "utopian thinking" that I explore. Plot summaries for those less familiar with these plays follow. In *Birds*, the protagonist Companion-Persuader and his companion Goodhope leave Athens in search of a more comfortable way of life and wind up convincing the mythological man-turned-bird Tereus to allow them to "help" bring the birds back to their former position of power in ancient times. In the process, Companion-Persuader gains control of the realm of the birds, draws boundaries, builds walls, and fends off his city in the sky, Cloudcuckooland, against intruders. These episodes lampoon a variety of figures, from those associated with the corruption of Athens (oracle-sellers, urban planners, a would-be poet laureate) to the Olympian gods, who are upset that Companion-Persuader is enjoying the smoky smell of sacrificial meat on Earth and not allowing the delectable odors to pass above him. All the while, Companion-Persuader is preparing his own feast—of the birds who objected to his new rule. He

Moreover, creating a distinct terminology for a utopian function allows for greater nuance within the field of utopian criticism, which tends to limit the definition of the utopian to the merely formal. For example, most surveys of *utopianism* are in fact anthologies of utopian *literature* (e.g. Claeys; Claeys and Sargent, Kumar). In sum, I use the term "blueprint utopia" where other writers refer to this formal or content-driven definition of utopia as simply "utopia" because it enables a broader range of subfields within the utopian such as "wishful thinking" or "utopian desire" which prove useful tools for *performance* analysis.

This latter definition of the utopian, rather than any clear "blueprint" utopia—is surely more difficult to grasp, yet it is this definition of utopia as a function rather than a form that I wish to explore throughout this dissertation. Of course, "utopian thinking" might inhere in countless material examples or be replaced by countless synonyms—Ernst Bloch describes "dreaming of a better world" not as utopian thinking but as utopian consciousness. I use "utopian thinking" to designate "dreaming of a better world" (Bloch) without necessarily embodying or even imagining utopian *sociopolitical* structures. The difference between utopian consciousness and utopian thinking is that Bloch argues that this "not-yet-ness" of experience is a structural and

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convinces the gods to give him Sovereignty, a literal metaphor in the form of a young (possible nude) woman, "Miss Universe." In *The Assemblywomen*, the women of the city meet covertly before dawn, dressed as men. Under Get-Er-Done's tutelage, they rehearse the scene that will follow—the women will vote to hand the city over to the women at the assembly, as Athens has run out of ideas to remedy its waning political power and growing wealth disparity. Offstage, this motion passes, and the proceedings are detailed in a conversation between Get-Er-Done's husband Look-See and their neighbor. Get-Er-Done then details the new laws—everyone will share the same "condition of life": all property will be handed over to the state, marriage will be abolished, all meals will be held communally. The second half of the play follows the conclusions—a scofflaw tries to evade the new law and formulates a plan to sneak into dinner, three old women vie for a night with a young man, who must sleep with them by new decree, and everyone, including the audience, is invited to a sumptuous feast.

universal element of human thought, a utopian revision of Freud's sub- or unconscious (the past, repressed) into a future-centric "not-yet-conscious" (the future, waiting to be expressed).[23] "Utopian thinking" might, then, account less for an intrinsic utopian structure to human cognition and more for a particular, historicized utopian turn that I argue occurs specifically in moments where agriculture appears in peril. I attempt to clarify a definition of utopia that accounts for the heterogeneity of utopian forms and the variety of utopian functions, both conservative and radical. As Levitas writes, "we may claim all utopias have something in common without making claims about the universality of utopia or the existence of a fundamental utopian propensity" (Levitas 8).

I make no claims for universal human experience or human dreaming—I am interested only in identifying utopian thinking within aesthetic traditions at two historical moments when I believe that it appears. For my purposes and those of this dissertation, I see a shift toward utopian rhetoric when discussing foods and agriculture of the past: a "utopian turn." For example, in the final chapter, I describe the way that the "New Southern Food Movement" hearkens back, nostalgically, to the South's agrarian past but also insistently imagines the future of the South. In the two chapters about Aristophanes' theatre in fifth-century BCE Athens, "the utopian turn" is a dramaturgical hinge within the very structure of his comedies.

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[23] So, too, does Frederic Jameson both affirm and deny Bloch's implication that utopian thinking inheres in human psychology, "It is important to complete this Utopian formalism with what I hesitatingly call a psychology of Utopian production: a study of fantasy mechanisms, rather, and one that eschews individual biography in favor of historical and collective wish-fulfillment" (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* xiii).

In both instances, this "utopian turn" occurs at a moment of political transition, particularly economic transition away from family farms. Thus, parceling out utopian thinking from utopian structures allows me to draw a distinction between the political work done by agrarian nostalgia and the work of utopian thinking. The political work that is done by the combination of nostalgia with blueprint utopias is potentially conservative, even antihistorical. This combination of a fantasy past with a formal utopian future too often erases the materiality of labor and human suffering. In both case studies, these fantasy pasts particularly omit the figure of the slave. In Chapter Three, I use Paula Deen's 2013 deposition to describe the way in which Deen's nostalgia for an agrarian South functions as an antihistory that replaces the legacy of slavery with a utopian and illusory vision of cross-racial alliance in the Jim Crow era. Utopian *thinking*, then, provides a way to acknowledge the dangerous entanglement between nostalgia and utopia while giving power to the fundamental act of dreaming of a better world. In *Birds*, a separate analysis of utopian thinking allows the "utopian turn" of founding a city in the sky to function separately from the dystopian conclusions of the play in which power is consolidated in the hands of one feasting tyrant who refuses to share.

Thus, both my case studies are united in this outpouring of the utopian thinking I define, even as tensions between agrarian and urban modes of production grow increasingly strained in each example: the test of Athens' newly minted democracy in the Peloponnesian war in the late fifth century BCE, and a contemporary America faced with national bankruptcy, corporate personhood, and increased anxiety over

food security and genetically modified foods.[24] Thus, economic questions about modes of production within both Athenian and American democracy have engendered a return of agrarian nostalgia, in which agricultural life is described with utopian language of labor-less sensorial delights and individual pleasure.

The reason for the popularity of defining utopia as "blueprint" utopia, a reason to bind utopia closely to literary examples or intentional communities is clear enough—if utopia is defined otherwise, it might inhere in anything. And, indeed, those attempts to unmoor utopianism from a constitutive model do sprawl—in the three-volume *The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch uses fifteen hundred pages to parse utopian consciousness. This dissertation, in more narrowly relating this 'utopian thinking' to nostalgia for an agrarian relationship to the land and labor-intensive foods in the Athenian and American case studies, will take up considerably less real estate.

While certainly an unwieldy counterpoint to the tightness of constitutive utopian theories, Bloch's focus on utopian thinking does allow for utopian analysis of even those social formations and cultural products that would in no way qualify as constitutive utopias. An analysis of utopian thinking allows for an analysis of utopias before Plato, and comic utopias, both of which are rarely included in major surveys of utopian literature and remain largely ignored even within the discipline of Classics.[25]

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[24] The political and economic relationship of the contemporary United States to Athens is trotted out periodically for various political ends, both liberal and conservative. I do not mean to repeat this rhetorical gesture ("Why President Obama Should Read Thucydides" DIAS 2008) but only to note the similar response—to locate utopian pleasures (delicious food without the pain of making it) within nostalgia for an agrarian past—within *respective* (not parallel) crises within democratic government.

[25] While of course Hesiod's Golden Age and even Old Comic fragments are often called utopian within the field of Classics (Hoffman et al., Ruffell 2000, Ruffell 2013, and Baldry), few scholars of utopianism point to these Arcadian tropes as a potential starting place. Ian Ruffell surveys the ways in

In addition, broadening the category of "utopia" allows countless other sites of mundane sites of dreaming to come into focus, outside of blueprint utopias from Thomas More, or even Ursula LeGuin. Such a turn towards defining a utopian function in performance allows me to use food to describe the dangers and potentials of wish fulfillment. The materiality of food itself grounds the metaphors of culinary nostalgia or utopian wish fulfillment in visceral reality.

Thus, I will briefly trace the trajectory of *The Principle of Hope*, noting the ways in which this foundational text for utopian thinking lays the way for contemporary theoretical interventions such as that by Ruth Levitas.[26] The universality of utopian consciousness and its contagious nature are central to even the first several pages of *The Principle of Hope*:

> Everybody's life is pervaded by daydreams: one part of this is just stale, even enervating escapism, even booty for swindlers, but another part is provocative, is not content just to accept the bad which exists, does not accept renunciation. This other part has hoping at its core, and is teachable. (3)

Like Bloch, I do not see incommensurability between a kernel of utopian thinking (dreaming of a better world) and its exploitation by larger structures. This "booty for swindlers" might be quite obvious—exploiting dreams for financial gain defines the

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which utopianism in Old Comedy has been "ignored" and the literature "piece-meal" and "over-synchronic" (2001; 473). Old Comic utopias are rarely placed within larger historical trajectories of utopian thought. Of the above scholars who write about utopianism in the ancient world, only Ruffell situates his taxonomy of Old Comic fragments within larger theoretical paradigms of utopia—namely those of Ricoeur and Mannheim. For the relationship of Plato's *Republic* to *Assemblywomen* and the extent to which Old Comedy has been ignored in scholarship on utopia, see Sommerstein 1999.

[26] Who, in turn, focuses primarily on Bloch for a theory of utopia that is based on the function of utopia rather than its form or content. Thus, her final definition of the utopian—that it must be broad enough to find the utopian outside of 'constitutive utopias'—is "the desire for a different, better way of being." (209) Levitas takes great pains to separate her theory of utopian desire from Bloch's of "dreaming of a better world", especially disavowing Bloch's psychoanalytic intervention, yet the comparison is clear enough.

Ponzi scheme or the cult. In the case of culinary discourse in fifth-century Athens and contemporary America, the way in which individual desires, hungers and memories are coopted and repurposed to serve the interests of the powerful may be confusing and hidden, sold back to the individual as "their own" version of utopia. My two case studies unite around the figure of the slave: freedom from a painful history is figured as utopian, but this conjuring of a past without slaves is, of course, merely booty for swindlers in both fifth-century Athens and the contemporary American South.

Nonetheless, as Bloch demonstrates, even the most forcible coopting of hope does not remove its radical potential.[27] This seems the unique promise of utopian thinking: it is self-sustaining and seemingly autonomous, as in Cornel West's refrain that he is not an optimist, but a prisoner of hope (xvi). In sum, the false promises offered by some utopian visions, the compensatory vision of utopia in exchange for political representation or cultural agency, need not undermine the pervasiveness and power of utopian thinking (Levitas 86). Ruth Levitas summarizes,

> the mirror in which wishful images are reflected is 'a beautifying mirror that only reflects how the ruling class wishes the wishes of the weak to be.' However, the compensatory aspect of wishful thinking does not itself mean that it operates, as Mannheim supposes, to sustain the status quo. It is not merely fictitious compensation for the discomforts of experienced reality but a venturing beyond that reality which is essential to the inauguration of a transformed future. (86)

Bloch, despite an awareness that utopianism can serve socially conservative or even oppressive ends, stresses that utopian thinking has great potential to "overhaul

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[27] To put it another way, "Bloch's hermeneutic is not designed to excuse these deformed Utopian impulses, but rather entertains a political wager that their energies can be appropriated by the process of unmasking" (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 8). I attempt preceisely such an "unmasking" or "against the grain reading" in the case studies that follow.

the given world" (35) and pass contagiously between dreamers. He describes the power of hope, as a "revolutionary interest," as a "YES" that is "explosive" (75). It is this explosiveness that I wish to recover even within an analysis of reactionary, conservative utopias in which agricultural labor or democratic interests are erased. In the section that follows, I use the separation between utopian thinking and blueprint utopias to reconcile Aristophanes' political conservatism and radical utopian poetics. I do so by first contextualizing his role as the comic *didaskalos*, theatrical educator of the people. I then turn to Aristophanes' own claims to poetic invention and survey the secondary literature which connects Aristophanes' linguistic novelty with the blueprint utopias within his plays. Next, I assert that this poetic novelty carries the ideological charge of utopian thinking rather than offering a simply metatheatrical intervention.

Aristophanes' novelty and utopianism

Extending the above schema explicitly to Aristophanes, I argue simultaneously for a reactionary, politically conservative or socially nostalgic Aristophanes and also for the Old Comic theatre as a public, radically democratic vehicle for dreaming. This is in line with arguments in which Old Comedy is a privileged form of civic critique, enjoying a "fool's privilege."[28] Aristophanes himself certainly claims that his role as a playwright and director is to instruct the populace on how to live (Foley; Cartledge, *Aristophanes and His Theatre of the Absurd*). However, I argue that this "comic

[28] As one might read, perhaps, Henderson's "The Demos and the Comic Competition" (Henderson, "The Demos and Comic Competition"). In this chapter, Henderson claims for Old Comic poets "the fool's privilege" to comment on public and political affairs within a medium that is parallel to the law courts or assembly.

teaching" extends to modeling "utopian thinking" as well as mounting political critiques.

The Old Comic playwright-as-teacher *didaskalos* trope maps nicely onto Bloch's axiom that dreams are transmissible, are "teachable" (3). Aristophanes' claims to teach the people are many: for example, "τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖσιν δ' ἡβῶσι ποιηταί.πάνυ δὴ δεῖ χρηστὰ λέγειν ἡμᾶς" "To children, whomever explains things is a teacher (*didaskalos*). To grown-ups, poets. We poets have a serious obligation to say useful things" (*Frogs* 1054-6).[29] In the following chapter, I argue more systematically for a relationship between Aristophanes' politics and utopian poetics using Frederic Jameson's concept of the political unconscious. Here, I stress that these "useful things" that Aristophanes feels belong to the comic poet might not simply be policy suggestions or ethical codes of behavior. Demosthenes might teach Athenians how to vote; Homer might teach them how to behave. I argue that Aristophanes, the comic *didaskalos,* teaches the Athenians how to *dream*.

Josiah Ober sums up the role of the comic *didaskalos*, coming before the assembled populace, "The Athenians intended for the comic poet to help educate the citizenry by serving as a social and political critic… the comic poet/critic was expected to expose the ideological framework of political life" (Ober *Popular Dissent*

[29] While these bold lines may of course be translated in a number of ways, I disagree with Wissman that treating the relative clause as determinative ("children have a teacher who explains things") is significantly semantically different than the translation I offer above (Wissmann). While the translation above offers the suggestion that children, like the populace, might take bad advice, it ultimately stresses that poets' messages are *influential* in forming popular opinion. Both translations suggest to me the importance of dramatists as moral instructors of the populace.

125). Of course, Aristophanes is a dramatist, and the means that he uses are comic and theatrical. Here, I add that the comic *didaskalos* was not only "invited by the regime to encourage the demos to laugh at its leaders and itself" (Ober 126) but also to imagine a better world, to smack their lips, to dream.

In the second volume of *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch traces the various locations in which he believes that this utopian thinking inheres, drawing a much wider net than simply science fiction and communes. Bloch turns to unusual sites of utopianism; his vision of utopian thinking includes even the racist and retrograde—from fashion advertising's promise of a brighter future to, provocatively, totalitarian governments and Nazism. Thus, as above, I find food a particularly fruitful place to find utopian thinking, not only due to the scope of Bloch's definition of utopian thinking but also because of the way in which culinary utopian imaginings are often deeply backwards-facing, nostalgic sites of erasure. Bloch's section on the utopian promise of "syrupy stories" or self-help books (Bloch 349) becomes analogous to the promise offered by cooking shows like *Paula's Best Dishes* and "New Southern Food Movement" cookbooks. As I explore in Chapter Three, Bloch's schema is able to encompass the double work done by Deen, in which intense nostalgia is paired with compensatory utopianism that privileges fantasy over history. This wide-ranging survey of the forms that utopian thinking can take proves one value of defining utopia functionally—such a definition of utopia as "wishful thinking" allows a utopian analysis to account for a wide-range of arts and experiences. Moreover, such an approach allows a reading of Aristophanes' utopian plays that explores how the innovation of his dramatic forms and radical hopefulness of his protagonists can be in

direct conflict with the sociopolitical utopias that are set up. First, then, a study of the utopian in Aristophanes' benefits from Ernst Bloch's ability to set aside the radical core of a utopian impulse from the way in which utopian ideologies can be manipulated by dominant forces.

"To each his chicken in the pot and two cars in the garage, this too is a revolutionary dream," (35) writes Bloch. The revolutionary potential of dreaming of normalcy and comfort brings to mind Aristophanes' farmers who long for the simple joys of life before the war.[30] I have long been curious about the relationship between Aristophanes the conservative and Aristophanes the utopian comic poet. The plays themselves suggest that these may simply be two sides of the same coin. Thus, in this chapter, I trace the fine lines within Aristophanes' plays between utopian thinking, a compensatory dystopia that stands in for legitimate political change, and nostalgia for a lost and imagined past. A distinction between nostalgia, utopia and utopian thinking—one drawn by tracing culinary metaphors—allows for Aristophanes' political conservatism (Starkie; G. E. M. de S. Croix; Henderson, *Acharnians)*, or his explicit nostalgia for Cimonian[31] government (de S.Croix) to exist alongside the political work done by the promise of contagious utopian thinking. Aristophanes'

[30] Indeed, Aristophanes' depictions of common citizens—non-elite farmers and merchants, even unemployed old men—enjoying the symposium has been used as evidence by cultural historians that the practice of the symposium was more widespread than previously recorded (Pu□tz, Wilkins). Bloch's axiom that aspiration toward upper-middle-class comfort marks a revolutionary dream echoes the way in which elite aspirations in Aristophanes have been used, even in the absence of archeological evidence, by cultural historians to present a more radical and egalitarian portrait of Athenian social life.

[31] Cimon: Mid-Fifth century Greek statesman and military general who supported oligarchic rule and peace with Sparta. Calling Aristophanes a Cimonian, then, places his political interests between pure oligarchy and democracy, in a middle ground based on an upper class desire to make peace with Sparta for economic reasons.

political conservatism, then, does not then undercut a utopian reading of the play but might in fact call out for an analysis of the way in which this nostalgia is paired with an intense and sometimes explicit utopianism.

Bloch's utopian chicken-in-every-pot is a metaphor closely echoes the Aristophanic utopian trope that the government might be better handled by housewives who know how to cook or sew. The utopian scheme of *Assemblywomen* passes in part because women will transfer their skills at household management to the state. Their conservative maintenance of social mores and traditional skills is *precisely* what enables them to institute a radically new political scheme. Get-Er-Done[32] rehearses her lynchpin speech, stressing women's qualifications as their innate conservatism:

> καθήμεναι φρύγουσιν ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς φέρουσιν ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> τὰ Θεσμοφόρι᾽ ἄγουσιν ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> πέττουσι τοὺς πλακοῦντας ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐπιτρίβουσιν ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> μοιχοὺς ἔχουσιν ἔνδον ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> αὑταῖς παροψωνοῦσιν ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> οἶνον φιλοῦσ᾽ εὔζωρον ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ:
> βινούμεναι χαίρουσιν ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ.
> Women sit and parch corn like in the old days;
> They carry things on their heads like in the old days;
> They are in charge of the Thesmophoria like in the old days;
> They bake flat cakes like in the old days;
> They wear down their husbands like in the old days;

[32]My choice to loosely translate these names, despite the fact that most Aristophanic names seem to be a fairly common and acceptable Greek names, stems from Peter Meineck's translation of *Birds* in which he translates Peithetairos as "Makemedo." Hopefully I have rendered the names in a way that points to the meaningful associations generated by these names. My choice also follows from a desire to appeal to a non-specialist reader and what I see as a general discomfort with Greek names. In two different graduate seminars discussing *Acharnians*, students were uncomfortable with the names—some *Classicists* made so uncomfortable by the pronunciation that they dubbed Dikaiopolis "Dick" for the remainder of class. I am routinely and sheepishly asked if I can "correct" someone's pronunciation of Greek names. I find an English equivalent, even an awkward one, much preferable.

> They keep their adulterers at home like in the old days,
> They stash away food like in the old days,
> They love strong wine like in the old days,
> They love getting fucked like in the old days… (221-8)

The length of this rhetorical trope only adds to the comedy. As it was in the nostalgic "good old days" so shall it be in the utopian future. This is set in direct contrast to the men of Athens, who would "always be trying some new thing or other" (220), embracing novelty at the expense of prudent governance. It is their groundedness in traditions (even ones that manifest as a rehashing of misogynist stereotypes) that allows these women power to *innovate*. Lysistrata, too, extrapolates from her experiences carding wool and weaving a cloak to her ability to devise a new political scheme (574-585). Thus, utopian innovation is tied to nostalgia for traditional home economics, some of which gesture towards the importance of female domestic labor in an agrarian economy (flat cake baking, carrying goods, wool carding). "A chicken in every pot"—one might joke, a woman in every kitchen—is a revolutionary idea in Aristophanes, as it is through traditional enactments of female labor that they are able to radically reorganize Athenian politics. In Aristophanes' plays, the utopian schemes dreamed up by his protagonists are often linked to conservative or nostalgic cultural values.

Here, I argue that Aristophanes himself stresses the novelty of his own breaks with theatrical form. The utopian critical language of overhaul and renewal is also the language of the plays themselves—many of Aristophanes' comedies have

dramaturgical premise of dreaming up and then enacting some "big new idea."[33] The turn from agrarian nostalgia to utopian partying is often described as a "big new idea." (c.f. Whitman, 11). In *Birds*, the hero Companion-Persuader explains, "φεῦ φεῦ: ἦ μέγ᾽ ἐνορῶ βούλευμ᾽ ἐν ὀρνίθων γένει, καὶ δύναμιν ἣ γένοιτ᾽ ἄν, εἰ πίθοισθέ μοι." "Woweee! I have a huge plan for the race of the birds—a plan for power, if you might be persuaded by me" (163-5). Creating a nexus between inventive protagonists and an inventive playwright, as Whitman does, opens these plays up for an analysis of the literary inventiveness of Aristophanes as a dramatist; yet an emphasis on "comic hero as innovator within the play" has historically precluded a reading of these plays that allows for the politically conservative elements folded within this drama. I argue that using Bloch's model of utopianism, in which formal utopianism is distinct from the functional work of utopian thinking within the play, allows the novelty of the comic hero's plan to exist alongside nostalgic political gestures in the play.

Assemblywomen makes Aristophanes' concern with the power of novelty explicit. After establishing the "traditional" credentials of the women who take over the government, Aristophanes stresses the novelty of their plan itself and of his own inventiveness as a comic *didaskalos* alike. Get-Er-Done introduces the reforms that will be instituted by stressing their novelty:

> G: But the spectators, will they want something that cuts anew, or do they want the same old stuff they're used to? That's what I'm most afraid of.

[33] See especially Cedric Whitman's *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Whitman).

> L: Don't worry about doing something completely new—for us to innovate, to despise what's old, takes the place of any other virtue.[34] (585-7)

Her utopian scheme, while potentially challenging for her husband and the spectators because of its novelty, radically restructures Athenian society by first restructuring agriculture and dining.

I return to a passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "The Poet," "Every thought is also a prison… therefore we love the poet, the inventor, who in any form, whether in an ode, or in an action, or in looks or behavior, has yielded us a new thought. He unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene" (Emerson 78). Emerson's axiom reminds me of Bloch's embrace of the mundane as a site for utopian thinking.[35] Emerson here offers a paean to innovation that parallels Bloch's use of "dreaming" or "hoping" or even Ruth Levitas' "desiring" a better world. Each of these thinkers defines a utopian impulse that privileges the sheer act of imagining something new. Thus, when defining a utopian impulse as that which innovates toward a better world there is, tautologically, something utopian contained within all forms of innovation, regardless of form. Get-Er-Done offers the audience a new political scheme, but more importantly, she offers them new dinner parties. Thus, in the spirit

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[34] The translation of the last line is Sommerstein's, for clarity. This line is contested, the mss reads "τοῦτο γὰρ ἡμῖν δρᾶν ἀντ᾽ ἄλλης ἀρχῆς ἐστιν, τῶν δ᾽ ἀρχαίων ἀμελῆσαι" which Ussher construes as "we prefer doing this to anything that smacks at all of *arche*" (Ussher, *Aristophanes* 157). Aristophanes puns, then, on the relationship between the two meanings of *arche* both as "origins" as connected to "old things" and also as "authority," "empire" and "government." Unlike Ussher, I find that this pun does challenge the poet's conservative opinions, once again highlighting the relationship between innovation as an aesthetic value and utopianism as a political one.

[35] It also reminds me, once again, of Jameson's analysis of Bloch in *Archaeologies of the Future*: "The Utopian calling, indeed, seems to have some kinship with that of the inventor in modern times" (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 11).

of Emerson's inclusion of 'looks and behavior' to the list of utopian forms for a generalized utopian impulse, I amend the quote above. We love every recipe, every dinner, every cooking show, every cookbook, every onstage feast and every symposium that unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene. Aristophanes' insistence on his own poetic novelty echoes the language of utopian liberation based on a formal definition of utopian thinking, rather than a functional definition of a blueprint utopia.

Indeed, the definition of the utopian as liberating innovation has been explored by some classicists as a way of understanding the relationship between the utopian structures represented on stage and Aristophanes' poetic innovations, his frequent neologisms and extended burlesques of tragic plays. I survey this literature briefly below. Gregory Dobrov uses Lacan, rather than Emerson or Jameson, to demonstrate the prisonhouse of language and the way that jokes and metaphors are able to break its chains in a utopian function: "Comedy, especially the Aristophanic variety, thrives on rattling its fetters in a perpetual show of escape from the linguistic prison through humor and transference" (102). In "Language, Fiction, and Utopia," Dobrov goes on to create a taxonomy of Aristophanes' metapoetics and traces the utopian function of these ruptures created by various metatheatrical devices that Aristophanes employs; Dobrov ultimately concludes that utopia involves metatopia (displacement). Metadrama (both direct audience address and riffs on tragedies like Sophocles' *Tereus*) is able to shift the location and tone of the drama. Indeed, Dobrov's analysis of metatopia closely echoes one that correlates novelty and utopian thinking. I would

argue that all comic rupture— whether *para prosdokian* joking,[36] rapid shifts in situation, sheer absurdity, or metaphors made into concrete stage images—has a utopian quality, a commentary on the expected in order to anticipate something new and better. For Aristophanes, I argue that this utopian power of comic language is harnessed in order to find performed solutions to real conflicts about agrarian versus urban modes of sociopolitical organization.

Thus, I draw on and expand Dobrov's conclusions to discuss to what ends Aristophanes uses the utopian power of comic language. It is not, somewhat paradoxically, in order to advocate for a utopian model of social organization, to create a "blueprint utopia" or offer policy suggestions to the assembled voters. This distinction is crucial and perhaps controversial: just because a play offers exaggerated fantasy solutions, it does not follow that the impulse towards change is being satirized. Thus, much of the scholarship on fantasy in the *Assemblywomen*, that it was "too absurd" to be taken seriously, might be examined anew.[37] Nor is the utopian function of the play limited to a displacement of the contemporary world through the creative use of language and parody, as Dobrov argues. Aristophanes capitalizes on the rupture

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[36] Aristophanes is indeed famous for this (Slater, Revermann). My first encounter with this literary form was a friend's yearbook quote: "Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a banana," misattributed, apparently, to Groucho Marx. *Para prosdokian* comedy is also much beloved of Steven Colbert, e.g. "Nation, I have always admired Justice Clarence Thomas. The man is a rock — in that he could be replaced by a rock, and I'm not sure anyone would notice." (3/7/13) which may explain the comparison between his humor and Aristophanes' that is frequently drawn. I would like to stress that this style of comedy simultaneously does and undoes sense. *Para prosdokian* jokes are both an act of instantiation of expectation and the surprising upset of those expectations—in this way these jokes are more powerful than simple absurdist ruptures of sense (e.g, Monty Python's fish slapping dance or dead parrot sketch) in that the audience member is actively prepared to be startled and amused.

[37] A good example of the former line of thinking is MacDowell's succinct: "The notion of female participation in politics is merely comic fantasy" (MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens* 238). Here, I argue with Bloch, Jameson and Levitas that no fantasy is mere.

and novelty inherent in jokes and metaphors not simply to "rattle the fetters of language" but for more potent and political ends.

As scholars like Niall Slater and Gregory Dobrov have noted, Aristophanes takes full advantage of Old Comedy's shifting locations and the ability for verbal gestures to instantiate huge changes in location or scene instantaneously.[38] As above, Dobrov's use of literary theory points to the way in which comic rupture through metadrama (Dobrov calls this 'metatopia') reveals the metaphorical structure of all thought. I repeat my criticism that Aristophanes' absurdist poetics do create rupture, but that this is mobilized not to *deconstruct* a naturalized linguistic epistemology (a postmodern notion) but to *construct* poetic solutions to a political problem about the role of agriculture and luxury in Athenian life.

Niall Slater, similarly, concludes that Aristophanes' poetics are used in order to make a statement about the power of comedic performance. Unlike Dobrov, he concludes with an optimistic spin about the construction of thought around metaphor, "the [metatheatrical] bird city becomes a model for Aristophanes' own art. As long as he believed the comedy he practiced, he could not make his theatrical city a place of misery" (88). Thus, for Slater, Aristophanes' utopianism comes out of his choice of the comedic form—his dramatic innovations must associate escape from imperial Athens with the pleasures of comedy (88). I am indebted to these scholars for a

[38] A good example is the Greek pun between *polos/polis* in *Birds*. Companion-Persuader instructs Tereus the hoopoe to look at the sky (*polos*) and imagine founding a city (*polis*). Through this wordplay, Companion-Persuader founds Cloudcuckooland in the sky. Niall Slater discusses the linguistic creation of space in *Birds* at length in "Performing the City: Birds" in *Spectator Politics*.

thematic treatment of utopianism in *Birds*; yet I insist on a relationship between Aristophanes' metapoetics and his nostalgic politics.

Turning to food imagery, rather than language alone, might help connect Aristophanes' dramaturgy in which utopian novelty stands alongside traditionally conservative values. In this section, I hope to show the ways in which Aristophanes' utopian poetics offer an ideological critique of contemporary politics, not a simply metatheatrical one as Dobrov and Slater argue. These culinary scenarios in *Birds*, for example, implicate the assembled audience through the use of humor and hunger in various social conflicts, manipulating the audience's sentiment through scenes of cooking and eating, not merely "proving" a point about the structure of language. Performance is able to contextualize and resolve social and political conflicts—such as the conflict between idealizing labor intensive and labor-less foods. In many of Aristophanes' plays, jokes both create linguistic rupture and political "structures of feeling" simultaneously. For example, I attempt an extended close reading of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* in the chapter that follows, mapping the utopian dramaturgy of the play onto historical crises in fifth-century BCE governance and agriculture. Thus, neologisms, densely-packed puns, and absurdist nonsense both create the utopian poetics Dobrov describes above but also instantiate a utopian politics. In this utopian politics, linguistic innovations "admit us to a new scene," reorient cultural attitudes about the natural-ness of natural bounty.

For example, in *Birds*, Tereus describes the diet of birds (seeds and berries after all!) "myrtle berries, white sesame, thyme, and poppy seeds" and Goodhope, slackjawed, responds, "ah, the life of newly-weds!" (158-9). Here, the natural

abundance of the pre-Olympian gods (here, the birds) is read first within an existing utopian trope of natural abundance (see 3.a below). By pacing the birds in the land of milk and honey, Aristophanes employs the pull of Arcadian nostalgia for a simpler time. This fantasy of natural abundance also serves as a commentary on present-day Athens. Aristophanes reads Tereus' seeds and berries within human frameworks of sensual pleasure—as ritual foods associated with fertility, weddings, and as contemporary euphemisms for sensual delight. Here, within a single word (νυμφίων), Aristophanes is able to both associate the life of the birds with sheer delight, contextualize the world of the birds within ritual foods associated with human weddings, and pun on the association of certain seeds and berries with the female genitalia (Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Birds* 209). This comedy is extremely compressed. A close reading of even a single word demonstrates how quickly Aristophanes is able to generate meaning and twist it, contextualize a joke within a larger literary framework and subvert it. This comic slippage is not benign comedy but political in its utopianism. In creating a world in which "naturally occurring" seeds and berries encompass a commentary on Greek religious life, an allusion to archaic Greek literature and an obscene joke, Aristophanes creates a *tabula rasa* onstage (Cloudcuckooland) in which radical semantic shifts can occur in a short period of time. Through this utopian rupture, Aristophanes reconsiders Athenian social life and reorients culinary desire away from the gourmet and back, nostalgically, for food from the land.

That is, exploring the function of utopian thinking within *Birds* need not lead only to a metafictional model but to one that shows visceral scenes of cooking and eating in order to *teach* utopian thinking. In *Assemblywomen*, the audience is encouraged to "map" themselves imaginatively into the women's utopia, thereby psychically constituting it. Food imagery solidifies this affective resonance between onstage and off by blurring the lines between the feast within the play and the good times that the audience will enjoy throughout the religious festival. In other words, food forces the audience's hand—by 'buying' their affective loyalty through promises of commensal eating, the audience of *Assemblywomen* participates in an imaginative utopia that hardly ends as the play draws to a close.

Perhaps ironically, on the subject of Aristophanes Bloch himself is fairly dismissive: he refers to *Birds* as a "mockery of socialist utopia" and Aristophanes' humor as "reactionary" (436). Of course, Aristophanes makes a mockery of the utopian social constructions in his plays, yet he never invalidates the individual's desire for a better world.[39] Clarifying the difference between the utopian function of these plays from the explicit utopian content, which surely *is* comic fodder, allows for a reading of Aristophanes' plays that transcends Bloch's easy dismissal. Thus, I contend that the treatment of the women's utopia in *Assemblywomen* cannot simply be a burlesque of women in power, a cautionary tale, and a satire of positive change. Rather, while female stereotypes are often deployed (like sexual depravity or excessive wine drinking), it does not mean that utopianism itself is satirized.

[39] See *Acharnians* section above for a case study of a play which promotes the validity of individual citizen's desires for a better world while mocking the "better world" that this citizen creates.

Instead, Aristophanes satirizes the ends of the slippery slope of communism—particularly the suggestion that in order to make sexual relations communal, (612-614) attractive men must first sleep with "uglier women with worse noses" (617) before sleeping with the women of his choice. In the episode that shows the inevitable conclusion of this premise (975-1111), three crones haggle over who will first sleep with a young man.[40] Despite his burlesque of communist sexual mores, Aristophanes never satirizes the utopian impulse, the desire of the city to try something new, something that has never been done before. In short, it is precisely this tension between the conservatism of Aristophanes' blueprint utopias with the radically utopian function of dreaming within the plays that draws me to him as a case study. Aristophanes' utopianism is at once nostalgic in its embrace of agrarianism, Golden Age myths, and traditional female domestic knowledge—and insistently *novel*. Defining utopia as a way of thinking, and tracing these moments through food imagery onstage, allows these plays to look backwards, forwards, and keenly at their own political contexts.

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[40] Indeed, this scene is extremely crude, though, as I argue throughout, that need not damage the reputation of women or utopian thinking in general. Sommerstein argues that this episode is emblematic of the ironic treatment of populist rule in both *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth* (A. H. Sommerstein, "Aristophanes and the Demon Poverty" 320). In this "ironic" camp he joins Said in *Aristophane, les femmes et la cite*, who claims that this scene is a parody of the judgment of Paris, an inversion of the natural order with death overtaking life, and Zeitlin, who argues that this scene marks the breakdown of Get-Er-Done's communist utopia into a stratified society that requires law enforcement. Konstan and Dillon, on the other hand, describe this scene as a "a glorious expression of [the women's communist experiment], the randy, boisterous, grotesque triumph of comic energy" (382). Given Aristophanes' parodic treatment of old age in general (e.g. Philokleon's behavior at the symposium at the end of *Wasps*), I am inclined with Konstan and Dillon to take a gentler view. Even at its most biting, here, Aristophanes seems to be mocking the fallout from this new order rather gently, in a spirit of boisterous good fun (cf *Wasps*) rather than pointed invective (cf *Knights*).

Having discussed the ways in which Aristophanes' poetic novelty, both self-proclaimed and analyzed by Dobrov and Slater, demonstrates a poetic example of utopian thinking, I now turn back to the blueprint utopia. In the section below, I argue that Aristophanes draws from a long existing history of blueprint utopias within Greek literature. These Arcadian tropes imagine a laborless past of limitless harvests, yet they are not pure escapist fantasies but always ideologically invested political critiques of contemporary agriculture. Having established a corpus of poetic and dramatic images of Arcadia, I turn to the ways in which Aristophanes winkingly manipulates these tropes in *Birds*.

Golden Age utopias before Aristophanes

Bloch's claim that utopian thinking belies the conservative ends of utopia maps nicely onto Aristophanes' *Birds*, in which existing tropes of Golden Age utopianism are transformed into a satire of Companion-Persuader's desire for an easy agrarian life, set against the struggles of urban democratic living. In turn, this desire to escape democratic bureaucracy in favor of bucolic pleasures shifts to a parody of Companion-Persuader's bureaucratic politics in Cloudcuckooland. In charting this schema, I have been largely influenced by Thomas Hubbard, who draws a distinction between Arcadia (an uncorrupted mythic past characterized by natural bounty) and Utopia and describes this play as a move from an Arcadian premise to a utopian conclusion (25). I agree with Hubbard that "the return to an uncorrupted, bounteous past seems an almost generic obsession of Old Comedy" and that at the end, "*Birds* turns into a hypercivilized, overstructured totalitarian state, a dystopian nightmare vision of grandiose proportions" (25). Thus, despite being "simply" nostalgic Arcadian,

Aristophanes' nods to the Big Rock Candy Mountain do not locate a better life safely within the past, parodying the dystopian conclusions of Companion-Persuader's efforts. Arcadianism (a bounteous past) bleeds into a dystopianism (a distorted and parodic future): yet between the two lies the utopian function, utopian thinking. Thus, I disagree with Hubbard that Arcadianism is privileged above utopianism in *Birds*. Rather, these Golden Age tropes, situated *both* in the mythic past and unseen future, comment on particular political realities of fifth-century Athens.

I push Hubbard's conclusions to explore *why* and *how Birds* shifts from a generic depiction of Golden Age to a satire of contemporary Athenian demagoguery. How? Food imagery, cooking scenes onstage, and culinary equipment form theatrical units that get repeated and recontextualized throughout the play. Thus certain key props and scenes—myrtle berry wreaths, cooking pots—generate different structures of feeling as the drama unfolds. Myrtle berries are at once representative of Companion-Persuader and Goodhope's desire to ritually celebrate a city founding, freely growing food for birds, and human celebration of marriage and the feast the accompanies. The cooking pot, too, is introduced at the top of the play as a ritual implement for city-founding, is used as armor against the birds, marking the division between man and beast, and is ultimately used to prepare the poultry consumed at the wedding feast, finalizing the apotheosis of Companion-Persuader. Tracking props—a commonplace for stage managers but perhaps not for classicists—allows a simple answer to the question of how this play shifts in focus from Golden Age depiction of unfarmed bounty to daintily prepared symposium food, from all-providing labor-less Arcadia to mincing, labor-intensive, demagogic dystopia. Why? Perhaps the

grotesque, one-person feast at the end of *Birds* mark the ending's total departure from the pastoral world of the birds, in which a handful of berries could mean a wedding crown, a new city, a dirty joke. By the time Companion-Persuader has fortified his city, the tenor of the play has already changed from the power of utopian thinking to the dangers of enforcing a blueprint utopia.

The first reason to move to a lateral analysis of Golden Age utopias in the history of Greek literature is to show the background of Arcadian images from which *Birds* radically diverges at the conclusion of the play. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, these Golden Age tropes also demonstrate the hinge between an idealized fantasy past and an idealized fantasy future. Hubbard's citation of the Arcadian is particularly felicitous, as it is temporally dislocated, situating agrarian bounty as both an idyllic past and potential future. In the section that follows, I argue that this temporal dislocation between the past and future allows Arcadian food tropes to discuss the politics of the present. By first describing and then historicizing Golden Age utopias in Greek literature in which food is abundant and self-producing, I create a ground against which the pastoral imagery in the first half of *Birds* and the bastardization of these tropes in the second half of Birds can be read.

Just as much of the theoretical scholarship on utopia has focused on these so-called "blueprint" utopias, much of the much of the literature on ancient utopia focuses on perhaps the most popular ancient iteration of ease and plenty—the Golden Age, the pre-Olympian time of Kronos. Many surveys of (implicitly Western) utopia

more generally begin with Plato,[41] or even centuries later with Thomas More, excepting the ancient trope of the Golden Age because it does not mark interventions into social or political organization. I argue that, of course, Golden Age tropes are ideologically loaded and comment on the contemporary society. They mark the particular dreams of farmers to be free from labor; in short, they are indeed intensely utopian despite the fact that these images of plenty have been largely ignored by theorists of utopianism. Rather than ignore Golden Age imagery because it does not offer concrete political suggestions or because it seems focused primarily on an Arcadian past, I argue that the doubleness of this fantasy and its interstitial position between past and future allows Golden Age tropes their power, their association with utopian dreaming.

While images of a Golden Age in which there is no suffering and labor may predate the eighth century BCE,[42] the topos finds its earliest extant incarnation in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. The whole passage is fundamental and bears repeating:

> χρύσεον μὲν πρώτιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
> ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχοντες.
> οἳ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ᾽ οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν:
> ὥστε θεοὶ δ᾽ ἔζωον ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες
> νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ ὀιζύος: οὐδέ τι δειλὸν
> γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὁμοῖοι
> τέρποντ᾽ ἐν θαλίῃσι κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἁπάντων:
> θνῇσκον δ᾽ ὥσθ᾽ ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι: ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα

[41] *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* is rare in that it acknowledges the Golden Age as a utopia, but refers to it as an "escape" and compares it with the "political" version of the Golden Age in Ovid, which comments on its contemporary society (13-14). For Plato as a starting point for utopianism in the ancient world, e.g. Goodwin and Taylor's *Politics of Utopia*. The debate over the inclusion of Plato's *Republic* or *Laws* into a canon of utopian literature seems to hinge on the question of whether Plato's schemas are "seriously" meant to be implemented or not. Klosko (1981) surveys much of the literature on the subject. On the utopianism of *Laws* as distinct from the political philosophy of the *Republic*, see Bobonich 2002.

[42] See the debate between H.C. Baldry and J. Griffiths.

> τοῖσιν ἔην: καρπὸν δ᾽ ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
> αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον: οἳ δ᾽ ἐθελημοὶ
> ἥσυχοι ἔργ᾽ ἐνέμοντο σὺν ἐσθλοῖσιν πολέεσσιν.
> ἀφνειοὶ μήλοισι, φίλοι μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν.
> First, the immortal gods who live on Olympus made a golden race of men—these men lived in the reign of Cronus in heaven. They lived like gods having hearts free from cares, with no labor or sorrows. They had no miserable old age, but with ever-strong arms and legs they enjoyed abundant feasts far away from any evil. When they died, it was like falling asleep, and they had all good things, for the life-giving earth bore them fruit of its own accord, abundant and begrudged. They lived a life of ease and willingness with many good things. They were rich in flocks, and dear to the blessed gods. (109-120)

Thus, for Hesiod, utopia is defined as life without labor—in which food comes automatically from the earth. Other human sufferings, the result of physical labor, like old age and painful death are also erased within this society. A full reading of this myth within the larger context of *Works and Days* quickly debunks its exclusion from even a strict "blueprint" definition of utopia, despite being displaced into the past as opposed to the future. The dream of a world without labor or suffering is clearly politicized within Hesiod's context—Hesiod's complaints about the Iron Age, in which man now lives, seems directly related to the frame narrative of a letter to his brother about farming, to the long treatise on agronomy, to the poverty of his own plot of land, to the broad social stratification newly-contested at the beginning of the Archaic period.[43]

Thus, as this trope of the Arcadian Golden Age is established, freedom from labor and abundance of food (fruit and animal products) are associated with ease and richness within a political context. And so even Hesiod's Golden Age, a seemingly

[43] The last point made by Victor Hanson in *The Other Greeks.* See Hanson, Marsilio and Nelson for arguments that Hesiod is directly responding to the historical exigencies of agricultural labor.

purely fantastic and escapist gesture, is a radical and constitutive rewriting of the past in order to imagine a better future. In a time of stratified land tenure more generally and of Hesiod's particular land feud with his brother in particular, creating a genealogy of mankind that hearkens back to an undifferentiated time of *agricultural* plenty creates a foundational myth based on hope. The Golden Age, then, is not only a concretely utopian inversion of contemporaneous agrarian ills but an act of transcending those ills by imagining a better "otherwise." It is, in Raymond Williams' terms, a site of "aspiration for the landless poor" (Williams 1973, 43), a direct commentary on the contemporary wealth disparities and a portrait of a world without them. Looking forwards and backwards creates a "myth functioning as memory" (43)—a false history, perhaps, but one that contains the liberatory potential of a better future. In the theatrical context, the presentation of these Golden Age scenes onstage transforms this backwards-looking hope into a forward-looking utopian thinking, as the actors embodying these scenes of ease and leisure bring a Golden Age past into the present.

This trope which Hesiod encapsulates in the *Works and Days* spreads like wildfire within Old Comedy. The originator of many of these images, especially food which begs to be eaten, seems to be Krates' *Beasts*. This play, unlike the later versions of this trope, features wild animals insisting that men not eat *them* (to mankind's dismay), but rather enjoy the abundant and self-producing food all around (Baldry), including fish that turn themselves over on a grill (Ath. 267e-f).[44] This trope becomes

[44] And, amusingly, a little cup that arrives to the feast dirty and is sent off to take a bath!

immensely popular as it shifts towards one in which food vies to be eaten, from Telecleides' birds flying pre-roasted (ὀπταὶ δὲ κίχλαι) into diner's mouths on little milk-cakes (Ath.268b) or cakes fighting to be eaten (Ath.268a). This trope culminates with Pherecrates' fantasia in *Miners*: birds do not just merely fly into the mouths of eaters as in Telecleides, but, "ὀπταὶ κίχλαι γὰρ εἰς ἀνάβραστ᾽ ἠρτυμέναι περὶ τὸ στόμ᾽ ἐπέτοντ᾽ ἀντιβολοῦσαι καταπιεῖν ὑπὸ μυρρίναισι κἀνεμώναις κεχυμένας" "roasted thrushes seasoned by boiling flew into our mouths and begged us to swallow them down, while we were reclining on myrrh and anemonies" (Ath. 269b). Thus, as these scenes become popular riffs in intertextual Old Comedy, utopian tropes of self-producing food and freedom from labor grow ever richer in detail.[45]

A tendency to stress the backwards glance of this Arcadianism has two consequences. The first is that it becomes more difficult to see the way in which these Golden Age tropes are related to the explicit blueprint utopias in a play like *Birds*, or place them within a history of utopian literature, as I describe above. The second consequence of focusing on Golden Age tropes as Arcadian is that they become disconnected from the utopian function of radical dreaming. For example, as Hubbard

[45] These utopian comic fragments are explored most fully by Ian Ruffell in his article, "The World Turned Upside Down: utopia and utopianism in the fragments of Old Comedy." Ruffell works through this same body of fragments I describe briefly above, drawing a distinction between 'automatist' utopias on the Golden Age model (e.g. Kratinos' *Plutoi*) and 'nostalgic' utopias that respond more directly to Athenian social contexts (e.g. Eupolis' *Demoi*). While I consider this chapter the high-water-mark for scholarship on ancient utopianism, I reject the idea that old comic fragments either provide an explicit criticism of the contemporary political situation or serve as a kind of fantasy escape-valve—Ruffell himself notes the way in which the trial of Hagnon in *Plutoi* speaks about contemporary Athenian economic stratification (479) . Even a utopia which 'merely' comments on the status quo has a diagnostic function (Mannheim), and thus a taxonomic comparison between Ricoeur and Mannheim may create a false dichotomy (Ricoeur; Mannheim). An analysis of Golden Age tropes that allows escapism to be a form of political critique is able to situate these fragments within *both* a generic idiom and political context.

suggests, the proliferation of this trope in Old Comedy is due to the rural origins of Dionysiac festivals. I would argue that these Golden Age tropes are not enacted as a way to look backward, to mark the origins of their genre, but as a way to comment on the *political* present and reimagine the foodways of the *future*. That is, I historicize Golden Age tropes in order to show the way in which Greek utopianism uses the past to figure the future. This "utopian turn," then, is marks agriculture not as a concern safely located in the past, but an actively contested ideological site in the present and future.

Moreover, the preservation of these fragments within a collection on slavery speaks to the possibility for Golden Age images comment on the political present rather than present a nebulous nostalgic past. Almost all of the fragments I explore above are culled from Athenaeus, who preserved these fragments in a section about practices of slavery in the 5th century.[46] After a long discussion of slavery and the moral nature of slaves, Athenaeus describes each of these Golden Age fragments: "οἱ δὲ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμῳδίας ποιηταὶ περὶ τοῦ ἀρχαίου βίου διαλεγόμενοι ὅτι οὐκ ἦν τότε δούλων χρεία τοιάδε ἐκτίθενται" "the Old Comic poets, when they spoke about the olden days, expounded that there was no use for slaves…" (Ath.6.94). The numerous fragments collected in the *Dinner Philosophers*—that I have described

[46] Athenaeus' early third century AD *Dinner Philosophers* (*Deipnosophistae*) is a fifteen-volume discussion, putatively at a series of dinner parties, in which fictionalized lexographers, historians, and gourmets discuss many matters, sacred and mundane. The fact that they discuss mostly mundane matters (the dinners at hand) means that this lengthy volume is the reason that so many comic fragments about food, sex, and luxury from the fifth-century were preserved. Baldry glosses over this grouping, but I argue that Athenaeus' gesture may be a potent clue for the function of utopian imagery within Old Comedy. These fragments are also available in Olson's *Broken Laughter* (S. D. Olson, *Broken Laughter*).

above—not only revel in self-roasting birds and rivers of gravy but articulate sites of contemporary suffering—agricultural and/or slave labor—by illustrating the pleasure of their alleviation. *Ta automata,* things that happen of their own accord, are constructed as a category in opposition to that which requires (slave) labor.

These Golden Age tropes are preserved in a way that demonstrates an awareness of the necessity of slaves—and agricultural slave labor—for the production of the luxury commodities that Atheneaus describes throughout the rest of *Dinner Philosophers*. Indeed, to clarify this relationship of utopian fantasy to the political frame, just before this section of the *Dinner Philosophers*, a number of slaves have entered the scene bearing "everything required for eating" (Ath. 6.81). These utopian scenes do not transcend their historical or political agricultural contexts (either Hesiod's eighth century BCE context, the comic poets' fifth-century context or Athenaeus' Hellenistic one) but point to them directly. The framing conversation about slavery in *Dinner Philosophers* shows, in brief, that the function of persistent Golden Age utopian imagery in Old Comedy may be to comment on contested social practices in contemporary life, not merely to escape from them. Like in *Works and Days*, the Golden Age in Old Comic fragments does not merely serve an escapist or nostalgic function but an ideological one.

Indeed, within the final Golden Age fragment quoted in this section of *The Dinner Philosophers*, characters in Pherecrates' *Persians* are apparently debating the usefulness of agricultural and hoplite crafts: mankind's technological advances are directly opposed to a land that does not require any such labor. A character claims, "What need will we have of your ploughs, yokemakers, sickle-makers, or smiths, or

sowing, or staking?" which introduces generic descriptions of rivers of soup and cooked meats that grow on trees (Ath.269c).

The Golden Age tropes in the Old Comic fragments—as in Hesiod—do not merely imagine a temporally dislocated fantasy world; they actively comment on the political present. While Hesiod's Golden Age transcends the limitations of his own rocky patch of land, the self-roasting poultry of Crates and Cratinus speak to the contemporary political concerns over agricultural slave labor, imagining instead Big Rock Candy-like *automata* taking the place of the slaves' embodied labor. In the section that follows, I discuss the ways in which these double nostalgic and utopian Golden Age fantasies also intervene in contemporaneous ideological debates about Athenian cultural life (over meddlesomeness, for example, and country versus city).

Utopianism in Aristophanes: transcending the meddlesome city

Even as the comic fragments demonstrate a diagnosis of social ills, Aristophanes' treatment of this trope only expands the way in which the fantasy of the Golden Age bears on contemporaneous social life. The first way in which Aristophanes uses utopian tropes to intervene in cultural debates of the fifth century BCE is to draw a distinction between having too many or no public affairs, between being *polypragmon* or *apragmon*. The Greek words have a range of meanings, which I explore below, yet the essence of the binary is between whether one has no (ἀ) or too many (πολυ) stakes in civic life (πρᾶγμα): between *apragmosune* and polypragmosune. The distinction, depending on who you read, is either between being an actively engaged citizen and selfishly refusing to participate in democracy

(Thucydides' Pericles)… or between sticking your nose into other people's business or running off to live a better and more delicious life without labor (Aristophanes).[47] In *Birds,* Athens is described as full of busybodies, while the world of the birds is free from worries or cares. By describing the birds' Golden Age imagery against the meddlesomeness of Athenian cultural life, these utopian tropes become not escapist fantasy but a direct commentary on politics in Athens.

In their opening speech to the audience, Goodhope explains the reason these two are wandering around in an 'unmarked' location—so far all the audience knows is that they are looking for a life that is free from interferences (ἀπράγμων, 44). This "ease" is a fairly general set-up for Aristophanes, not set in contrast with any one political official (as Kleon in *Knights*) or political structure (the lawcourts in *Wasps*). Rather, *Birds* casts its metaphorical net wider: *mores* considered to be core Athenian values are undons. Thus, when Goodhope enumerates things to love about Athens, he mimics Thucydides' Pericles in that Athens is "free for all" (Thuc.2.39.1)… "to pay taxes in" "καὶ πᾶσι κοινὴν ἐναποτεῖσαι χρήματα" (37). Aristophanes derails Pericles' assertion by moving not from patriotic premise to conclusion but by inserting a satirical punchline; through *para prosdokian*[48] humor he directly mocks Pericles' funeral oration statement that "τήν τε γὰρ πόλιν κοινὴν παρέχομεν" "we keep the city open to all" by recontextualizing this adjective, *koine*, from praise of Athens'

[47] For background and the afterlife of the concept, see Ehrenberg; Leigh.
[48] Again, a style of joking frequently employed by Aristophanes in which an unexpected ending is substituted within a given set-up. Another example, for good measure, on a ninth-grade girls' future career options: "To become a doctor's… nurse or a lawyer's… mistress or even the President of the United States... Shopping Association" (30 Rock, *TGS Hates Women*).

generous immigration strategy to mockery of the large size of Athenian government (2.39).[49] In one phrase, Aristophanes dismantles Pericles' dazzling imperial rhetoric, insisting that late fifth-century democracy puts power not in the hands of the people, but the state.[50]

The courts seem to be a particular point of interest here, even eight years after *Wasps*— Companion-Persuader complains, "οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὖν τέττιγες ἕνα μῆν' ἢ δύο ἐπὶ τῶν κραδῶν ᾄδουσ', Ἀθηναῖοι δ' ἀεὶ ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ᾄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον" "while cicadas only chirp for a month or two on a fig branch, Athenians will talk to no purpose their whole lives perched on points of law" (39-41); as soon as Companion-Persuader and Goodhope announce that they are from Athens, Tereus calls out in terror, "not jurors!" (109). Yet this play does not really censure the courts as much as the *polypragmon* values that the courts represent: urban government, power in the hands of a few upstarts. From this vantage, "the life of newlyweds" ascribed to Tereus and the birds—an *apragmon* life of berries, seeds, and sexual freedom—is a distinctly utopian dream of freedom from the perceived constraints of such a government.

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[49] I am, perhaps, over-stressing the contemporary language of libertarian conservatism. However, the reader must confront the conservatism of Aristophanes' protagonists' attitudes, especially as Aristophanes directly satirizes Pericles' (actually popular) foreign policy. Commentators on this line (Aristophanes, *Aristophanes Birds*; A. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes: Birds*) note the use of Thucydides but do not read this as an abuse of Pericles. I find that pointing to this gesture as one of both intense poetic innovation and of direct political conservatism provides still more evidence that these are not mutually exclusive and that, instead, the nostalgia of Companion-Persuader for non-bureaucratic life and his utopian urban planning are in fact *coextensive.*

[50] Excuse the anachronistic Marxism. But Aristophanes seems to be talking about Government with a capital G, not simply the court system or a handful of demagogues, but the encroaching power of bureaucratic structures to subsume the power of the individual. Perhaps Dana Sutton's "ultrademocracy" might be a useful term to describe the Athenian democracy that Aristophanes represents (Sutton).

Thus, when Aristophanes characterizes our protagonists' dream city as carefree, *apragmon*, he is directly responding to representations of democratic Athens as *polypragmon*. Again, this jab is directed at democratic rhetoric promoted by Pericles through Thucydides. Keeping Athens "open/*koine*" is central to Pericles' praise of Athens, yet its association with individual overinvestment in state functions proves the reason for Companion-Persuader' departure. So too, *apragmon* life for Aristophanes means the "carefree" Golden Age; yet signifies means a useless failure to participate in communal political life for Thucydides' Pericles:

> ἔνι τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια, καὶ ἑτέροις πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γνῶναι: μόνοι γὰρ τόν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ᾽ ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν
> Here each individual is interested in both his own affairs and in politics at the same time—even those who are preoccupied with their own business know a good deal about politics. We consider someone who doesn't care about the community at all not care-free (*apragmon*), but useless. (2.40.2)

Within popular democratic ideology, typified here by Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides' *Histories*, Companion-Persuader' utopia is an unthinkable departure. Thus, even this so-called "problem play" that has been described as having no political agenda can be seen to use utopian images in order to invest in, rather than opt of out, contemporary political dialogues.[51]

Thus, in *Birds*, Aristophanes redefines *apragmonosune* not as uselessness but as idyllically Arcadian. Meddlesomeness is likewise transformed by the utopian current of the play as an individual (and therefore transcendable) failing.

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[51] E.g. Ian Storey's "Some have tried to see *Birds* as a detailed political allegory of the Sicilian expedition (Suevern, Katz, and Vickers) but these impress the reader only with their ingenious arguments" (Aristophanes, *Aristophanes I* 265).

Polypragmosune is central to the Athenian character for Thucydides. Whether it has a positive or negative valence, *polypragmosune* is an essential component of Athenian democratic life: used as an insult by the Corinthians that the Athenians "will never keep quiet themselves or leave others in quiet" (1.70, see Ehrenberg 47) and as a positive attribute in the Camarinian debates (6.87). For Aristophanes, *polypragosune* inheres in the individual *polypragmon*, the busy body; it is a negative trait connected with officious informers.

And yet even Companion-Persuader uses the term *as an Athenian,* in the vein of Thucydides, when chastising Tereus when he "has not heard" that the birds are the rightful heirs of heaven: "ἀμαθὴς γὰρ ἔφυς κοὐ πολυπράγμων" "well, you aren't too bright, and you're not a good gossip (*polypragmon*)" (471). Here, then, Aristophanes seems well aware of the irony that *polypragmosune* is a hallmark of Athenian character in both its positive and negative usages. Thus, in *Birds*, Companion-Persuader is distinctly Athenian in his use of polypragmosune as both a key civic virtue used to accuse others and a personal foible ripe for mocking. Companion-Persuader himself code-switches between cheeky inversions of imperial "restless" ideology (in which he searches for place to rest) and the enforcement of Athenian imperial ideology in this exchange. By the end of the play, Aristophanes' ironic inversion of *polypragmosune* as an Athenian virtue is complete: *Birds* ends with an informer, a *polypragmon*, worse yet, an ambulance chaser (πραγματοδίφης), whipped and kicked out of Cloudcuckooland. In sum, Aristophanes uses the word to *invert* Thucydides' positive associations of *polypragmosune* with a successful imperial

policy. The violent expulsion of a *polypragmon* from Cloudcuckooland draws Companion-Persuader and Goodhope' ideal city, which is free-from-cares (*apragmon*), soft as a blanket to snuggle up in (122) in direct contrast to Athens, to a city that is *polypragmon*.

Next, Companion-Persuader and Goodhope describe their desired civic responsibilities to Tereus (*pragmones*). Companion-Persuader's vision involves being forced to dress and shower for a wedding feast:

> ὅπου τὰ μέγιστα πράγματ᾽ εἴη τοιάδε:
> ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν μου πρῴ τις ἐλθὼν τῶν φίλων
> λέγοι ταδί: 'πρὸς τοῦ Διὸς τοὐλυμπίου
> ὅπως παρέσει μοι καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ παιδία
> λουσάμενα πρῴ: μέλλω γὰρ ἑστιᾶν γάμους:
> καὶ μηδαμῶς ἄλλως ποιήσῃς: εἰ δὲ μή,
> μή μοι τότε γ᾽ ἔλθῃς, ὅταν ἐγὼ πράττω κακῶς.'
> This would be my greatest trouble—one of my friends comes to my door and says, "by Olympian Zeus, you and your children, take your baths early and come to my house. There's going to be a wedding party! If you say 'no,' I'll never forgive you." (127-133)

And Goodhope' is "of the same kind" "τοιούτων" (136): he is accused by the father of a young boy that he has not engaged in enough sexual behavior with this pretty young thing— didn't even "speak to him, kiss him, take him home, nor fondle his balls!" (141-2). Such are the cares of their ideal city. The obligations of the law court, for example, are replaced by the "obligations" of feasting and flirtation. Tereus jokes in response: "you must really love suffering" (133, 142). Within *Birds*, Golden Age imagery of a land without money, a land of freely available food and sex, is always tied to or diagnostic of Athens' particular social ills.

Polypragmosune, sophism, and the boastful chef

In this section, I discuss the way in which the political distinction between *polypragmosune* and *apragmosune* are mediated through explicitly *culinary* scenarios onstage, as well as inversions of existing Golden Age tropes. Not only are Hesiodic Golden Age images used to satirize a Periclean definition of carefreeness as uselessness, but culinary language of mixing, chopping, and stirring are also used to negatively describe Athenian *polypragmosune*. Here, culinary scenarios stress the meddlesomeness of Athenian civic life, as overly interfering with cooking is associated directly with overly interfering with the Athenian state. I focus, in particular, on the nexus between boastful sophism (*alazoneia*, a cousin of *polypragmosune*) and culinary discourse.

Birds does not merely rehash Hesiodic or Old Comic ideas about "the good life," but rather moves from the Golden Age set-pieces described above to the business of urban planning. After the parabasis, Companion-Persuader blueprints an entirely new ancient version of utopia—a fortified city with rules and regulations, an exclusive location that is decidedly not a *nowhere* (*ou-topia*). Instead, Cloudcuckooland is a dramatically unprecedented utopian city with its own standards of abundance and luxury that draw on the Golden Age images from the first half of the play but are redefined within an Athenian political context.[52] The food of Cloudcuckooland, one established, is not limitless harvest but rather carefully

[52] Hence the inclusion of an urban planner and a decree-seller alongside other "Aristophanic intruder" mainstays: a prist, a poet, an oracle-seller, an inspector, and an informer. Aristophanes goes so far as to name Meton, an urban planner who is mocked for both his sophistic interest in geometry and "cosmic ovens" (1001) (an old joke from *Clouds* 96). This mincing intellectual quality is connected to his bad citizenship and an apparent bid to be excluded from the Sicilian invasion draft (Sommerstein *Birds* 265).

concocted poultry dishes. Thus, the *mageiros*, or chef, is especially important to the second half of *Birds* as the inventor and provider of these dishes. For this reason, I disagree with John Wilkins' analysis of the *mageiros* in Old Comedy in his volume*, The Boastful Chef,* which is brusquely summarized, "a character of low status who is of no account in Old Comedy" (87). He is looking, it seems, for protagonists who are chefs by "type"—boasters, *alazones*[53]—and occupation, as is often the case in later New Comedy. Therefore, Wilkins reads *Birds*' *mageiros*, addressed offstage as a maker of sauces ("CP: "μάγειρε τὸ κατάχυσμα χρὴ ποιεῖν γλυκύ" "Cook! Make the sauce nice and sweet!" (1637)) as mere anticipation of the character he discusses in his section on New Comedy.

However, it seems clear that a *mageiros* is not only distinctly present in *Birds* but crucial to the thematic composition of the comedy. Indeed, the figure of the chef is central to the distinctions Aristophanes draws between Periclean civic engagement and his own caricature of bureaucratic or sophistic meddlesomeness. Companion-Persuader himself can easily be read as the 'boastful chef', since Aristophanes characterizes him with simultaneously culinary (*mageiros*) and sophistic (*alazon*) vocabulary. In short, I disagree strongly that in Old Comedy, "there is little exchange between philosophy and comic cooking" and that the image of a boorish slave so inextricably associated with the material world is completely opposite to that of

[53] The link between sophism and *alazoneia* is cemented in *Clouds*, 103-5, 445-51. Aristotle defines the boaster: "ὡς ὁ ἀλαζών, ὁ δὲ ἀργυρίου, ἢ ὅσα εἰς ἀργύριον, ἀσχημονέστερος οὐκ ἐν τῇ δυνάμει δ' ἐστὶν ὁ ἀλαζών, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει: κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν γὰρ καὶ τῷ τοιόσδε εἶναι ἀλαζών ἐστιν" "But if he boasts to get money or things that make money, this is more shameful. Boastfulness is not a matter of one's capacity but of one's choice; a man is a boaster because he has a habit of boasting, he is that sort of person" (NE 1127b)

sophists: ethereal, elitist and idealistic (Wilkins 403). As I argued above, culinary and agricultural imagery is explicitly used to untangle contemporary ideological knots. Turning to the figure of the individual boastful sophist, Companion-Persuader, has acquired a discrete body of knowledge on a subject and extrapolates unduly that he possesses knowledge or skills that, in fact, he does not. Wilkins cites the *mageiros* in the New Comedian Sosipater's *Perjurors*, who boasts that he must know about "the heavenly bodies and the setting and rising of the stars…" (fr. 1; Wilkins 398) as well as understand architecture and strategy in order to ply his trade as a cook. Such a character was actually referred to as a *sophistês* in *Dinner Philosophers*; moreover, some aspects of philosophy such as medicine and diet clearly fall in, or close to, a cook's purview (14.621d).

Companion-Persuader introduces himself to the birds with a culinary metaphor. By referencing the labor-intensive process of bread-making at the beginning of his attempt to persuade the birds, "καὶ μὴν ὀργῶ νὴ τὸν Δία καὶ προπεφύραται λόγος εἷς μοι,ὃν διαμάττειν οὐ κωλύει," "And by Zeus I am ripe with anticipation and a speech has been concocted by me which no one will prevent me from kneading thoroughly" (462). Companion-Persuader explicitly connects the philosophical/philological act of constructing a speech with the acts of mixing and kneading. Moreover, while Companion-Persuader refers to the speech itself, the audience is also aware that the speech is merely the beginning of a larger despotic scheme, as Companion-Persuader's founding of the *polos/polis* and his name itself attest to his rhetorical power. Therefore, the vocabulary of kneading is associated with

Companion-Persuader's entire project of persuasion and demagoguery. Already, culinary imagery is used to characterize the play's protagonist as typically Athenian and typically flawed.

The more the audience learns about Companion-Persuader, including the revelation of his name itself (644), the more he begins to use culinary vocabulary that is linked with sophism, the less the world onstage looks like a Golden Age utopia. In 465, Companion-Persuader describes his speech as "λαρινὸν ἔπος τι," "fattened-up," again connecting his project to the process of readying animals for ritual consumption, one of the few chances for meat-eating in ancient Athens. Thus, Companion-Persuader's speeches to the birds, his whole demagogic project, is like that of preparing luxury foods for the birds' delectation—it is both more "hands-on" and gourmet than the self-producing food of the birds, and marks Companion-Persuader's attempt to "join" the birds as an attempt to colonize them, to rhetorically outmaneuver them, to give them a taste of luxury foods requiring substantial preparation.

Companion-Persuader' *pnigos*[54] at the end of his persuasive speech to the chorus,[55] cements the connection between over-seasoning meat and political deception. Companion-Persuader creates a matrix in which chef is equivalent to sophist:

> εἶτα λαβόντες πωλοῦσ᾽ ἀθρόους: οἱ δ᾽ ὠνοῦνται βλιμάζοντες: κοὐδ᾽ οὖν, εἴπερ ταῦτα δοκεῖ δρᾶν, ὀπτησάμενοι παρέθενθ᾽ ὑμᾶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπικνῶσιν τυρὸν ἔλαιον σίλφιον ὄξος καὶ τρίψαντες κατάχυσμ᾽

[54] A "choker" of a speech delivered on one breath, until the speaker runs out of air, for comic effect.
[55] A sophistic version of a traditional *agon*, in which Companion-Persuader argues only with himself through verbal trickery.

> ἕτερον γλυκὺ καὶ λιπαρόν, κἄπειτα κατεσκέδασαν θερμὸν τοῦτο καθ᾽ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ὥσπερ κενεβρείων.
> Then once they've caught you they sell you in heaps, and the customers feel you up. And even after that, they don't just roast you and serve you up—they grate cheese over you, oil, silphium, vinegar, and mixing up another sauce, a sweet and glistening one, then sprinkle the hot sauce over you, just like you were carrion. (523-38)

Companion-Persuader stresses how many different sauces are that are poured over the birds, how hot and savory, in order to outrage the birds at their mistreatment.[56] In this case, then, the situation is something like the ubiquitous addition of hot sauce to chicken and rice from a street cart—Tabasco fundamentally obscures the low quality of the meat. Both this *pnigos* and the chorus' speech at 1073 describe 'culinary crimes' committed against the birds that involve deception. Companion-Persuader and the chorus of birds accuse chefs of selling birds in groups (529, 1079), thereby cheapening them; the chorus also mentions 'puffing up' for birds for sale to fetch a higher price in the agora, which presumably inspires careful groping by the buyers, as described above (530, 1080). Therefore, the imaginary *mageiros* in 535 is accused of what appears to be a fairly standard complaint—disguising lesser-quality meat by adding overpowering spices, selling meat en masse, or misrepresenting the meat for sale.

Then, an essential part of the chef's craft is not only to possess a discrete body of knowledge (like a sophist) but to be able to use this knowledge to make it difficult

[56] I realize that this translation advocates for ancient use of hot sauce as a hallmark of an unsophisticated palate as opposed to the perhaps simpler understanding of *thermos* as hot in temperature. Dunbar associates *thermos* with a certain savoriness and "gastronomic pleasure," citing *Acharnians* 975 and 1156-9. In Andrew Dalby's *Food in the Ancient World From A to Z*, the only use of thermos describes flavor, not heat (Dalby, *Food in the Ancient World from A to Z* 149). Thus, I argue that by "hot sauce" Aristophanes really does mean garlicky hot-sauce. See also Dalby, *Siren Feasts*; Wilkins and Hill.

to judge between the good and bad—meats, that is—to make the weaker food the stronger. What at first blush appears to be mere culinary wordplay, thus, in fact comments on political and intellectual shifts in Athens towards sophism and *polypragmosune* at the end of the fifth century BCE. What a delicious parallel to Socrates in *Clouds*, who rehashes Protagoras' famous boast in his promise to Strepsiades that

> εἶναι παρ' αὐτοῖς φασιν ἄμφω τὼ λόγω, τὸν κρείττον', ὅστις ἐστί, καὶ τὸν ἥττονα. τούτοιν τὸν ἕτερον τοῖν λόγοιν, τὸν ἥττονα, νικᾶν λέγοντά φασι τἀδικώτερα.
> They say that they have in the Thinkery both arguments, the better, whatever that is, and the worse. They say that someone giving one of these two arguments, the lesser, will conquer the more just ones. (112)

Indeed, to make weaker food the stronger seems to be an essential part of the *mageiros*' job in Aristophanes; it maps quite cleanly onto the stereotype of the Aristophanic sophist, constantly struggling to make the weaker arguments the stronger. Because it is associated not with archaic agricultural plenty but rather with an act of concoction unmistakably similar to sophistic practice, Aristophanes here disconnects *Birds* from other Old Comedies that discuss the Golden Age and even the realm of the birds as represented in the first half of the play. Once Companion-Persuader starts persuading, food is closely associated with sophistic urban rhetoric and no longer with Golden Age imagery. In this break, the audience is able to mark what has been lost—the comic possibility, the freedom from social stratification, the time for utopian thinking.

City and country

In sum, Aristophanes stages a debate in *Birds* between utopian *apragmosune* and sophistic *polypragmosune* through food imagery. This political intervention through Golden Age and culinary tropes is related to a still larger cultural shift in late fifth century Athens—between Athens as an agrarian polis of farmers and Athens as a democratic, imperial power. In this section, I argue that the culinary concerns of *Birds* comment not only on the individual failings of a chef/sophist like Companion-Persuader but of these types of governance more broadly. 5th century Athens stands at the intersection between historically agrarian Athens, the height of democratic rule, and the rise of oligarchy as the Athenian empire fights to continue to exist. As Athens' imperial interests expanded, the voice of the farmer is increasingly silent.

The ideological conflict between agrarian and urban democracy becomes particularly charged, as the countryside is associated with the reign of the birds, with the reign of Kronos, and urban democracy with deceitful luxury foods: poultry and sauces. All political discourses within *Birds* are ghosted by this tension between country and city. Immediately, right after telling Tereus that they hail from Athens, Companion-Persuader and Goodhope put a finer point on in—they are from the countryside (111). It is this juxtaposition between the moral goodness of the countryside and the depraving of urban life, typified by the lawcourts, that sets up the conflict between the "Golden Age" utopia of the Birds and the dystopian city that Companion-Persuader creates and commands in the second half of the play. *Birds* is explicitly political throughout—not just when the scene shifts to the urbanized Cloudcuckooland, but also in the Golden Age birds scenes. A broader scope for investigating the political allows for fantastical representations of agriculture in this

play to be taken seriously. The Golden Age images may be as "radically nostalgic" for a lost past as Eupolis' more 'overt' *Demoi* (Ruffell 1990, 490): the Golden Age tropes in this play politicize the dialectic between city and country. This play's representations of utopia are marked by a charged country/city divide that has been largely ignored by scholars, yet I argue that this fact may speak more to a traditionally urban bias within academia than the concerns of the characters.

I take seriously the character's concerns within Aristophanes' plays; for those on stage are always concerned with when and what they will eat, and who will provide it. Farmers onstage are constantly concerned with their livelihoods and political representation. In *Birds*, when Hercules complains that he never gets to eat delicious roasted poultry, Aristophanes insists on scope of the problem of wealth disparity in Athens, that even the gods are hungry for luxury foods. I see the hungry Hercules as a proxy for the audience, intentionally crafted to create a certain sympathetic affective response. They too look on hungry; they too yearn to enjoy the fruits of Companion-Persuader's feast. And so I read the utopian concerns of this play, the comic question of who is allowed into the ideal city, and who gets to eat, as inextricably tied to the political concerns of 5th century Athens—here, the role of food and its producers in the life of the democratic city.[57] This utopian impulse of *Birds* is, thus, not escapist or

[57] The idea of a "culinary" political history of Athens may seem ludicrous compared to an intellectual or military one. Yet farming and access to luxury foods was certainly an essential site of Athenian self-definition. See Ch. 1. For links more broadly between political structures and food production, see also Hanson, Croix *Class Struggle* (especially "Property and the Propertied"), Ehrenberg *People of Aristophanes* (especially "Money and Property" and "Economics and the State"), Osborne 1991, Ostwald 203. Ancient authors, too, pointed to the connection between farming and the fundamental nature of Athenian democracy—this is the subject of Xenophon's *Economics*. See *Ath. Pol.* 6.1319a4ff, in which Aristotle argues that a farmer's democracy is the best, compared to a democracy in which

purely aesthetic. Rather, the play legitimates the view that the core values of Athenian democracy are tied to the land, tied to the *earth*, rather than the democratic structures of the city by creating a nostalgia for a simpler Golden Age and figuring the sophistic city as an exclusive dystopia.

There is a line of thinking about the pastoral content of Aristophanic comedy that is helpful in pointing to the agricultural as a particular interest of this play, although those that write about the pastoral quality of *Birds* rarely tie the literary genre of the "pastoral" with political or historical concerns about the role of the Athenian countryside. For example, Carroll Moulton describes the pastoral quality of *Peace* and contrasts it with other plays involving "peace makers" and "assailants of the heavens," that is, *Acharnians* and *Birds* respectively. "The pastoral fantasy of *Birds*, on the other hand, though it be adorned with shimmering lyrics (e.g. Tereus' song of 227-262) is swiftly transformed into Companion-Persuader's ambiguous 'Utopia'" (101). Here, Moulton is primarily concerned with Aristophanes' verse style, arguing for the often overlooked *Peace* on the basis of its wide variety of lyrics. I argue that the use of the pastoral as literary genre is inextricable from the sociopolitical context of a *polis* rapidly shifting from a land-based system of governance to one in which skilled laborers, merchants, rowers, and city-dwellers had an increasing amount of political power. *Birds* offers the same sumptuous poetry—especially in the bird song, as Moulton notes—and is imbued with the same concerns. Thus, the shift away from

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"everyone shares alike (τὸ πάντας κοινωνεῖν) (1319b2) that gives rise to demagogues like Cleisthenes. These democracies only "appear" democratic but are, in fact, "disorderly" (ἀτακτοτέραν) compared to an agrarian (and hoplite) polity.

lyric poetry based on birdsong to the language of the city that characterizes the episodes (sophistic language, as I argue above) does not mark a lack of investment with rural themes but rather the opposite: conservative concern over their disappearance. The Golden Age imagery and the "old-fashioned" lyric poetry of the first half the play aren't erased by Companion-Persuader's rise to power. It is through the conversion of the utopia to the dystopia that the audience marks what has been lost. This patterned dramatic form that Moulton describes as a rejection of pastoral verse style—a protagonist with a big idea who enacts it despite opposition and enjoys the consequences— in fact does active ideological work. The dramaturgical structure of the play provides a solution (hoping, thinking of new ideas) for real social conflicts about the role of the countryside. Food metaphors and onstage feasts render the political work of the play entertaining and viscerally affective throughout.

In contrast, in the only article to treat the pastoral quality of *Birds,* Dora Pozzi argues convincingly for the contiguity of the tone of the play. By underscoring the threat and violence and power differential that runs through the first section of the play through the myth of Tereus and Procne (as with the comic inclusion of Tereus' slave, the Messenger-Bird), Pozzi links Companion-Persuader's rise to power with his assimilating to the political climate of the thicket and the ethos of the *Birds*. Pozzi writes,

> Companion-Persuader' wings have grown from the thicket, and in the end he rises as the champion of the thicket and of the order of the universe… In *The Birds*, then—perhaps the most intensely political of Aristophanes' comedies—Aristophanes brings into question the underpinnings of the Athenian imperialistic dream by transmuting the quality of the fantasy that serves as the foundation of the plot…. Aristophanes challenges the temper of the times; with a stentorian laugh

> he disposes of the imperialistic ideal, offering instead as a counter-ideal the image of life in untainted nature. The poet inspired by the muse of the thicket knows what is good for the city (Pozzi 128-129).

Xenophon, I think, would agree with the moral superiority connected to the country-side, as the fourth-century mouthpiece for the same ideology:

> Since the crops grow and the cattle on a farm graze outside the walls, husbandry seemed to us to help in some measure to make the workers valiant. And so this way of making a living appeared to be held in the highest estimation by our states, because it seems to turn out the best citizens and most loyal to the community." (Oec.6.10)

Thinking about the pastoral quality of this play as a whole allows an analysis of the political function of this play as a whole, as Pozzi demonstrates. While I argue that Aristophanes stresses discontinuity over continuity, and that Companion-Persuader's rhetoric once he gains power is certainly sophistic and demagogic (not lyric/pastoral) this play *is* continuously interested in the site of the thicket, in the relationship between the city and country. Ultimately, I argue, with Pozzi, that Aristophanes' representation of Cloudcuckooland is not sweeping, negative conservatism but rather attempts to demonstrate the desirability of the countryside, of the farm life that Xenophon describes, of a Golden Age *apragmosune* rather than a Periclean one. Aristophanes manipulates existing Golden Age tropes in order to forge a new, utopian definition of *apragmosune*—one rooted in culinary pleasures—that forms a direct commentary on Thucydides' political ideology.

A culinary free-for-all in *Assemblywomen:* the limit case of slavery

Of course, treading the line between utopianism and nostalgia through the image of the Greek Golden Age demands certain fantastical elements of the Golden Age be taken for granted, be naturalized into the trope. To conclude, I return to the

figure of the slave to mark the way in which slavery is absent not only from Greek Golden Age tropes, but Aristophanic utopias as well. In what I argue is Aristophanes most explicitly utopian play, *Assemblywomen*, the new government is marked by commensal eating, shared property, and a lively feast to which all—not merely the protagonist—are invited. Yet this growing inclusion and dramatic openness over the course of the play makes the maintenance of slavery within this utopian scheme more visible and troubling. Imagining an Arcadian past is radical for Aristophanes, in substituting utopian politics for Pericles' insistence on civic participation and investment. Yet this libertarianism has a real cost, as I conclude in the section below. On the one hand, *Assemblywomen* demonstrates quite clearly the ideological work that Aristophanes does to draw nostalgia and utopianism together. On the other hand, *Assemblywomen*, with its twenty year vantage on *Birds* and *Acharnians*, speaks from a moment at which Athens' agrarian and aristocratic government as grouping of unwalled family farms is long past. Therefore, this decidedly non-agrarian stance of fourth-century Athens allows Aristophanes allows slavery to slip from a highly contested discourse that he attempts to regulate from one in which the use of agricultural slave labor is a given within a celebratory and inclusive utopia. I turn to the figure of the slave in this play, where it has been most systematically ignored, in order to avoid reproducing Aristophanes' gesture within my own celebration of Aristophanes' utopianism. As Page Dubois reminds us, "although slavery is a crucial, structuring presence and metaphor in Aristophanes' comedies… it appears often to be invisible or incidental to scholarly readers" (DuBois 110).

The closer plays stay to Athens and Athenian social values, the more actively contested the figure of the slave. In *Birds*, anxiety over naturalized slaves is a heightened debate in free-for-all *Athens*, not highly structured, tyrannical Cloudcuckooland (DuBois 108ff). The play opens with jokes about Exekestides (10-11), later characterized as "a slave and a Carian" despite being a naturalized citizen. These jokes culminate in the claim that he should, with branded slaves and all father-beaters in the audience, join the birds: "Are you a slave and a Carian like Exekestides? Among us you can create yourself forefeathers!" (764-5). So too is Sakas, another naturalized Athenian, harshly criticized for creating a genealogy for himself at Athens (31-5). Aristophanes is explicit about the way in which his comedy censures "the brazen foreigners and redheads, worthless sons of worthless fathers" (*Frogs* 731-2). In the branded physical landscape of imperial Athens, slave bodies were monitored carefully in comedy as in life. Aristophanes' heightened anxiety over named slaves and those who no longer bore physical signs of their slavery stands to reason.

Assemblywomen, on the other hand, both fails to demonstrate this anxiety over naturalized foreigners or slaves within the space of the city and relies, fundamentally, upon the erasure of slave labor for the instantiation of Get-Er-Done's agriculturally bountiful, communal utopia. Paul Cartledge relies on Aristophanes in his discussions of ancient slavery, as do so many who chart the material history of the ancient world. Cartledge catalogues household slaves and unnamed attendants, slaves of allegorical figures and slaves of poets (DuBois 119; Cartledge, *Aristophanes and His Theatre of the Absurd* 70). Yet the public Scythian slaves featured in Aristophanes' plays pass unnoticed (perhaps as integral to the social fabric of Athenian public life), as do the

"field slaves" that labor off-stage in *Assemblywomen*. It is this unnoticed, unnamed, and indeed unremarkable labor force to which I now turn.[58]

Assemblywomen comes, perhaps, the closest to Bloch's utopian function. The utopian work of *Assemblywomen* is both conservative and radical; the women who take over the government are able to create their utopian scheme because of their experience managing households; because of these skills, the women are successfully able to transform the government into a more equitable and pleasurable arrangement. The inherent conservatism of women within Athenian ideology leads to, rather than stands in the way of a vision of utopianism. In a way, the ideology of *Assemblywomen* changes very little over the course of the play—rather, the comedic madness comes from pursuing one idea to its conclusion doggedly, rather than the zigs-and-zags, the rapid changes in location, character, and tone that define *Birds* and *Acharnians*.

Reorganizing Athens' food distribution systems in order to reduce economic disparities is one of the key facets of Get-Er-Done's communism: "πάντα γὰρ ἕξουσιν ἅπαντες, ἄρτους τεμάχη μάζας χλαίνας οἶνον στεφάνους ἐρεβίνθους" "Everyone will have everything: bread, slices of fish, barley-cakes, thick coats, wine, symposium wreaths, chickpeas" (606-608). Get-Er-Done provides in this comic list a generalized portrait of elevating even the poorest, those who need winter coats,[59] to

[58] It is perhaps ironic that the three plays I analyze in this section are some of the few within the Aristophanic corpus without named household slaves. I do note the way in which slavery structures Aristophanes' political critiques. See duBois for an analysis of the way in which slavery metaphors and abuse of slave characters alike structure Philocleon's politics in Wasps. Indeed, Aristophanes' choice to figure non-elite Athenian politicians as slaves at the beginning of *Knights* further demonstrates the importance of slavery in structuring Aristophanes' political thought, even as it is never directly addressed at length within his comedies.

[59] Surely a reference to the scene told about the speaker Euaion, who came forward at the assembly

participating in symposium delights like decorative wreaths and roasted chickpea snacks. The primary thrust of this offering is the alleviation of poverty—who, personified, offers only foraged roots and withered radishes to eat (*Wealth* 543-4). Yet, there is certainly also within the rhetorical frame of the comic list, the offer that everyone shall have everything, a gesture towards a Golden Age in which even luxury foods are freely available to all.

And Golden Age images of plenty characterize the luxury foods in this play. A certain combinatory logic here defines both the alchemical quality of cooking to create something greater than its parts and a worldview where "all good things come in terms of one another" (Reckford 170). Thus, the dish that the audience and characters are invited to consume is not part of a comic list in which individual dishes ironically push or pull against the overall theme of list. This feast is an amalgamation of all good things, excessive, and ludicrous. The dish, a combination of luxury foods—fish, spices, sauces, and poultry—adds expensive, sought-after ingredient after ingredient to form the longest word in the Greek language. This play, then, closes with a synaesthetic and seductive dish that is wholly generative, the kindles the audience's desire:

> τάχα γὰρ ἔπεισι
> λοπαδοτεμαχοσελαχογαλεοκρανιολειψανοδριμυποτριμματοσιλφι
> οτυρομελιτοκατακεχυμενοκιχλεπικοσσυφοφαττοπεριστεραλεκτρυο
> νοπτεκεφαλλιοκιγκλοπελειολαγῳοσιραιοβαφητραγανοπτερυγών:
> σὺ δὲ ταῦτ᾽ ἀκροασάμενος. ταχὺ καὶ ταχέως λαβὲ τρύβλιον:

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nearly naked his coat was so threadbare, demanding coats for all (408-422). Thus, the visceral effects of poverty are here satirized, but clearly displayed. The importance of these coats is heightened later in the play as the distinctions between even the (formerly) poorest citizen and the slave heightened. For, as Ussher notes, winter coats were available only to citizens (133).

> Soon there'll be a skillet-o-sliced-fish-shark-dogfish-head-leftover-strong-well-sauced-silphium-next-to-salt-honey-poured-all-over-thrush-on-blackbird-ring-dove-pigeon-chicken-oven-baked-coot-wagtail-rock-dove-hare-in-a-wine-reduction-sauce-and-crispy-wings! So listen up and grab a plate! (1169-75)

This vision of goodness applies to all—the audience is to be invited (1140),[60] the judges, the comic chorus, even the household slave has poured perfume in her hair. The household slave sings out in praise of all—the people, the land, the inventor of this scheme, all who are on stage. This commensal vision is in stark contrast to the stratified feast to which none are allowed access in *Birds*.

However, despite the celebratory song of the one female slave, increased plenty for the citizen can only come on the backs of many other slaves. By strictly enforcing distinctions between citizen and slave, Get-Er-Done lays the framework for a political system in which equality can be held dear, ideologically. While feasting is Get-Er-Done's primary concern—after detailing the political changes, she leaves the stage half-way through the play for the duration of the comedy—the sumptuous, egalitarian banquet is always connected to sexual discourses which call for the repression of desire. Get-Er-Done leaves with two parting thoughts[61]: that she must first set up communal dining arrangements so that the new government can be celebrated with a feast (714-716) and that her sexual reforms are going to put all

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[60] Although they are later comically uninvited in a standard trope (Ussher 232, Sommerstein 236). Yet, even as the whole audience so carefully considered earlier is not going to partake in the feast traditionally provided for the actors, they are exhorted to transfer their culinary enjoyment into their aesthetic enjoyment and vote for this play. Thus, the audience is still "invited"—only to participate by voting, not eating.

[61] Which I take as a generous gesture towards her female attendants, especially after her remark that she "needs to use [the chorus] as her advisors" (517-19). Thus, I disagree with the reading of Praxagora that she is a despot like Companion-Persuader and that her utopia is in fact a dystopian monarchy (Sommerstein 2006, Slater 2002).

prostitutes out of business, as sex will be freely available to all (718-19). These twin ideological inversions—freedom of dining made possible by agricultural slave labor, and freedom of sex made possible by curtailing slaves' sexual freedom—are two sides of the same coin.

Aristophanes, then, strengthens regulations placed upon slaves in his urban utopia. In a way, might echo the exclusion of slavery figured by returning to a fantasy past without slaves by using Golden Age imagery. In both the Golden Age imagery and the invitations at the end of Assemblywomen, slaves are actively pushed to the limits of Athenian consciousness. Both of these utopian departures demand the further exclusion of the slave from Athenian civic life. In this way, the performative omission of slavery in both the Golden Age and the urban utopianism of Assemblywomen refracts the criticisms of Athens made by the Old Oligarch.

The Old Oligarch, also known as Pseudo-Xenophon, was an anonymous author, presumably an Athenian abroad, who wrote a political pamphlet criticizing Athens. His aristocratic view led him to believe that Athenian democracy gave too much power to the poor. His comments on slavery, however, echo my reading of *Assemblywomen* that urban utopianism is undergirded by the increased stratification of Athenian life and abjection of the slave class. For the Old Oligarch, a lack of clear distinction between citizen and slave is characteristic of a powerful lower-class. According to his logic, democracy (rather than a system with a clear separation between slave and citizen like Sparta, 1.11) is at fault for giving "the wicked mob" (τοὺς πονηροὺς) a voice. Putting power into the hands of the "masses [who] display

extreme ignorance, indiscipline and wickedness" (1.3) leads to terrors of democracy like the fact that "slaves and metics at Athens lead a singularly undisciplined life; one may not strike them there, nor will a slave step aside for you… In the matter of free speech we have put slaves and free men on equal terms; we have also done the same for metics…" (1.10) For the Old Oligarch, a democracy that does not distinguish between slaves, metics and citizens in terms of access to free speech or performance of obedient behavior is a fundamentally flawed form of government that puts too much power in the hands of the many. This ideology characterizes, for example, Aristophanes' claims in the parabasis of *Frogs* that the aim of comedy is to call out "counterfeit" citizens "minted just yesterday with the worst stamp" (723-6).

Get-Er-Done, then, answers the Old Oligarchs calls for a more stratified society *even and especially in the form of an urban utopia*. Even in the act of creating a more joyous, delicious, and egalitarian society, she strengthens the distinction between citizen and slave, even giving away coats, yes, but only to citizens, thus creating another visual distinction with which to regulate slaves in society. In doing so, she creates a utopian version of the Old Oligarch's preferred democracy, in which the "ignorant, undisciplined and wicked" are not the populace as a whole but outcasts. Wicked individuals lose power and desperately try to regain it, like the scofflaw or the crones.

In order for democracy to cease being a contest between the better elements of society and the uneducated, disorderly masses, structural inequality between citizens must be displaced onto the figure of the slave. Thus, the redistribution of land in

Assemblywomen is inextricable from the tightening regulation of slave life: "καὶ τάς γε δούλας οὐχὶ δεῖ κοσμουμένας τὴν τῶν ἐλευθέρων ὑφαρπάζειν Κύπριν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοῖς δούλοισι κοιμᾶσθαι μόνον κατωνάκην τὸν χοῖρον ἀποτετιλμένας" "slave girls can't keep putting on make-up and stealing the hearts of free men, but they must sleep only with slave men, and keep their pussies as hairy as their shaggy cloaks" (721-4). The category of the slave allows for a space of abjection that makes utopianism a viable option, a viable dream for citizens and women. Thus, this utopia is quite the opposite of the Golden Age comic fragments of abundant agricultural bounty without labor; Get-Er-Done's utopia is clearly built on handing over the labor of production to slaves. Handing over agriculture to slaves enables the men of the city to "only worry about going to dinner" (652). That is, Get-Er-Done's utopia is not one in which all food comes unstinting *from the earth*—it comes unstinting from slave labor.[62]

Get-Er-Done later describes the dining arrangements, a repurposed version of the jury selection process, in which voting machines would allot formerly legislative buildings as dining halls. When Look-See wonders what will happen if his name doesn't get pulled—a commonplace if this process were used to elect jurors—she responds that πᾶσι γὰρ ἄφθονα πάντα παρέξομεν," "we will provide everything for all unstintingly" (690). *Unstintingly*: this is imported from Hesiod. Here, though, it is not the earth that will offer food without resistance (φθόνος, in the common sense of μὴ φθονήσῃς: "do not refuse"). Slaves will offer themselves up without resistance—

[62] Unlike in the Golden Age old comic fragments, which Athenaeus explicitly stresses are about a time before slavery: see above.

not even as prostitutes, to the sexual escapades that citizens will now enjoy in the new order, but to unceasing agricultural labor.

Thus, the way in which that dining is represented within the play hints at tropes from the Golden Age of ease and leisure, but also gives a regrettably *plausible* explanation for the utopian abolishment of class—increased use of slave labor and increased policing of the distinction between citizen and slave. Thus, the ideological simplicity of food in Get-Er-Done's utopia—perhaps, more perniciously, even in Plato's utopia in the *Republic* as well—that food should stand for equality, that citizen needs be met, that land plots be made equal, that citizen labor be abolished—all of this hinges on the abject figure of the slave.

This simple solution, in response to Look-See's question, "But who will till the soil?" is given only one line, one word: "the slaves" (651-2). I find the brevity of Get-Er-Done's answer so troubling because it does not cut to the heart of a central problematic within Athenian democracy—it is not a hilarious aesthetic solution to a lived political conflict. It is not even a joke. Increasing and highly regulating slave labor does not resolve a dialectic between agrarian and urban modes of production. Aristophanes does not explore this conflict within a space of comic fantasy. He does not disrupt, refigure, or invert this trope, he succinctly employs it before moving on to utopian images of peace and plenty. Get-Er-Done's gesture simply resolves the question of agricultural labor efficiently and even realistically in order to prepare the audience for more important questions—what's for dinner? And when do we eat?

Chapter Two: Utopian Thinking and Utopia at odds in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*

I would bathe myself in strangeness:
These comforts heaped upon me, smother me!
I burn, I scald so for the new,
New friends, new faces,
Places!
Oh to be out of this,
This that is all I wanted
—save the new.

Ezra Pound, "The Plunge"

Having laid a theoretical paradigm in which utopian thinking might be separated from utopian formalism in the previous chapter, here I read through a single text, *Acharnians*, in order to provide a sustained case study.[63] In this paper, I trace the way in which Aristophanes explores the paradox between culinary delights and political invective in his first extant comedy, *Acharnians*. Specifically, I argue that food serves two distinct dramaturgical ends in this play: to criticize the way that politics operate and to prioritize the power of the theatre by demonstrating the way that culinary longing is able to create fantastical utopias onstage.[64] Aristophanes mocks all characters who are interested in food: government officials who eat too

[63] I argue that a sustained reading of a single text might provide insights into Athenian cultural mores that a bricolage of sources might obscure. For example, this reading of *Acharnians* in toto paints a considerably different portrait of Athenian citizen desire for food than the one that is promoted by James in *Fishcakes and Courtesans*. In this excellent book, Davidson begins with a brief chapter on Greek food before launching into a discursive analysis of Athenian moderation and self-control in sexual and political life. To conclude the chapter on eating, Davidson writes, "Our authors reveal a struggle in the very composition of their prose, an ongoing battle with dangerous passions that threaten all the time to consume them and their readers" (Davidson 35). Instead, I argue that another way to define these "passions" is as utopian thinking, desiring better food, a better world. Only when sated do they create the tyranny with which Davidson ends his volume: tyranny which is criticized. In this chapter, I argue that these hopeful desires themselves are never satirized but only galvanized.

[64] I do use the words "culinary longing" and "culinary desire" someone interchangeably in this chapter. I find "longing" to capture the backwards-looking nature of this desire to foods available in the past. Because I define the potency of longing in its unfulfillment, I find this term generally more germane than "desire." Lastly, I find "longing" an individual version of the "culinary nostalgia" discussed as a cultural phenomenon in Chapter Three.

much luxury food at the beginning of the play and the protagonist Dikaiopolis, who zealously guards his food and wine from interlopers at the end.[65] Thus, Aristophanes uses food to bookend the first and final sections of the play to mock luxury foods and luxurious lifestyles by emphasizing hierarchy and power differentials. The tantalizing food onstage is never an image of collective or commensal feasting but always marks a position of dominance, although it is framed by the language of archaic Golden Age utopianism. Despite the fact that Dikaiopolis' personal utopian feast is distinctly anti-democratic, I argue that Aristophanes is also attuned to the way that longing for certain foods can proliferate longing in ways that are unruly and ambiguous. Unlike the archaic images of unthinkable luxury that mark the beginning and end of the play are parodied as falsely utopian, Dikaiopolis' longing for agrarian or pre-war foods, his culinary longing, creates new dramatic possibilities, creates utopian rupture and play. That is, I separate "the utopian turn" in which Dikaiopolis' culinary longings instantiate new dramatic possibilities from the gluttonous "utopias" in which massive amounts of food are consumed at the beginning and end of the play. This separation enables a new reading of the play in which the longed-for pleasures of eating are the very ground through which the politics of the play are staged.

In this chapter, I map the relationship of longing for food—in this play, longing for agricultural products of pre-democratic farm living and for luxury goods no longer available in Athens due to the Megarian embargo—onto the utopian

[65] Of course, Aristophanes is actively making choices to represent government officials this way. The Athenian government does not seem as invested in using food to manipulate civic desire (i.e. no bread and circus) as Aristophanes would have it: see below. I also explore the way in which this reading of Dikaiopolis may be contentious in the sections that follow.

dramaturgy Aristophanes employs.[66] Lest food seem an unlikely thread to trace throughout a seemingly frivolous farce about Athenian political participation, bear in mind that Acharnians was performed for an Athenian audience suffering from massive food shortages, for farmers forced to relocate within the city as their fields were destroyed by Spartan troops, for merchants who lacked imported goods now embargoed from Spartan allies. Eating on stage does not obscure but rather demonstrates the high stakes of fifth century BCE politics. Tracing the utopian valence of Dikaiopolis' nostalgic longing for both free-market luxuries and down-home country cooking raises larger questions about the dangers and delights of nostalgia, questions to which I return in my second case study in the third and fourth chapters. More specifically, this mapping also provides a way out of a seeming deadlock in Classics scholarship over the political content of Aristophanes' comedies, as I explain more fully below and in the second chapter. I argue that using culinary longing to imagine a utopia that creates a view outside 'oppressive' political life is central to Aristophanes' dramaturgy. I use food (specifically images of culinary longing for luxury foods or political longing for an agrarian economy) to highlight these intense ambiguities about the relationship of food to political participation in Aristophanes' work more generally.

I trace the ways in which *Acharnians* both looks backwards to an agrarian past and forward to a utopian future. In order to do so, I track food from the beginning to the end of the play, describing the ways in which food is metric for political corruption

[66] *Megarian embargo:* A result of a 432 BCE decree that, in part, precipitated the Peloponnesian war a year later (Thu. 1.67.4 and 1.139-140) .

in *Acharnians* (democratic in the first half of the play, tyrannical in the latter), In the doubleness of Dikaiopolis' gesture, combining an antidemocratic nostalgia for *deme* life with the fantastic founding of a utopian city, one can find new 'horizons' in the text.[67] That is, this struggle between rural past and urban present seems resolved by the turn towards a utopian polis in which agrarian values are dominant: specifically freedom from civic obligation (such as military service) and full satiation of culinary and sexual desires. In this paper, I use Frederic Jameson's notions of a political unconscious to find a way out of the gridlock between so-called incompatible assessments of *Acharnians* as festive, political, generic, or serious. I do so by tracing the way in which food is used in this play to use an agrarian past to ignite a critique of the contemporary state of democracy at Athens. I go on to read the ending of a play as fantastical conclusion of this critique—an antidemocratic utopia that, I argue, does not offer wish fulfillment for the audience but instead demonstrates viscerally the dangers of tyranny by leaving the chorus, characters onstage, and indeed the audience hungering for more.

By using a potent mix of satire, parody, and absurdist fantasy, Aristophanes is able to criticize both individuals and entire ideological structures (the current state of democracy). Direct mockery in Aristophanes sends up both excessive individual longing and the social forces that constrain that individual—this double-edged comic

[67] *Deme*: a political unit in Athens, a land-based grouping set up during the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 BCE. Dikaiopolis claims in the play that he is from Chollidae, a rural deme. Acharnae, home of the Acharnian chorus, is a large rural deme with extensive political representation in Athens' governing bodies, making it is a large voting bloc. For more on specific role of Acharnae in the Archidamian war, see Thuc.ii.19-21.

sword, critically engaging both the political structures of Athens and the individual demagogue, is only underscored through the larger dramaturgical structure of the play as a whole. Aristophanes' coupling of direct political invective and fantasy-based utopian comedy maintains a poetics that allows social inversion and rapid shifts in tone, location, and situation. I argue, with David Konstan, that these discontinuities do not mark Aristophanes' failing as a playwright but in fact offer not only new meanings (critiques of institutions and individuals) but new ways-of-making-meaning (Konstan). These ruptures, neologisms, enacted metaphors and comic surprises are not only comic tropes that get laughs but a way-of-thinking that establishes the potency of nonsense even in a fantasy world that ultimately undercuts its own conclusions.

These constant shifts and overturnings within Aristophanes' comic world open alternative ways-of-thinking for characters like Dikaiopolis, modeling alternative modes of political participation for the assembled audience. I disagree that the audience follows and supports a coherent protagonist through a unified action, fulfilling their wishes vicariously and experiencing a kind of comic catharsis: Dikaiopolis is no Oedipus, and Aristophanes conforms to few of Aristotle's so-called "unities." The rapid shifts in tone, location, and situation in *Acharnians* allow the audience to change its mind about the play's own protagonist, for the chorus to switch allegiances and back again, and, for my purposes, for each episode of the play to be discussed as a discrete structural unit. That is, the political gesture of *Acharnians* is this hinge from a mockery of the current government and its officials to the fantasy symposium at the end of the play. This hinge marks the knot between longing for certain foods, insisting on the validity of one's own pleasure, and imagining a better

world. This hinge, then, in which longing becomes utopian thinking, defies the mockery of luxury foods in the episodes.

Through its ability to instantiate fantastical twists, turns, and utopian feasts onstage, *Acharnians* shows the validity of culinary longing as a *politics*, as a way of participating politically, a definition of the political that clearly extends beyond a political critique that merely leverages one politician or faction above another. Utopian thinking, within Aristophanic comedy played out through both agrarian nostalgia and longing for luxury foods not available during war-time, forms an alternative epistemology of political participation.[68] *Acharnians*, then, with its radical discontinuities of action, time, and place, does not fail to become Aristotelian drama but demonstrates instead the power of theatrical inventiveness to resist all totalizing logics. The permeable space between the Athens at the beginning of *Acharnians* and Dikaiopolis' fantasy world at the end sets up the very space for such play, with the production of alternate ways-of-thinking at its heart.

I take seriously the critique that end of play, which clearly marks the failure of utopia to imagine a more pleasant, egalitarian world onstage, might undermine the power of utopian thinking that I argue is crucial to Aristophanes' political/poetic ideology. It does indeed seem that we look to the ending of a play to provide the "take-home message." However, I argue that the tight ring structure by which Aristophanes constructs this play—the intense parallels between the episodes in the

[68] I do not mean to use epistemology and way-of-thinking interchangeably: I am arguing that the ways-of-thinking presented by individual characters in Aristophanes (here, Dikaiopolis) are exemplar of a heritable intellectual tradition in which individual utopian thinking creates new forms of meaning in a political field that seems to offer little representation of the average citizen.

beginning and end of the play—enable a reading of the central section of the play as its own unit. The scholarship on the aesthetic privilege and artistic freedom allowed in the Old Comic parabasis supports my thesis that the central section of this play contains Aristophanes' political consciousness in its clearest form: a shared utopian turn on the part of both Dikaiopolis and the chorus.[69] That is, I draw a separation between *a utopia* (which I define in this context as a space that embraces individual liberty, is free from governmental interference, and in which food and sex are unlimited) and *utopian thinking* (dreaming of a better world, claiming the validity of longing). Dikaiopolis' utopian thinking leads not to a 'utopia' but to a spatially displaced version of Athens in which only Dikaiopolis reaps the culinary and sexual benefits of a utopian society—thus, this utopia fails to provide true and lasting social change.[70] Nonetheless, his *gesture* of utopian thinking is not selfish but contagious, as he persuades the chorus to urge for a better world as well. Indeed, such a separation between intent and effect is clear in modern political discourse: just because American democracy miscarries does not mean that one *actually* moves to Canada.

Again, Aristophanes' poetics in fact enacts a politics: his on-stage production of alternate epistemologies resolves concerns about incommensurable relations between food in urban and rural life. That is, Dikaiopolis' utopian turn in the central section of this play, in which he leaves the rules of Athens and instantiates his own

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[69] *Parabasis*: Literally, a 'coming forward'. It is generally assumed that it is spoken by a playwright figure who walks forward and speaks directly to the audience. In this paper, I feel comfortable discussing the effect of the parabasis as the more lasting message than the conclusion of the play because of its structural anomalousness: the parabasis is set apart both by meter and staging. It is referred to metatheatrically as its own unit and follows a fairly strict internal pattern of call and response.

[70] As explained more fully below, I take equality as a primary component of a utopian society.

rituals and economy, condenses a kind of ongoing cultural renovation on the axis between an agrarian and open-market past and a utopian future. I attempt, in Jameson's terms, "the rewriting of materials in such a way that this perpetual cultural revolution can be apprehended and read as the deeper and more permanent constitutive structure in which the empirical textual objects know intelligibility" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 97). This paper rewrites *Acharnians* (from beginning to end) with an aim to expose the play's implicit investment in an ongoing dialogical process of defining Athenian political life as either based on liberty or obligation through tracing the role of agrarian life and longing for luxury foods. Thus, the parabasis and the speeches just before and after constitute an 'ideology of form'—both a narrative strategy and a political ideology for Aristophanes.[71] This emphasis on utopian play and fantasy in the middle of the play generates alternative meanings both dramatically and politically; all while Aristophanes levies critiques of specific modes of Athenian governance like bureaucracy and demagoguery at the beginning and end of the play, respectively.

A road map

First, a brief plot summary: Acharnians opens with a lone protagonist, Dikaiopolis, at the Assembly. A series of ambassadors and functionaries enter, detailing the luxurious lifestyle that Persians enjoy while Athenians are embroiled in war. Dikaiopolis vows to make peace and sends a divine messenger to make an independent peace with Sparta. Dikaiopolis is celebrating his success when he runs

[71] Cf. *Political Unconscious*, "susceptible to both a conceptual description and narrative manifestation all at once" (87).

into a group of enraged older farmers, who demand revenge from Sparta for their destroyed farms and threaten Dikaiopolis. Dikaiopolis announces that he will make a convincing speech to win them over, he just needs a moment. He then borrows a beggar's costume from Euripides, in an extended satire of Euripides' *Telephus*. In the central section of the play, Dikaiopolis, dressed as a beggar, eventually wins over the divided chorus. Customary jokes about the depravity of modern times ensue. In the last section of the play, Dikaiopolis sets up his own civic center and proceeds to take advantage of those who arrive to trade with him.

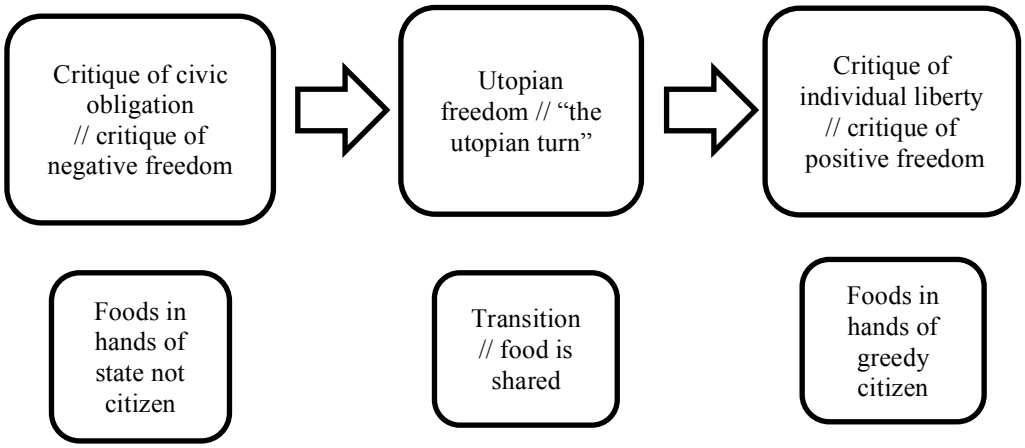

Figure 1: "Road map" to *Acharnians*.

For Aristophanes, food is first used to expose inequality within fifth century "democratic" governmental institutions–specifically, a rigged electoral system,[72] overpayment of government bureaucrats,[73] and the luxurious softness of government

[72] *Ach*. 597, 607
[73] *Ach*. 65-7, 161

officials, the Pyrtaneis.[74] Aristophanes also uses food to satirize extreme personal liberty, mocking a citizen who would eat luxury goods all the time. That is, in the first half of the play, food functions as a critique of civic obligation. Aristophanes' mockery of the luxurious meals of the ambassadors and sustained criticism of the Pyrtaneis uses food not as a starting point for generative longing, but as a portrait of oppression and personal limitation in the face of civic structures that demand the repression of individual longings. [75] At the beginnings of the play, Dikaiopolis is trapped within democratic structures that cannot fully contain his longing—he yearns for peace, for his farm. This is the "structural impossibility" that leads to a "critique of governmental structures" that I refer to in the chart above. The opening scene, in which individual political participation through existing democratic venues is deemed impossible, sets off a food-based critique of those governmental structures. A war-time market economy is relentlessly mocked in favor of nostalgia for a simple agrarian past.

In the latter half of the play, the repetitive denial of food to supplicants (while the protagonist cooks and gorges) casts all foods onstage as manifestations of Dikaiopolis' longing, the power of his personal "*polis*." The massive amount of food onstage hoarded by Dikaiopolis at the end of *Acharnians* functions as a critique of individual liberty, of the tyranny of fulfilled longing. That is, Dikaiopolis and the rural chorus of old-fashioned Acharnians yearn to return to their farms, for their ravaged

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[74] *Pyrtany:* a rotating, randomly assigned month-long appointment during which those appointed set the agenda for assembly and council meetings and were fed through civic funds.

[75] I should be clear that civic obligation fails to provide political representation only for Dikaiopolis in this play; the ambassadors and Prytaneis are represented as experiencing the civic "obligation" to enjoy luxury lifestyles at home and abroad.

fields to be restored—what Dikaiopolis gets are symposium dainties and the luxury foods associated with urban markets and trade. Aristophanes winks at the audience: Dikaiopolis now enjoys the luxury items he formerly sent up. Satiety offers little in the way of critique; the utopian city created by Dikaiopolis marks the direct inversion of the affairs of state at the beginning of the play. The carnivalesque ending forecloses itself and shuts down in the end; David Konstan's dictum, "utopian fantasy is at once liberating and conservative, inasmuch as it grounds the aspiration to human equality in a nostalgic hankering for a simpler time that cannot pose a viable alternative to the hierarchies imposed in city-state life (8)" proves true at *Acharnians*' conclusion. Thus, the selfish, brutish Dikaiopolis the audience sees at the end of the play deserves as much mockery as the civic structures of Athens do at the beginning—this is the "failed utopia" to which I refer in the chart above. Once Dikaiopolis gains political power, the creative project is completed; once Dikaiopolis sets the boundaries of his new market, he is merely reproducing systems he formerly distained.[76]

The overlapping discourses of agrarian Arcadianism and inaccessible, elite fifth-century luxuries in *Acharnians* create an incommensurable image of pleasure and democratic politics. As Konstan articulates, Aristophanes' ideological critique

[76] The ending of the play is, of course, subject to a variety of interpretations. Alan Sommerstein, for example, sets up a hermeneutic in which some plays by Aristophanes offer a fleshed out utopian world, an alternative democracy, whereas others present an alternative to democracy in the form of a tyrannical leader (A. Sommerstein, "An Alternative Democracy and an Alternative to Democracy in Aristophanic Comedy"). I argue that the figure of Dikaiopolis is able to encompass both of these readings. First, his institution of a civic space is clear from his setting up a market and performing civic rituals. Secondly, he displays a great deal of personal power when he turns away a series of suppliants in the episodes: very much like *Birds*' Companion-Persuader. Because his political power is in the form of wine libations through the concretized metaphor of *spondai* (peace treaty / libation), the stakes for entrance into Dikaiopolis' scene of cooking may appear to be low; when the episodes are mapped onto the historical situation of war-time starvation, Dikaiopolis' political power of doling out peace becomes very real.

becomes less pointed within a utopian field of play. Food and sex fail to provide individual liberty for Dikaiopolis, only a performative refashioning of the forms of Athenian democracy that Dikaiopolis himself parodied in the opening scenes. Dikaiopolis' personal version of a public festival (rural Dionysia), then, is set by Aristophanes as a direct inversion of Athenian democracy; a government predicated upon individualism is no utopia but a mere reproduction of demagogic politics.

It is rather the moment of imagining, the moment of creation within the play, that is unique to Aristophanic comedy. This moment of utopian thinking is at the heart of Aristophanic political ideology: it thrives within the communal assembled space of the festival audience, it undercuts atomistic individualism, it grows best in repressive environments. It is a new vision of dissent based on the embrace of unfulfilled longing. Thus unfulfilled longing to return to the farm, voiced as political dissent, offers citizens entry into a comic fantasy-land–and, in turn, makes them citizens of utopia.[77] Again Frederic Jameson becomes a useful touchstone: these incompatible discourses become part of the same *langue* when aesthetically juxtaposed within Aristophanes' dramaturgy—and that language is one of utopianism. Between these satires of individual liberty and civic obligation lies the kernel of Aristophanes' political message—the power of thinking-otherwise. I argue that, between satires of

[77] A definition of the Aristophanic hero as turning away from the disappointments of society and embarking upon a crazy scheme is hardly new: cf. Whitman 10. However, I am particularly interested in the way in which this act of rupture could be framed as distinctly utopian. Certain plays seem to frame the "crazy scheme" of the protagonist within explicitly utopian discourse: *Ekklesiasuzae, Birds, Knights.* I argue that by separating the utopian conclusions of a play (in which culinary and sexual desires are sated, people are free from government interference, food appears without labor) from the moment of utopian thinking allows for a fuller analysis of the utopian in Aristophanes and perhaps Old Comedy as a genre. Thus, *Acharnians*, with its frequent allusions to Golden Age images of agricultural plenty, provides fodder for an analysis of the utopian both in the conclusion of the play and in the rupture of the status quo—characterized explicitly as a Golden Age turn to a non-market based system.

political institutions on the one hand and individual longing on the other that hinge on the grotesque representation of food and eating, Aristophanes offers an alternative political theory through the free play in the central section of the play.

Aristophanic comedy has, conveniently, a generic hinge upon which his comedies turn–the *parabasis*. While not all of his comedies feature this convention and the relationship of the parabasis to the thematic material of each comedy is a topic for scholarly debate,[78] I argue that the parabasis of *Acharnians* marks this central moment from which *Acharnians* moves from a satire of institutional democracy to a satire of the excesses of desire. I track this shift of theme through the use of food in both of these satires, before and after this central turning point. After the moment of Dikaiopolis' dissent—the moment of utopian thinking, the moment of demanding an alternative—food takes on a very different tone within the play: the average citizen Dikaiopolis wants to be fed, too.

I argue that this "new and big and terribly clever idea" (*Ach.*128) for Dikaiopolis appears to be nothing less than the longing to eat and drink well, but is in fact an important recapitulation of dissent. Within a field of consensus-based politics, the ability to say no becomes an important civil right that reinscribes the individual within society. Habermas, for example, refers to dissent as one's "Nein-Sagen-Koennen," one's ability to say no (Habermas 119). Here, Dikaiopolis is able to insert himself into the Athenian political sphere not by saying no, but by saying yes to his

[78] E.g.Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy*; A. M. Bowie. As Bowie notes, the majority of the literature on Aristophanes maintains little connection between parabasis and play. Further bibliography on the parabasis more generally detailed in Simon Goldhill's "The Great Dionysia" in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?* (Goldhill).

longing for eel or wine within governmental structures that would deny him. In the central section of the play in which Dikaiopolis and the chorus speak directly to the audience—the parabasis and the sections directly surrounding—Dikaiopolis sets up a new utopian city based on the embrace of agrarian nostalgia or culinary longing. Politics are transformed in this central section from Athenian bureaucratic structures into a free space of utopian thinking. This, I argue, is the political contribution of Aristophanes—to refigure the political itself.

Democratic ideology and longing: a brief literature review

An analysis of the political unconscious of *Acharnians*, then, is indebted to studies that defend the political consciousness of *Acharnians*. Thus, scholars who consider the historical allusions encoded within the play and determine from them antagonisms within Athenian politics "mark a widening out of the sense of the social ground of the text through the notions, first, of political history, in the narrowest sense of the punctual event and a chronicle-like sequencing of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less diachronic and time-bound sense of a constitutive tension and struggle between social classes" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 75). The political content in the play does indeed on one level depend upon a decoding of dramatic events.

Indeed, Athenian political context is required to answer some questions. For example, when the protagonist speaks "on behalf of the playwright," does is he referring to Aristophanes, who ghost-wrote the play, or the public producer, Callistratus? (MacDowell, "Aristophanes and Callistratus"). Political context might illuminate some puzzles in the text, such as a one-line allusion to a legal penalty levied

against the politician Kleon (A. Sommerstein, "Harrassing the Satirist The Alleged Attempts to Prosecute Aristophanes"). If Aristophanes has a political program, a discrete set of policy suggestions, surely the best way to decode it would be to parse a series of jokes for their contextual resonances (MacDowell, "The Nature of Aristophanes' *Akharnians*"). One could interpret the work done on unearthing symbolic references to historical events within the text an examination of Jameson's first and second horizons, upon which this study expands.

However, Aristophanes' relationship with Kleon (to take but one example) is interesting not only on its own terms but in establishing *modes of production in conflict* in the 420s BCE. Thus, the symbolically coded information about Kleon within the text highlights larger social movements: novelty versus conservatism, pro-war versus pro-peace interests, etc. To follow Jameson's reading, these larger social issues form a second horizon through which to read a text. I argue that these binaries are not only represented symbolically within the text but in fact resolved by the construction of this dramatic world.

I argue that Aristophanes is not only critiquing Athenian policies and personae but the very paradigm of the political by systematically satirizing both definitions of civic obligation and individual liberty as inherently democratic. Jeffrey Henderson makes a similar argument about the political power of comedy, but he outlines the way in which Aristophanic comedy forms a kind of watchdog organization, comparing comic speech with speech in other public democratic institutions like the law courts or assembly (Henderson, "The Demos and Comic Competition"). I am less interested in the way in which comedy served to check and balance political discourse but to

transcend and redefine it by aestheticizing utopia and radically reimagining urban modes of production through the sustained use of food imagery.

The logical conclusion of such a utopian argument might focus on a realm of utterly free play instantiated by a character's embrace of desire. Indeed, such is the argument of James McGlew's recent *Citizens on Stage*. In this chapter, I build on James McGlew's thesis in *Citizens on Stage* that democracy is remade by Aristophanes in the image of the citizen's bodily desire; I focus specifically on the longing for food, which McGlew ignores in his analysis. I share with McGlew an interest in *comedy's* contribution to the question, "what is the democratic citizen?" Like McGlew, I operate with the assumption that civic ideology is constructed and, importantly, performed. I find his orientation towards a desire-based hermeneutic (that Aristophanes reimagines democracy according to the desires of the citizen) alluring, but when applied broadly across plots and characters, inconsistent with many moments in the texts themselves. The end of *Acharnians* hardly seems to endorse the sustainability of a demagogic utopia as a model for Athenian politics. After the initial gesture towards utopia reaps real consequences in the play, once Dikaiopolis is comically reunited with the luxury foods which were unavailable during wartime Athens, the epistemological opening created by thinking creatively about a better life has closed. While McGlew insists that desire is portrayed as democratic throughout *Acharnians*, I posit that Dikiaopolis' critique of so-called democracy ends when utopia begins, and explore that suture. Thus, McGlew sees the use of desire (nebulously defined) as uniformly commensal across social categories, and *Acharnians* as having a "progressive logic of inclusion" (McGlew 85) from a prohibitive democracy to an

inclusive utopia. I, conversely, argue that the play satirizes the extremity of both forms of government in the play (tyranny and democracy) and instead focus on the moment of utopian imagining as the moment of democratic dissent.

Again, I argue that Aristophanes' innovative aesthetic solution (utopian thinking) for a political Athenian problem (irreconcilable modes of production of food in urban and rural spaces) is generated specifically in the face of restriction and conflict. If, as Michel Foucault elaborates, regulatory discourse generates perversities, what clever, inventive, utopian thinking can stem from a satire of rigid political structures? How can the massive unavailability of a variety of foods generate desire within *Acharnians*' Athens? How does representing luxury food onstage in front of an assembled audience with no access to many of these foods create new possibilities for civic engagement?[79] Unlike, for example, the notable claims about Athenian desire for food and sex in James Davidson's *Courtesans and Fishcakes*, I posit that democratic ideology is predicated upon the embrace of these desires within repressive governmental structures, not the careful extinguishment of desires within a free field of play. For Aristophanes, the restrictive portrait of democracy that begins *Acharnians* is precisely what generates Dikaiopolis' utopian thinking. Upon the satiety of his desires, Dikaiopolis ceases to think cleverly or to continue to desire; the banal completeness of Dikaiopolis' power at the end underscores the importance of

[79] Indeed, the luxury food onstage never takes place in an ahistorical "festival" background but in a city in which no audience member had eaten imported luxury foods for the last six years. Within the political context in which Athen's ability to live off of its own grain production was an essential question that meant the success or loss of the Peloponnesian war, representations of starving on the one hand or hoarding luxury foods on the other have a super-charged resonance.

Foucault's notion of the generative nature of restriction, including the restriction of culinary desires.

Dikaiopolis at Athens

Dikaiopolis begins the play with an agrarian critique of market politics and by extension much of Greek political life. In his opening monologue, he exclaims,

> ἀποβλέπων ἐς τὸν ἀγρὸν εἰρήνης ἐρῶν,
> στυγῶν μὲν ἄστυ τὸν δ᾽ ἐμὸν δῆμον ποθῶν,
> ὃς οὐδεπώποτ᾽ εἶπεν, ἄνθρακας πρίω,
> οὐκ ὄξος οὐκ ἔλαιον, οὐδ᾽ ᾗδει ‘πρίω,’
> ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸς ἔφερε πάντα χὠ πρίων ἀπῆν.
> [I sit] looking out at the countryside, longing for peace, hating the city, yearning for my home deme, where no one would say–“Buy coal!” no “oil!” no “vinegar!” no one would sing out–“buy!: but each man would produce everything himself and this “buy!”-er was away. (32-36)

Here, Dikaiopolis critiques urban market politics—in his home deme, “each man produced everything [he needed]” (36). This opening gesture—the incommensurability of agrarian and urban life—sets up the conflict between these modes of productions that runs throughout this text. Starkie notes in his commentary the exclusive nature of the verb *ἀποβλέπω*: Dikaiopolis is not only “fixing his gaze on a single object” but also “rescinding from everything else” (17). Even vision, then, cannot accommodate both the farm and urban spaces, let alone the social or ideological conflicts between these modes of production.[80] By placing this conflict between agrarianism and urban cultural production in the city center, Dikaiopolis’

[80] On the hatefulness of city in this period more generally: *Eq* 792ff. Thuc.ii.14,17,52. E.g.Thuc.ii.52 on the plague of 430 BCE: “A factor which made matters much worse than they were already was the removal of people from the country into the city… there were no houses for then, and living as they did during the hot season in badly ventilated huts, they died like flies.”

resistance—his private peace—reads not as pure fancy but always in response to this established ideological conflict.

Of course, the historical resonances of Dikaiopolis' statement bear exploring—the use of food to establish this conflict speaks both to food's role in making ideological conflict visceral and also to the direct historical importance of the Athenian plain to the identities of farmers from rural demes. As a result of the Spartan invasions, Dikaiopolis is a farmer forced to live within the walls of the city, his vines cut and trampled (183, 512, Thuc. 2.14, 2.17). Dikaiopolis describes living in the ramparts of the city, looking out at his home deme and watching its destruction by invading Spartan forces (71-72). Oil, too, free-flowing in Dikaiopolis' fantasy, was directly affected by wartime shortages.[81] The stakes of the food imagery, then, are high at the beginning of the play: food is not used to mark a festival context or a commensal ethos but to mark the painful consequences of war—consequences that both the audience and the protagonist share.

Thus, on a strictly historical level, the farmer Dikaiopolis' physical position within the city of Athens gives his demands for peace a real charge, connecting these larger critiques of war with a more visceral commentary on war's agricultural impact. That is, this section functions both as a specific critique of the Pyrtaneis and the current wartime policy, and a more general critique of urban life.[82] This is, I argue,

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[81] Cf. Starkie 18; *Wasps* 252.

[82] That is, Aristophanes is using the Prytaneis in order to make jokes that do not point symbolically to the actual historical behavior of the Prytaneis, but in order to collapse tensions between agrarian life and urban trade luxuries through jokes at the butt of both. The Prytany seems to be an office carefully guarded against the kind of complacency and corruption that Aristophanes jokes about by choosing all positions by lot and the daily rotation of the position of *epistates (*□πιστάτης**)** (Aristotle, Ath. Pol. 44).

what Frederic Jameson means when he draws a distinction between the horizons of the political text: Dikaiopolis here both points to a specific historical moment that might clearly be called "political"—the relocation of rural Athenians to within the wall of the city—but concurrently collapses and enacts a tension between modes of production in city and country. Old Comedy, with its ability to make meaning on multiple levels simultaneously, and to rapidly shift the butt of the joke even within a single word, is uniquely able to do different kinds of political work simultaneously and enact Jameson's theories.

In contrast to the previously peaceful life in the fields, Dikaiopolis links his current experience of foods like vinegar and oil to a commercial market economy that is marked by compunction instead of with a 'natural' relationship to the land. The description of the Pyrtaneis herded into the assembly by a vermillion rope that would stain the clothing of all late-comers renders this compunction visible, marking its social legibility (23). Thus, Dikaiopolis begins the play by using food to describe a life in which citizens of rural demes are interpellated into an urban market economy, forced consumers. Political life at Athens is characterized in direct contrast to an agrarian system. That is, Dikaiopolis immediately defines citizenship—particularly at Athens during wartime— as the freedom to have civic obligations such as shopping in the agora or waiting for the Pyrtaneis at the assembly. Food fits into this picture not as an aspirational portrait of mouthwatering excess, but as a measure of how far Athens has come from an archaic utopian ideal in which food is self-producing. By referring to the average citizen as at the constant call of a "buy!"-er (*πρίων*), Dikaiopolis defines citizenship as a series of constant interpellations, of literal hailings into

political life. Sitting at the assembly and not being able to participate is linked to and figured as the inverse of being forced into the city and forced participate in buying food at the agora in Dikaiopolis' opening monologue. Political structures like urban markets and assemblies run by the Pyrtaneis fail to embody democratic ideologies of equal representation and free speech: and so Dikaiopolis turns next to his body as a catalogue of potential resistance.

The extent of Dikaiopolis's "freewilling" civic participation is a comic list of embodied actions. Dikaiopolis compares the pains of the current war—being forced to relocate to within the walls of Athens with his fields destroyed—to getting soap in his eyes. He then describes the experience of waiting alone at the Pnyx, the seat of the Athenian government, for the Pyrtaneis to arrive. Dikaiopolis lists the myriad ways that he bodily amuses himself in the absence of political structures—the delayed assembly. If we are to understand Dikaiopolis' opening monologue on the Pnyx as constitutive of Athenian public speech at the assembly, his long list of individualistic actions recenters the mass into the figure of the individual:

> στένω κέχηνα σκορδινῶμαι πέρδομαι
> ἀπορῶ γράφω παρατίλλομαι λογίζομαι
> ἀποβλέπων ἐς τὸν ἀγρὸν εἰρήνης ἐρῶν
> I groan, I yawn, I stretch, I fart, I'm bored, I doodle, I pull out my hairs,
> I make arguments, I look out at the fields, I long for peace. (30-32)

Dikaiopolis replaces rational speech at the assembly (*logoi*) with parodic embodied actions of restlessness. Each sensory organ is used opposite its "political" purpose: the mouth yawns, speech is replaced by groans, rational speech is reduced to farting. While all this can be expected to "fetch a laugh" (S. D. Olson, *Aristophanes: Acharnians* 76), I would add that the systematic reduction of political speeches to

bodily sounds in this opening monologue is significant. The rich resonances of gaping, groaning, and farting within Aristophanes' diction create an Aristophanic "discourse of the body." Dikaiopolis' bodily postures are both a poor substitute for political participation and at its very heart; his porous, gaping and farting body on the Pnyx[83] at the time of the assembly both determines the limits of his political participation and demeans those democratic structures like the Prytany.[84] That is, not only does Dikaiopolis' public farting and hair-pulling desanctify this civic space but also demonstrate the impossibility of Dikaiopolis' full political participation. By satirically linking peace-seeking with these base discourses of the body, the disjunct between embodied longing and participatory politics becomes clear. Dikaiopolis will not be able to work within the system to create change, it appears. And so when the full presence of Dikaiopolis' body fails to 'count' at the assembly, when established mechanisms for democratic participation fail to adequately offer representation, Dikaiopolis begins to reimagine these mechanisms and this participation.

Once the assembly is called and embassies from abroad appear, we further see the failure of the desiring body to enact social change, as food is used as a dividing force that marks the distance between democracy's ideals and its functioning in Aristophanes' comic fantasy. Once the assembly begins, the herald welcomes a succession of foreign comers—a god who wants to make independent peace with Sparta (later coming to the aid of Dikaiopolis); ambassadors returning from Persia; a

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[83] *Pnyx*: The seat of the Athenian government, a hill overlooking the acropolis where Assembly meetings were held.
[84] Again, the election by lot of the administrators of the assembly and council for the period of one-tenth of a year.

showy, over-dressed Persian missionary telling the Athenians to continue their support of these expensive foreign-policy missions—who turns out to be flanked by effeminate Athenians in disguise; an ambassador from rich Thrace who again shows the Athenians their relative poverty; a group of Odomantian mercenaries. The first set of ambassadors has been eating, quite literally, like kings: "ἐξ ὑαλίνων ἐκπωμάτων καὶ χρυσίδων ἄκρατον οἶνον ἡδύν" "unmixed wine from gold and crystal goblets" (74-5),[85] "ὅλους ἐκ κριβάνου βοῦς" "oven-baked oxen" (85-6),[86] and "ὄρνιν τριπλάσιον Κλεωνύμου" "birds three times the size of a man" (88-89). Their feigned difficulty at stomaching such rich foods only increases Dikaiopolis' rising sense of injustice—he rejoins their ironic "it almost killed us" with a description of watching his fields destroyed after his relocation to Athens (*apollumai*, 70). Through their connection to ambassadors, utopian foods belong to the state, not the citizen. Moreover, these ambassadors' consumption of luxury food is connected to antidemocratic behavior at Athens. The luxurious birds fed to these governmental officials are three time the size of Kleonymous, a citizen famous for being cowardly in military practice, fat in form, and effeminate in his sexual practices; the reference to Kleonymous connects the larger-than-life birds consumed by the ambassadors to a common butt of jokes about Athenian effeminacy and social decay (89). Thus, when these embassies describe oxen being roasted whole, the result is not generative longing

[85] C.f. Starkie: "to drink unmixed wine was a barbarous trait (e.g. of the Celts, Carthaginians, Scythians, Thracians, Iberians and Persians; see Plato, Legg. 637D)" (27).
[86] Cf. Herodotus' description of Persian feasting (1.133.1). Starkie suggests that in these lines Ar. is satirizing Herodotus' descriptions of Persian opulence, as using a *kribanos* oven to bake oxen when it usually bakes bread must be a mockery of Herodotus' exaggeration (30). For *kribanos* as a bread-oven only, see 1123; indeed, in Herodotus, the oven-roasted oxen are roasted in a *kaminos* (Sommerstein n. 87).

but a critique of the standing social structure (one that returns, more pointedly, in Dikaiopolis' exchange with Lamachus in the middle section of the play). This Golden-Age food of utopian proportions does not spread beyond the governmental officials on the bloated payroll, does not enable citizens to participate fully but renders Dikaiopolis without direct political agency. These impossibly lavish foods both demonstrate the clear unfeasibility of a whole-roasted ox and the unfairness of the current hierarchy of appointed "democratic" offices. The over-the-top foods served to the ambassadors, then, represent a negative vision of antidemocracy; a critique of contemporary democracy is launched through the connection of utopian foods with political corruption.

In a telling gnomic exchange, the ambassador apologizes, "οἱ βάρβαροι γὰρ ἄνδρας ἡγοῦνται μόνους τοὺς πλεῖστα δυναμένους καταφαγεῖν καὶ πιεῖν" "The barbarians only consider those who eat and drink a lot real men" (77-8). These barbarians not only eat the most (πλεῖστα) but unmixed wine and the whole cow, foods considered so indulgent as to be blasphemous in Athenian culture. These luxury foods represent a failure of democracy and the threat of its further corruption and degradation by the "softer" cities to which these embassies travel. Thus, Athenian citizenship here, though erotically depraved, as Dikaiopolis counters, is configured against and through this image of foreign gastronomic excess. In sum, these foods do not represent a utopian fantasy toward which citizens aspire but a negative scenario set in foreign lands, a *dystopian* Golden Age.

The explicit contrast between oligarchy and democracy that was ignited in the first encounter with the ambassadors is further established in terms of dining practices

(124-126). The invitation for the ambassadors to eat at the Prytaneion (state-owned dining hall) marks a critique of democratic structural institutions as only appeasing the desires of the elite.[87] The Prytaneion, and its frequent mention throughout the first half of this play, represents public dining as an elite practice in order to burlesque institutions of Athenian democracy.[88] Aristophanes' "insistence in this scene that the affairs of the city are run in an essentially antidemocratic fashion by a small group of high-handed insiders" (Olson n. 124-6) is tracked through food in this passage. Dikaiopolis' lack of agency within this state of affairs–the restriction of his appetites–only focuses his attention on creating political change. Instead of gaping himself, as in his opening monologue, he accuses the other Athenians of gaping (133). There is, between these two scenes, the suggestion that Dikaiopolis will dissent, alone (131).

The mishandling of Dikaiopolis' lunch that follows again marks the inability for the desires of the average citizen to find fulfillment within the current political

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[87] Aristophanes seems particularly fond of the image of the public Prytaneion overtaken by an individual: in *Knights*, the Prytaneion is the home of Demos which is taken over by the sneaky Paphlagonian (Kleon). Public commensal feasting is thus central to Aristophanes' conception of popular rule (cf. *Ekklesiazusae*). Kleon's invitation to be permanently invited to the Prytaneion (*sitesis*), according to *Knights* the first general to receive this honor, thus secures Aristophanes' enmity. Kleon was presumably awarded this honor for his service at Pylos (702, 743-5; Osbourne 162), which Aristophanes satirizes as a theft throughout, paralleling and one-upping Kleon's 'theft' of these accolades to the Sausage-Seller's theft of Kleon's stewed hare (1201). Aristophanes, then.characterizes Kleon's *sitesis* as a major breach of civic ideology— received for his the Prytaneion *should* be the home of the people, a public service for public officials, but is represented by Aristophanes as a corruptible institution. "cf. Knights 280-1, 535, 709, 766, 1404-5" (Sommerstein n.125).

[88] Even if they appear to be historically fairly functional democratic institutions, inviting all envoys equally whereas benefactors could not simply buy their way into a dinner (Osbourne 1981, 156-7). I argue that Aristophanes' stake in representing functional democratic institutions as corruptible stems from an intense interest in both nostalgia and novelty. *Acharnians*, then, does not undercut contemporary 5th century Athens in order to promote the value of a Cimonian, aristocratic, or oligarchic past but to marry those nostalgic ideologies to utopian, forward-thinking ideologies—to resolve these ideological conflicts dramatically. Thus, here, instead of praising existing democratic models of bestowing food upon the people, Dikaiopolis cuts down the institution of the Prytaneion in order to model the process of utopian dissent, imagining radical alternatives to the current state of affairs.

state of affairs. When Dikaiopolis paratragically laments, "οἴμοι τάλας ἀπόλλυμαι, ὑπὸ τῶν Ὀδομάντων τὰ σκόροδα πορθούμενος" "It's all over, the Odomantians pilfered my garlic!" (163-164), his lack of political agency, his silencing at the Pnyx is staged in terms of his lunch.[89] The movement from Dikaiopolis' monologue to silence– the eventual lessening of his free speech and thus democratic participation–is capped off with this comic theft.

To add insult to injury, Theorus remarks that the Thracian Sitalces, repeatedly characterized as barbaric in this scene through his association with the circumsized, Odomantian mercenaries, is so in love with the Athenians (ἐραστὴς ἦν ἀληθὴς 143) that his son, Sadocus, is already craving Athenian blood sausage (146; Thuc. 2.29.4.). That is, though already an Athenian citizen, Sadocus desires to become "more Athenian" through a inclusion in a phratry, a unit of Athenian social and political life based, at least ideologically, on kinship bonds: for their meal at the Dorpia, a day within the Apatouria festival that marks membership in a phratry through a shared meal, candidates would eat blood sausage and other delicacies (Olson 118, Sommerstein 164). To crave such foods means that Sadocus is so established as a citizen that his desires (culinary or sexual) are for Athenian political life. This historical nod to the ritual function of commensal eating, conferring full political

[89] Garlic does indeed seem like a paltry lunch—indeed, Olson notes that Dikaiopolis is saving this garlic for his dinner (174, Olson n. 163). Sommerstein, "Dikaiopolis cannot have brought this with him to eat during a long meeting for 174 shows that he meant to put it into a savory mash, which he could only have prepared at home. He must therefore be assumed to have done some early shopping in the agora before coming to the Pnyx" (A. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Acharnians* 165). That this garlic is not used as a snack or appetizer (as traditionally, Olson n. 163) further marks Dikaiopolis as a "working-class" farmer without access to urban luxury imports (*opsoi*). Starkie: "the point is that, during the present dearth at Athens, Dic. had to buy even garlic for his family or possibly for his own luncheon" (45).

participation at Athens, marks Dikaiopolis' own failure to participate in the political life of his own *polis*.

In the next scene, when divine messenger Amphitheos returns with the "peace treaties" from Sparta, the material exigency of food is again used to undercut utopian thinking for the citizen. In a play on the Greek *spondai*, these treaties are literally libations, skins of wine. Dikaiopolis does not live in a land of undifferentiated plenty; peace does not open up a world of anarchic pleasure but quite the opposite–the first two wines are disgusting. Again, food is judged along a gradient, used to create hierarchies and territories rather than embracing a Golden-Age utopian undifferentiation. The five-year peace treaties smell of naval preparations, the ten-year treaties of the wearing-down of alliances (190-195). Thus, not all food instantiates longing in a way that generates democratic thinking, political participation, or even a kind of generic "willingness" that might be construed as a libertarian political critique. Dikaiopolis' disgust is clear: "αἰβοῖ" (188).[90] These libations mark the foul taste of a short-lived peace treaty much more than they create a tantalizing image of a utopian world of peace.

In Dikaiopolis' famous speech concerning democracy (496-556), food is once again a central image. Here, grain metaphors make explicit the hierarchies embedded within democratic structures, representing the current political system as one of obligation rather than one of liberty and luxury. Thus, when Dikaiopolis (as Aristophanes) quantifies the difference between his current comedy and earlier plays

[90] There is no translation for this Greek onomatopoeia. It is generally recognized as a sound of disgust: "peeee-uw."

for which he was indicted, Dikaiopolis uses a culinary metaphor to make this difference real and concrete–*metics* (resident aliens) are the "civic bran" that, though foreigners present at the Lenaia festival, do not make Aristophanes liable for mocking the city in the presence of foreigners (504-5). By comparing metics to bran, Aristophanes handily explains their combination of insider and outsider status in Athens: they are not a foreign object in the grain, but have nonetheless been winnowed out and are available for sifting: "τοὺς γὰρ μετοίκους ἄχυρα τῶν ἀστῶν λέγω" (Starkie 106; Sommerstein n. 507). Yet again, civic identity is measured through culinary metaphors to root democratic ideology in the concrete and material, setting up a system in which individual liberty or desire is subservient to social classification systems and governmental hierarchies. This is represented dramatically through the use of food as metaphor, as yardstick by which to measure democratic structures. Individual longing is not related to food at all; rather than a vehicle for longing, food is only used to generate distance between the citizen and the state. This dynamic shifts as Dikaiopolis moves the scene from the Pnyx to the house of Euripides and back to the country—his free movement away from governmental structures and governmental officials enables the creative thinking that follows.

Utopian freedom between positive and negative freedoms

In *Acharnians*, the nature of political critique shifts from negative to positive at the moment of dissent. I follow James Liddell's use of John Rawls to examine fourth century oratory here as a guideline for the shift in food imagery onstage. While political scientists write about Athenian democracy in terms both negative (freedom

from, obligation based) and positive (freedom to, liberty based) a full analysis of Athenian democracy encompasses both of these freedoms—for this, Liddell turns to Rawls. I argue—through the work of Frederic Jameson—that *Acharnians* resolves the conflict between these political ideologies (obligation-based versus liberty-based, as well as agrarian-based versus market-based) through the narrative strategies and generic conventions of Old Comedy. The protagonist's turn away from the hassles of a contemporary political situation towards a world of pure imagination, when read as the hinge between a satire of both obligation and liberty based political participation, takes on a distinctly utopian tinge. Aristophanes' poetics of fantasy constitute a rupture of the ludicrous status quo; the connection of this rupture to images of sated desires and abundance without labor situates this gesture within discourses of utopia in the ancient world.[91]

The dramatic temporal and spatial shifts that characterize Aristophanes' dramaturgy frame the act of imagining radical alternatives as an act of utopian thinking, offering these fantasies of the protagonist real dramatic power. Once Dikaiopolis has the *spondai*,[92] he sets up his own rural Dionysia: we have moved from the space of political constraint to a festive atmosphere marked by individual freedoms. *Acharnians* features a long speech by Dikaiopolis in which he speaks about the city, about justice (496-556); moreover, Dikaiopolis assumes the voice of the poet/producer in at this moment (502-3), when he claims that Kleon has taken "him"

[91] Cf. Ruffell, "The World Turned Upside Down: Utopia and Utopianism in the Fragments of Old Comedy"; Ruffell, *Politics and Anti-Realism in Athenian Old Comedy*; H. C. Baldry, "The Idler's Paradise in Attic Comedy"; H. C Baldry "Ancient Utopias"; H. C. Baldry, "Who Invented the Golden Age?"

[92] A play on words in the Greek, meaning both 'libation' and 'peace treaty'.

to court for slander. I consider the factual accuracy of these lines and the question of whether they refer to Aristophanes himself or his former producer irrelevant: I merely note the discursive similarity between this speech and that of the parabasis. Thus, I refer to both Dikaiopolis' metatheatrical speech and the proper parabasis that follows as part of the same dramatic unit.

In Dikaiopolis' long comic monologue just prior to the parabasis, we observe the slippage between food as regulatory metaphor and food as object of utopian longing. After describing a fanciful account of the beginning of the war, the lengthy list of war preparations escalates into feasting and violence. In this comic list, the movement from political order (the beginnings of war) to wine-drenched disorder (a fight after a feast) encapsulates the trajectory of the play as a whole:

> ἦν δ᾽ ἂν ἡ πόλις πλέα
> θορύβου στρατιωτῶν, περὶ τριηράρχου βοῆς,
> μισθοῦ διδομένου, παλλαδίων χρυσουμένων,
> στοᾶς στεναχούσης, σιτίων μετρουμένων,
> ἀσκῶν, τροπωτήρων, κάδους ὠνουμένων,
> σκορόδων, ἐλαῶν, κρομμύων ἐν δικτύοις,
> στεφάνων, τριχίδων, αὐλητρίδων, ὑπωπίων:
> τὸ νεώριον δ᾽ αὖ κωπέων πλατουμένων,
> τύλων ψοφούντων, θαλαμιῶν τροπουμένων,
> αὐλῶν, κελευστῶν, νιγλάρων, συριγμάτων.
> The city would be filled with shouting soldiers, the clamor for the skippers, with pay distributed, with figureheads being gilded, with noisy markets, rations being rationed, with wallets, oarloops, people buying jars, with garlic, olives, onions packed in nets, with crowns, anchovies, dancing girls, black eyes, with the dockyard full of oarspars being planed and dowelpins hammered, oarports being drilled, with pipes and bosuns, whistles and toodle-oo. (545-553) (Henderson)

Here, "pay dispersed and rations being rationed" (547-8) moves to a list of military provisions ("garlic, olives, preserved onions, anchovies" [550-1]) becomes a sendoff party in the image of a raucous symposium, complete "dancing girls and black eyes"

(551). Aristophanes is moving, in other words, from culinary discourses that are used to measure the failing of democratic structures–discourses that leave no room for food to signify pleasure–to culinary discourses in which food ignites longing that is active, personal, even anarchic.[93] The regulated behavior and desires of the soldier give way to the transgression of rules at a symposium. Here an imagined wartime effort, an outpouring of civic obligation, becomes a manifestation of individual liberty through the enumeration of a succession of foods: the list builds with each additional item, creating and escalating this scene by mere accumulation.

In a way, this desire-based description of wartime undoes a common argument about Aristophanes' utopian descriptions of peace. Kenneth Reckford writes of Aristophanic lists more generally, "the accumulation of images, their sensual profusion and confusion, invokes the overwhelming beauty and richness [of peace in *Peace*]... This also reflects a basic comic axiom of Aristophanes, that all good things are related to all other good things" (6). In this scene, however, good things come out of *bad things*–from war preparations comes a night of feasting, from the stifling of a citizen's political participation comes a fantastic, liberatory gesture. In this moment only, Dikaiopolis dreams of a whole city based upon individual longing–buying olives, watching dancing girls.

After this speech, Dikaiopolis offers an explicit critique of paid general (*strategos*) Lamachus (595-606). The much-analyzed final scene of *Acharnians*

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[93] Again, I argue for the usefulness of the work of Michael Foucault to discussions of desire in Aristophanes. On the customary presence of flute girls with the symposium, cf. Pütz 10. On the association of komastic celebration with black eyes in particular, cf. Starkie 115.

features Dikaiopolis and a military general, Lamachus, trading one-liners about going to war versus going to a party—Dikaiopolis is making a picnic basket while Lamachus readies his MREs.[94] In the final scene, the critique of Lamachus lies in the dramatic act of juxtaposition, the message inhering in Aristophanes' dramaturgy of closely-paired couplets, not in the character voicing lengthy or complex opinions. Conversely, at *this* moment, Dikaiopolis himself can speak explicitly about the city, can politically dissent–even in his metatheatrical disguise, even, "in a comedy" (499).[95] Here, Dikaiopolis directly lambasts Lamachus' invocation of democracy; he is not merely compared to Lamachus in a demonstration of the benefits of peacetime behavior. Dikaiopolis' critique is explicit and pointed: what Lamachus calls democracy, Dikaiopolis boldly claims to be purely corruption. This reclaiming of corrupt electoral politics by an average citizen is both a clear and comedic representation of dissent against a system in which political structures have portrayed as having overtaken foundational premises of democracy.

The process of election (Lamachus: "ἐχειροτόνησαν γάρ με" "they elected me") marks the citizen body as feather-brained (Dikaiopolis: "κόκκυγές γε τρεῖς" "by three cuckoos") (598-599); a process intended to secure democratic representation has clearly miscarried as Lamachus has not even been elected by a quorum of cuckoos (Olson n. 599).[96] This moment of explicit verbal critique forms the hinge between the

[94] MacDowell, "The Nature of Aristophanes' Akharnians"; A. M. Bowie; McGlew: for instance, all analyze this set-piece.
[95] Indeed, Foley notes that the Telephus disguise trope in fact prepares the audience to diverge from the opinion of the chorus in the second half of the play, as the chorus is duped by the disguise whereas the audience is not (Foley).
[96] The explicit questioning of Lamachus' gaining power may have to do with the anachronism of the

world of this play as corrupt Athens and the world of this play as Dikaiopolis' fantasy: thus, it is in this particular scene that longing and disgust become terms with real ability to remake the image of the city. Dikaiopolis continues: "ταῦτ' οὖν ἐγὼ βδελυττόμενος ἐσπεισάμην, ὁρῶν πολιοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας ἐν ταῖς τάξεσιν, νεανίας δ' οἵους σὺ διαδεδρακότας," "being disgusted by these things I made peace, seeing grey-haired men in the army and young men like you in cozy government jobs" (599-601). Because hardworking agrarians have not enjoyed luxury positions abroad in "soft cities", Lamachus' "Oh, democracy!" (618) is nothing but a sham, as this "democracy" cannot incorporate the longings of the citizen. When Dikaiopolis points to the laboring class that has not seen luxurious Persian cities like Ectabana or Choas, he brings back the images of the ambassadors parodied in the first episode of the play; he now explicitly offers a critique of the electoral system and validates his own longing for the kind of foods the ambassadors enjoy.

By locating his most explicit critique of democratic structure in the moment of creative, utopian thinking (the moment at which Dikaiopolis prepares to live in his separate peace)–by linking dissent with longing, by foregrounding the political agency of a character who is able to imagine alternate political arrangements–Aristophanes in fact places his own creative project at the heart of Athenian political discourse. He argues, then, that democracy needs not specific sets of reforms but rather a complex

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line: in the winter of 425, Lamachus was not yet general. Sommerstein offers two alternatives for this problem—either the line is borrowed from Telephus, referring originally to Achilles, or he is "awarding himself a position in advance" (A. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Acharnians*). I would add that the fact that Lamachus has not been elected yet, but insists that he has gained his power from election functions as a kind of "*It's a Wonderful Life* fast-forward," placing the choice of scenarios in the hands of the audience, who easily see how the state of affairs onstage could be reversed through the process of voting.

reimagining. A reading of *Acharnians* that leans on the moment of utopian thinking as a moment of democratic dissent might provide evidence against arguments that Aristophanes' political comedy did not succeed;[97] if Aristophanes' political project is essentially valorizing agential, utopian thinking on the part of the average citizen, the re-election of Kleon after Aristophanes' lambasting (in a famous example) is hardly evidence of failure. The contagious moment of dissent–first for Dikaiopolis, then echoed in the chorus–allows Aristophanes to generate a political view that need not offer concrete policy suggestions to effect change. To reiterate my argument about comedy and political ideology, Aristophanes is not writing about politics in this parabasis–he is writing politics by imagining other worlds and other ways for citizens to participate, by focusing intently on the power of election and the validity of individual longing to eat well.

In this central section of the play, the audience's allegiance is so firmly with Dikaiopolis that even as Lamachus cries out on behalf of the city, "Oh, Democracy!," both Dikaiopolis and the chorus of Acharnians refute Lamachus' ability to speak for democracy. That is, in this short exchange with Lamachus, Dikaiopolis' nascent critique from the scene at the Pnyx becomes clear: what has been called democracy is democratic only in name, because it cannot fully account for the participation of its individual constituents. This shift occurs alongside a discursive shift within the discussion of food from one in which food is a metric that benchmarks political

[97] E.g. that the ad hominem attacks against Kleon in *Knights* failed to prevent Kleon's re-election the following year.

structures to one in which food satisfies the protagonist's personal pleasure with negative consequences for his social world.

In the parabasis, the chorus shares in this discursive shift with Dikaiopolis. They mock flatterers of the city and praise dissent as democratic:

> φησὶν δ᾽ εἶναι πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν ἄξιος ὑμῖν ὁ ποιητής,
> παύσας ὑμᾶς ξενικοῖσι λόγοις μὴ λίαν ἐξαπατᾶσθαι,
> μήθ᾽ ἥδεσθαι θωπευομένους, μήτ᾽ εἶναι χαυνοπολίτας.
> πρότερον δ᾽ ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν πόλεων οἱ πρέσβεις ἐξαπατῶντες
> πρῶτον μὲν ἰοστεφάνους ἐκάλουν: κἀπειδὴ τοῦτό τις εἴποι,
> εὐθὺς διὰ τοὺς στεφάνους ἐπ᾽ ἄκρων τῶν πυγιδίων ἐκάθησθε.
> εἰ δέ τις ὑμᾶς ὑποθωπεύσας λιπαρὰς καλέσειεν Ἀθήνας,
> ηὕρετο πᾶν ἂν διὰ τὰς λιπαράς, ἀφύων τιμὴν περιάψας.
> First, he has stopped you from being taken in too easily by foreigners and taking joy in flattery and being sucker-citizens. When ambassadors from allied cities used to come to hoodwink you, they'd start by calling you "violet-crowned" and every time they called you that at once that little word would get you sitting on your buttock-tips. And if in buttering you up some speaker said that Athens "gleams," you'd give him anything he asked, for honoring you like mere sardines. For doing that our poet merits many things, for showing what democracy meant to the people of the allied states. (635-645) (Henderson)

The chorus explicitly refers to Aristophanes' project as making the city less susceptible to flattery–and by stopping individual citizens from being "suckers" (χαυνοπολίτας) (635). Again, the imagery of Athenian's political susceptibility is explicitly pathic–Aristophanes clearly sees his role as preventing antidemocratic gaping by providing an alternative model of political participation: non-passive, agential dissent, utopian thinking. The reaffirmation of this insult ("suckers"/"gapers"), one that is both erotic and culinary,[98] within the parabasis marks

[98] Erotic in association with pathic sexual behavior (Henderson, *The Maculate Muse* 211); culinary in the connection to slackjawed amazement (Knights 651 e.g.; Worman 90–1). The connection between the mouth and anus as points of bodily permeability is noted by Bakhtin: "Next to the bowels and the genital organs is the mouth, through which enters the world to be swallowed up. And next is the anus. All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines

the dangers of a desire-based political system: dangers that will be dramatized in the second half of the play. Athenians that are aroused by flattery (sitting up on their buttock-tips), or hungry for it (gaping), lose their civic identity. Thus, in the parabasis, Aristophanic dissent is democratic by definition– individual utopian thinking, not institutional power nor all-consuming longing, provides a model for the citizen's full political participation.

Aristophanes, then, offers a vision of democracy in which longing must be limited in order to remain generative. He comically reduces Pindar's patriotic axioms ("glistening Athens") to the praise of sardines, insulting those who would call the city shining (639).[99] Aristophanes limits the praise of Athens in order to foster, perhaps paradoxically, individual liberty. Through the materiality of this culinary metaphor, Dikaiopolis' ideas are able to spread beyond his own bodily longing and be shared by the chorus: the comparison of Athens to an oily sardine makes visceral Dikaiopolis' critique. As the experience of food proves to be universal within this dramatic world (foods have the same weight and value for all characters), Aristophanes' political critique of demagoguery is transmitted from character to character through culinary images.

The chorus, in turn, characterize this moment in the play as one of expansive, generative culinary longing. The chorus sings,

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between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome" (Bakhtin 317).

[99] I take this direct mockery of images from archaic poetry as further evidence against analysis of Aristophanes' work as more firmly located within an aesthetic poetic tradition than within its historical context. That is, the way in which Aristophanes cites and mocks Pindar's metaphors seems to go against arguments such as Lowell Edmunds in "Kleon, *Knights*, and Aristophanes' Politics" in which he claims that the political/ideological critique of Kleon that unifies *Knights* is rooted in metaphors from archaic poetry.

> οἷον ἐξ ἀνθράκων πρινίνων φέψαλος ἀνήλατ᾽ ἐρεθιζόμενος οὐρίᾳ
> ῥιπίδι, ἂν ἐπανθρακίδες ὦσι παρακείμεναι, οἱ δὲ Θασίαν ἀνακυκῶσι
> λιπαράμπυκα, οἱ δὲ μάττωσιν, οὕτω σοβαρὸν ἐλθὲ μέλος ἔντονον
> ἀγροικότερον ὡς ἐμὲ λαβοῦσα τὸν δημότην.
> like a spark that leaps aloft from oaken coals when roused by the
> bellow's favoring wind, and meat for the grill lies by, and cooks stir up
> fine relish agleam with pickle-jewels and knead the dough: this way
> come, sing a song rousing, ardent, rustic, to us your deme compatriots.
> (665-675)

This image connects Dikaiopolis' inventive rhetoric with the agrarian values associated with the Acharnians, and the chorus of the Acharnians with the entire assembled Athenian audience. Dikaiopolis' direct critiques of demagogues and overpaid elected officials is transformed into a folk song by the older chorus of rural Acharnians—transformed through the affective comparison with food. Here, communality and commensality are engaged through a culinary metaphor–civic pride and association with "deme compatriots" is ignited just as meat on a grill. Thus, Dikaiopolis' political critiques are linked with agrarian culinary values as the chorus begins the parabasis.

In his essay on the *Acharnians* parabasis, A. M. Bowie argues that the themes of the parabasis highlight themes of violence against the citizen in the play as a whole (Bowie); I argue that while the play does switch from a world of violence to a world of pleasure, the fact that this transition occurs through desiring body of the protagonist does not render Aristophanes' political message inert but quite the opposite. Through a singular desiring voice, through the power of Dikaiopolis' thinking-otherwise, a social chance toward better living is possible, even if the utopia based on Dikaiopolis' private desire fails to live up to the promise of the moment of contagious utopian thinking. Bowie notes that Dikaiopolis is "grossly self-regarding" (Bowie 40): however, he

mobilizes this reading into an analysis that the play lacks a “serious” political commentary about Athenian politics that spreads beyond the limited interest of one citizen. I argue that the way in which Dikaiopolis' utopian thinking blooms into a tyranny of the appetites is precisely Aristophanes' political commentary.

Utopia and the failure of democracy

The next scene opens on Dikaiopolis' new market (720). In a carnivalesque comic inversion, both this new market and the Athenian agora are characterized as centering around the exercise of control rather than the agency and freedom of the buyer. The old market was marked by hierarchical compunction–the threat of the vermillioned rope herding citizens into the assembly, the tyranny of the voice of the seller, Mr. Buy. The new market is characterized by the constant threat of physical torment at the hands of Dikaiopolis. In this new political mode, Dikaiopolis appoints the threat of pain as market commissioner, “ἀγορανόμους δὲ τῆς ἀγορᾶς καθίσταμαι τρεῖς τοὺς λαχόντας τούσδ᾽ ἱμάντας ἐκ Λεπρῶν” “I appoint as market commissioners these three leather whipping straps, from Roughville.” (724-4). Dikaiopolis' new polis trades an economy of blows–this coinage foregrounds the pleasures and pains of the body. The new city is in many ways the direct inverse of the “democratic” state at the top of the play, but the currency in Dikaiopolis’ utopia is the embodied experience of longing. As Douglas Olson comments, “Dikaiopolis' regulations are on analogy with those from the real agora” (258); although food here is used to stage the fulfillment or unfulfillment of citizen longing (rather than push and pull against state structures), the overall effect is the same–food is used to show the ways in which the hierarchies of the agora are reproduced. That is, whereas food in the

first half of the play creates a dystopian vision of antidemocratic hierarchies, in the second half of the play, food is used to create a vision of tyrannical desire.

Thus, Aristophanic comedy is not the eruption of madness within a conservative Athenian state but in fact the comedic representation of the move from a conservative state of affairs to a moment of freedom and dissent to a version of the first hierarchy. Within *Acharnians*, the innate tensions between a political system characterized by the repression of citizen longing and a political system characterized by the total satiation of citizen longing are resolved through Aristophanes' parallel and ludicrous parodies of both, his 'fantastical' 'un-unified' dramaturgy itself. [100]

In this new world, just as before, food represents a mercantile quantum that measures the political participation of characters on stage. Whereas previously, food showed the failure of democracy to fulfill the longings of the average citizen, here, food is used to show the failure of one individual's satisfied longings to create a better life for others.[101] Dikaiopolis wants to buy piglets who are figured as the prostituted

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[100] As noted previously, this 'definition' of democracy comes not from a historical political record but Aristophanes' comic imagination. As Olson notes, "the image presented of the Athenian state in Acharnians is thus so wildly exaggerated and the poet's call for radical action to address supposedly systematic problems so utterly lacking in specifics that, were one to take the political argument implicit in this text seriously, one would have little choice but to condemn the play as irresponsible and ultimately unconstructive" (Olson 1). I contend that it is precisely the wild exaggeration of the first and last sections of the play and the untenable, radical breach of dramatic cohesion in the central section that marks Aristophanes' intervention as *utopian*. This play is not an 'irresponsible' set of real policy suggestions but a dramatic solution to the troubling ideological relationship of personal pleasure to political participation: a dramatic solution marked by fantasy and rupture.

[101] This argument relies on two implicit tenets: first, that a utopia is not a utopia if it is not shared. Extreme hierarchy is characteristic of a dystopian world (e.g. the social classification systems in much 20th c. dystopian science fiction: *Brave New World, The Handmaid's Tale* and film: *Metropolis, Blade Runner*). *Acharnians* does not go so far as to describe in detail a caste system, but I read the episodes as systematically disempowering all who come to trade at Dikaiopolis' market (or, in the case of the Bridesmaid, disempowering women as a group as too politically insignificant to contend with—'the war is not about them'). In this way, *Acharnians* echoes *Birds*, in which the episodes outline the rising power of an individual and the exclusion of all suppliants from feasting. Other scholars to note

daughters of a Megarian trader, playing on the Greek obscenity *χοῖρος,* the word for piglet used to degradingly describe the shaved female genitals—a more offensive iteration of the English equivalent, "pussy" (719-835; Henderson 1975, 8-9, 131-132). Thus, the first scene of trading has serious resonance as the audience realizes that Dikaiopolis' interest in culinary dainties will not create a utopian free exchange of goods for all; instead, this scene highlights, as before, the relationship between the embargo against Megarian goods and the human suffering as a result of the Peloponnesian war. The barter—in which these girls oink like pigs, gobble up sweets tossed before them—is uncomfortable, and as their father leaves empty-handed, the proliferation of longing that characterized the middle section of the play has ended.

Of course, the dramatic exclusion of Megarians from Dikaiopolis' market does consolidate Athenian identity in a 'nationalistic' gesture. However, rather than a patriotic scene which curries the audience's favor, I argue that Dikaiopolis' clear discomfort with the age of these girls highlights the inappropriateness and discomfort of this scene, as even Dikaiopolis feels reservations about the sexual availability of these girls. He banters with the Megarian trader about the age of the girls for a full twenty lines (781-797):

> M: In five years she'll look just like her mother...
> D: but she has no tail!
> M: Well, she is young…

Dikaiopolis' social isolation at the end of the play and the negative aspects of this fantastic feast include Dover, Foley, Bowie. The second implicit tenet of this argument is that the audience never watches one character but constantly weighs and reexamines the power relations on stage. Thus, charting this narrative as one of only Dikaiopolis' disempowerment at the Assembly to feasting at the Anthesteria allows more cohesion of character and plot than I suspect the play offers. Instead I offer a reading based on a succession of scenarios in which the protagonist becomes less and less sympathetic as he gains more and more mastery over proxies for the audience on stage.

D: Is she weaned? (783-7)

Thus, Dikaiopolis' transition from ethical skepticism to sexual fulfillment is one in which the audience's implicit agreement at the beginning of the scene transitions to (comic) discomfort. The audience's discomfort is expanded by the joke that the Megarian feels that he has been treated fairly and wishes that he could prostitute his wife and mother (816-17)! Thus, just because this scene marks one in which the protagonist grows more comfortable and the audience becomes less comfortable does not detract from but in fact creates a comic atmosphere. *The Office* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, to take contemporary examples, exploit this same model to create successful comedies based on audience discomfort.

The satiety of Dikaiopolis' culinary desires marks the conversion of peoples into foods–the same way that a corrupted political state reduces Athenians to sardines (*λιπαρός*)—but with terrifying conclusions for the punch-line daughters. Their initial refusal to comply, "οὐ χρῆσθα; σιγῇς ὦ κάκιστ᾽ ἀπολουμένα;" "you won't [oink]? Make a sound, you god-damned wretch" (777), underscores the threat of physical violence that oils all social exchanges within Dikaiopolis' new order. The staged and palpable anxiety of the daughters to be converted into food, to be felt up as livestock at market, complicates the nature of longing in this scene. These girls, dressed as livestock and forced to eat erotically, create an image of consumption that is hardly generative.

By replacing his own brand of political humor (which I characterize as utopian thinking on the part of an average citizen) with Megarian potty humor, Aristophanes moves from a series of serious political critiques to a "carnival of genres" (Platter 88;

Reckford 168): he moves back towards scatology and satire, punning euphemisms such as the extended play on *choiros* and other food related double-entendres (chickpeas, dried figs, spit-roasting). Thus, I read framing the prostitution of foreigners during wartime not a political critique for Aristophanes but, paradoxically, good fun. By showing the inability for Megarian scatalogical humor to create political change within the world of this play, Aristophanes undergirds his own comic project and undercuts the political power of other discourses; within the world of his play, those scenes that deploy competing ways-of-speaking highlight the inability for characters to make change within a political structure. Just as Dikaiopolis' embodied discourse could not effect change within the strictures of the assembly; the Megarian cannot, even by prostituting his daughters and engaging Dikaiopolis' sexual-culinary longing, enjoy material gains within Dikaiopolis' desire-based system: he comes away only with salt and garlic. Only dissent, utopian thinking, marks a discursive rupture and is able to change the world of the play—and by extension, a definition of political life. In this way, not only the Megarian as a character but Megarian-ness, Megarian lowbrow comedy, proves to lack power within Dikaiopolis' market, in the same way that Dikaiopolis' embodied discourse had no space within democracy. Power is given only to those that imagine a new space, a new world, a new way for themselves to participate. Thus, the sycophant Nicharchus interjects—only briefly, before Dikaiopolis regains the upper hand— an Athenian estimation of the value of Megarian speech— "κλάων μεγαριεῖς" "you'll howl in Megarian" (822). Aristophanes here coins the verb *μεγαριεῖς* as its own punishment—threatening that someone speak Megarian is tantamount to a curse.

And the end of this play, Dikaiopolis repeatedly asserts the extent to which his embodied desires (so carefully elaborated in the first section of the play and mutated into political critique around the parabasis) have been satiated. When compared with the Boeotian who enters, Dikaiopolis has clearly transcended his initial rusticity and simple tastes; the Boeotian is no starving buffoon like the Megarian, and yet Dikaiopolis still manages to swindle him and gain the upper hand. The Boeotian on the one hand still has access to luxury foods like fowl and eels while the Athenians were told repeatedly by Pericles to value agriculture and luxury foods less;[102] on the other hand, in this episode the Boeotian is figured as rustic and unrefined compared to Dikaiopolis. Thus, Dikaiopolis bests not only a starving Megarian but is able to send a wealthy trader (quite the opposite of an average Athenian) away packing—Dikaiopolis' dominance is all the greater, his power as an individual transformed into power traditionally wielded by a city-state.

The Boeotian is accompanied by rustic pipers while Dikaiopolis enjoys a life of increasing leisure—these pipers have so irritated the Boeotian that when they ask for his next request, the Boeotian counters, "τοῖς ὀστίνοις φυσῆτε τὸν πρωκτὸν κυνός" "why don't you play '[go look up] a dog's asshole'?" (863). On the one hand, this could be a request for a vulgar song (mentioned by schol. *Eccl*., 255: Sommerstein n. 863). In another reading (that I favor), "a dog's asshole" is short-hand for a compressed threat to the pipers: "put it where the sun don't shine"; the pipers

[102] "This [naval] power of yours is something in an altogether different category from all the advantages of houses or of cultivated land. You may think that when you lose them you have suffered a great loss, but in fact you should not take things so hardly… they are no more to be valued than gardens or other elegances that go with wealth" (Thuc.ii. 62, trans. Warner)

certainly seem to irritate Dikaiopolis, who threatens them in turn, likening them to droning bees and telling them in no uncertain terms to buzz off. In either case, the Boeotian pipers are performed as irritating purveyors of folk music. So, too, is the Boeotian degraded below Dikaiopolis when he refers to his *tulan*—his callus from carrying goods for import. Thus, one could easily imagine a disparity between the luxury goods that the Boeotian is selling and the merchant's own comportment in this scene. [103]

Moreover, items considered to be a luxury in Boeotia are mocked by Dikaiopolis, lowering the social status of these items within the world of the play despite the fact that Boeotia indeed had greater freedom and access to luxury goods during the Archidamian war. Thus, the Boeotian is κολλικοφάγος: an eater of *kollix*, a delicacy in Boeotia but slave food at Athens (Sommerstein n.872). The mockery of the Boeotian's culinary pretentions—which to the audience must have been real and enticing enough—within what for Dikaiopolis is utopian space marks the increasing distance between the fantasy world that Dikaiopolis has set out to create and its implementation in the play. Thus, although Dikaiopolis' desires become sated and he gains power, this distance is measured through the thwarted desires and diminishing power of his interlocuters; here the audience becomes aware that Dikaiopolis' rapid ascent to leisure and comfort does not enable the Golden Age vision of agricultural plenty without labor suggested by the beginning of the play.

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[103] Similarly, Alan Sommerstein takes the Boeotian's refusal of Athenian pottery on the grounds that "we have it at home, and lots of it" as "designed to show Boeotian stupidity, in ignoring the generally acknowledged superior quality of Athenian pottery" (n. 902).

Thus, much as the mockery of Megarian poverty occurs condescendingly through the image of the prostituted daughters as pigs, Dikaiopolis mocks the Boeotian's social standing not from below, to use satire to create change (the kind of humor which Dikaiopolis employs when he is allied with and perhaps even among the audience),[104] but from above, as a bully. Thus, it is all the more ironic given that the Boeotian's clear wealth and access to luxury foods does not offer him agency in the world of the play; Dikaiopolis' investment in free trade is not connected democratic practices but their opposite, the consolidation of individual power.

Food, in this play, then, signifies only the failure of democracy. Only the unfulfilled longing for food has the ability to create a field of dissent, of open political critique. The satiation of longing, such as Dikaiopolis' extremely funny paratragic reunion scene with a luxury import, a Copaic eel, only undergirds the hierarchical difference between Dikaiopolis and the Boeotian: a complete overturning before the hungry eyes of the audience, who know well that Boeotians have access to such delicacies as eel where they still do not as a result of the Megarian embargo. The inclusion of difference within Dikaiopolis' fantasy–and the constant affirmation of hierarchy by comic beatings and starving interlopers–marks a failure for Dikaiopolis' individual liberty to satisfactorily model a utopia.

And so when Dikaiopolis offers the Boeotian a trade, luxury foods for an Athenian informer, it marks a direct parallel to the earlier mockery of complex market systems at the top of the play; this burlesque of a utopian economy stages the

[104] As Slater elegantly traces in his chapter on *Acharnians* in *Spectator Politics* (2002).

completion of democracy's inversion. The Boeotian's prize, Nicharchus the informer, does not proliferate pleasure but only spreads Athenian governmental corruption outward. In Aristophanes' Athens, food is a commodity that marks the failings of democracy; it is the axis along which hierarchies are confirmed and established. In Dikaiopolis' utopia, he recreates these same structures: luxury food is exchanged directly for representatives of political corruption.

By trading cooking equipment with the Boeotian, Dikaiopolis prepares him to use these mechanisms to spread the corruption associated with democracy in Aristophanes: "κρατὴρ κακῶν, τριπτὴρ δικῶν, φαίνειν ὑπευθύνους λυχνοῦχος καὶ κύλιξ καὶ πράγματ᾽ ἐγκυκᾶσθαι" "a mixing bowl for evil, a mortar for lawsuits, a lamp to expose officials, a shaker to stir up trouble." (936-939).[105] The cleanness of this social inversion forecloses the possibility of restructuring a state to include its citizens more fully; these items are used not to enable others to eat well, to enjoy the fruits of liberty, but to share in Athenians' civic obligations.

The image of a symposium *krater* used to spread Athenian political corruption compresses individual liberty and civic obligation within a single image, creating a dramatic solution to the ideological conflict between defining political life by the liberty and pleasure of the symposium or defining it by the participation in democratic institutions. This "mortar of lawsuits", then, represents a closed circuit that can only be broken by an imaginative comic rupture. Given symposiastic equipment that can be

[105] Cf. *Peace*, 1210-1255; *Birds* 358-362. Aristophanes seems particularly interested in doubling cooking and military equipment in order to parallel discourses of personal pleasure and civic obligation: see, indeed, the final scene of *Acharnians.*

used only to experience the negative impact of governmental corruption, the Boeotian cannot make a joke, dissent, cannot imagine an alternate order. That is, the lack of agency of all characters but Dikaiopolis at the end of the play both parallels Dikaiopolis' own lack of liberty at the beginning of the play and underscores the importance of the central episodes and parabasis of the play as a space to voice actual critique, to imagine a utopian politics, "to speak of democracy in a comedy" (499).

Dikaiopolis' individual liberty is clearly unable to create a field of political participation for others. He taunts the chorus, "τί δῆτ' ἐπειδὰν τὰς κίχλας ὀπτωμένας ἴδητε" "wait until you see the thrushes being cooked" (1010), despite the massive amount of food props on stage at the end of Acharnians, it is out of reach. Just as the delicious food being cooked at the end of the play is diagetically out of reach of the audience for whom it is both visible and unavailable, so too is the food onstage held constantly out of reach of the chorus, the Megarian, Boetian, and Dercetes.[106] I repeat again the importance of the shifting allegiance of the audience in the second half of *Acharnians*—once Dikaiopolis has fantastical access to foods not available in contemporary Athens, I argue that the audience is more closely aligned in their interests with the thwarted chorus and episodic interlopers than the protagonist of the play.

And so the chorus complains that this representation of food without fulfillment will be the end of them, "ἀποκτενεῖς λιμῷ 'μὲ καὶ τοὺς γείτονας κνίσῃ τε καὶ φωνῇ τοιαῦτα λάσκων" "I'll die of hunger from the smells" (1044-6). The

[106] Even, perhaps, of Dikaiopolis himself, who spends more time defending his feast from bomolochic intruders than enjoying it.

extended descriptions of cooking, of honey poured on sausages, of cuttlefish browning, builds the chorus' longing in real time. They complain repeatedly of being at the site of food preparation without the satisfaction of eating, "ζηλῶ σε τῆς εὐβουλίας, μᾶλλον δὲ τῆς εὐωχίας ἄνθρωπε τῆς παρούσης" "I am jealous of your good planning— no, more jealous of the feast you have in here" (1008). Their active and increasing complaints about their own hunger surely mimic those of the attendant audience. The end of this play, then, is marked by no sense of symposiastic fulfillment for anyone but Dikaiopolis–his reordered political model is not a pointed critique of democracy but its direct and impotent inversion in the form of a symposium-for-one. Food creates a complex web of identifications wherein the audience identifies with the hungry character–where Dikaiopolis as hungry dissenter enables the active and pointed critique of the parabasis, his satiated longing links the audience onstage to the other spectating characters looking hungrily to Dikaiopolis' selfish feast (the Megarian, Boetian, Lamachus). This scene, then, essentially confirms the audience's passivity and encourages them, unlike the hungry characters onstage, to find other means to find satisfaction, as they have witnessed Dikaiopolis himself do.[107]

[107] Here I note that all accounts of food in *Acharnians* stress its connection to the peace-time benefits of agriculture. As Aristophanes links food onstage with a celebration of peace (Pu□tz 2007, Wilkins 2000) and represents food with tantalizing visual artistry onstage (English 2007), one could argue that Aristophanes is manipulating the desires of the audience in order to persuade them towards his political agenda: a vote for peace with Sparta. I contend that this *specific* debate over Aristophanes' personal stance on the war is in fact merely emblematic of a larger poetic project that posits utopian fantasy as both a dramatic strategy and an alternative political ideology to those political ideologies of civic obligation and individual liberty that he satirizes. That is, I do not disagree that aestheticizing agriculture might mark this as a plea for peace, but I push this argument to make broader claims about the political unconscious of Aristophanes' poetics of culinary fantasy.

Dikaiopolis' delicious and unshared meal (1000-1017) extends to other civic institutions in which fellow citizens have no stake. Dikaiopolis' condescending advice for Dercetes—"κλᾶε πρὸς τοὺς Πιττάλου" (1032), in Jeffrey Henderson's excellent translation, "bring yours tears to Medicare"—is yet another reminder that Dikaiopolis' utopia is not public space, is not a model for a more democratic Athens. I argue that the rejection of Derketes, a farmer affected severely by Pericles' war strategy, marks Dikaiopolis' total conversion from an Athenian every-man to a powerful dictator. As Derketes leaves wailing, Dikaiopolis moves on to more important matters: cooking. Yet, the chorus picks up on the mistreatment of Derketes, musing on their position: "ἀνὴρ ἀνηύρηκέν τι ταῖς σπονδαῖσιν ἡδύ, κοὐκ ἔοικεν οὐδενὶ μεταδώσειν…ἥκουσας ὀρθιασμάτων;" "The man has discovered something sweet with his treaties, but it seems like he doesn't want to share with anybody… do you hear how loud and commanding his voice is?" (1037-1041). The chorus' role at the end of the play is in no way clearly positive and supportive of Dikaiopolis' situation.

Indeed, I argue that chorus, at the end of the play, embraces the power of thwarted longing. They recognize that the fulfillment of Dikaiopolis' individual longing creates only a parodic world of individual fantasy; they punitively yearn for an unfulfilled longing that would make a better citizen:

> δεόμενον, ἡ δ' ὠπτημένη / σίζουσα πάραλος ἐπὶ τραπέζῃ κειμένη / ὀκέλλοι: κᾆτα μέλλοντος / λαβεῖν αὐτοῦ κύων / ἁρπάσασα φεύγοι.
> I want to live to see the day when squid is what he craves, and there it is, well-cooked and hot, come safely through the waves and making a port at his tableside, and as he fills his tray, I pray a dog will snap it up and carry it away! (1156-60)

This final wish of the chorus is both typical Aristophanic joke and an encapsulation of the entire message of the play. The build-up of the joke–the squid's journey from seaside to table, the description of cooking–this description draws out both the audience's titillation by luxury food and the anticipation of the punchline of the joke. The culmination, then, that a dog will eat the squid and the bureaucrat Antimachus will experience hunger, points precisely to the importance of unfulfilled longing for generating alternative political structures. It is only in such a state of hunger that the chorus can return to a more equal state of affairs; only while hungry can Dikaiopolis imagine inventive alternatives, tap into his culinary longing and politically dissent.

The very last lines of the play, in which Dikaiopolis is explicitly contrasted with Lamachus and the joys of peace contrasted with the pains of war, therefore does not draw this contrast in order to privilege Dikaiopolis' world over that of Lamachus, but to show how ludicrous *both* are. One could read this final scene as an inconclusive *agon* between defining political participation as Lamachus' civic obligation and Dikaiopolis' embrace of liberty.[108] And so despite the fact that both utopian liberty and a functioning democracy are subject to tireless satire, Aristophanes never delegitimizes the longing for food. Food itself is linked to excessive, antidemocratic behavior, but unfulfilled longing is shown within the structure of the play to unite these contradictory modes of political participation and force new ways of thinking and forms of citizenship. In *Acharnians*, daydreaming about dinner is tantamount to dreaming of a better world.

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[108] Thanks to Tony Edwards for this observation (personal communication 11/13/12).

Chapter Three: Regressive Temporal Logic of Paula Deen's Southern-Fried Nostalgia and the Seoul Food of the Future

Fried Butter Balls

2 sticks butter
2 ounces cream cheese
Salt and pepper
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 egg, beaten
1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
Peanut oil, for frying

Cream the butter, cream cheese, salt and pepper together with an electric mixer until smooth. Using a very small ice cream scoop, or melon baller, form 1-inch balls of butter mixture and arrange them on a parchment or waxed paper lined sheet pan. Freeze until solid. Coat the frozen balls in flour, egg, and then bread crumbs and freeze again until solid. When ready to fry, preheat oil in a deep-fryer to 350 degrees F. Fry balls for 10 to 15 seconds until just light golden. Drain on paper towels before serving.

—*Paula's Party* ("Everything's Better with Butter")

In this chapter, I work towards a definition of nostalgia and utopia as they pertain to the American South. As I argued in the previous two chapters, nostalgia and utopian thinking are often entangled when food is "on the table." Thus, here I similarly define this temporal entanglement generated by culinary performance within a contemporary southern context. Having defined these terms, I then demonstrate the ways in which cookbooks from the New Southern Food Movement performatively bend and double time. But first, I establish what this doubling means within this new context.

Here, then, I attempt to parcel out these terms before turning to my contemporary case studies in Chapter Four. While the first and second chapters used dramatic literature, the fourth chapter pushes the boundaries of performance. In the following chapter, I read contemporary southern cookbooks as a new genre of southern writing and a uniquely performative iteration of a new facet of southern

identity. In this chapter, I define the entanglement of nostalgia and utopian thinking in the Deep South by tracing the ways in which both function outside of history. I do so by using a range of examples across media; my methodological approach is drawn from popular culture studies. First, I derive a definition of southern nostalgia as antihistorical based on the temporally shifting legal testimonies of Paula Deen. Using two films, one contemporary popular film (*Forrest Gump*) and one documentary film from the Civil Rights Movement (*Mississippi: An Inside Story*), I discuss the ways in which this antihistory is aesthetically created and its distinctly performative qualities. To conclude, I compare the utopianism of *Forrest Gump*, which is predicated upon rewritings and erasures within southern history with utopian discourse surrounding the restaurants on Atlanta's Buford Highway region. Despite the pervasive language of white cultural omnivorousness, I argue that the utopian discourse surrounding the Buford Highway opens new possibilities for immigrant chefs, unlike the purely compensatory fantasy of racial reconciliation offered by *Forrest Gump*.

While this chapter marks a turn between the two case studies, I hope to demonstrate that food's ability to bend time into the past (nostalgia) and the future (utopian thinking) might inhere in a number of case studies. In Aristophanes' comedies, talking about the past is often indistinguishable from talking about the future; this muddling of time and place which is characteristic of Aristophanes' dramaturgy becomes all the more charged when laid on top of a historical shift from agrarian government marked by the availability of luxury foods from foreign countries to a democratic government at war. Certainly, Aristophanes' personal politics mark the way in which this entanglement of the past and future might ultimately do

conservative work politically, erasing the benefits of democracy and the human cost of slavery (Chapter Two). Yet his unique theatrical contributions—freewheeling spaces of utopian comedic play—allow for the benefits of utopia to be clearly seen. This recuperation of the moment of utopian thinking from a shift from conservative agrarian politics to luxurious dystopian politics is the subject of Chapter One.

In the first section of this chapter, I read through two of television chef and cookbook author Paula Deen's recent publicity scandals. In doing so, I define Deen's brand of southern nostalgia as antihistorical. In order to develop a theory of temporal estrangement that moves from past to future and back again, I discuss several contradictions within Deen's performative persona: a contradiction between televisual public and domestic private personas, between region and nation, and between health and excess. To demonstrate the ways in which this nostalgic antihistory is aesthetically enacted, I turn from legal discourse to two films: *Forrest Gump* and *Mississippi: An Inside Story*. Through a comparison between a 1990s conservative allegory about American optimism and a 1960s documentary film that candidly marked the nadir of the false promise of liberation of the Civil Rights Act, I characterize Deen's nostalgia as exemplar of a particularly southern re-orientation in time that I call "the iterative and regressive logic of southern time." Thus, by referring to this nostalgia as antihistorical, I mean specifically that culinary nostalgia located in the contemporary South erases histories of oppression and violence. To discuss a "more utopian utopianism" in southern food culture, I explore the discourse surrounding Atlanta's Buford Highway region. I compare the way in which this multi-ethnic enclave has been celebrated, and to what ends. If, perhaps, this final section is short and cynical, it

is because this chapter is still ongoing. The Buford Highway does not, like a Greek comedy, come down with the curtain.

Nostalgia as antihistory

In this section, I trace Deen's fall from her diabetes announcement in 2012 to her "plantation-style wedding" comment from her 2013 deposition. I draw connections not only to the way that the antebellum South is ghosted in contemporary southern nostalgia, but the way that the image of passive black waitstaff lives far beyond the plantation. By moving the discussion of nostalgia away from the past into the present, I focus on Deen not as an individual racist but as mouthpiece of nostalgic ideologies of which we can speak much more generally. These ideologies do not disappear once Deen's face is removed from Smithfield Ham labels.

I conclude the first section with the way in which Deen's own nostalgic ideology is based upon a model of time that is reversible.[109] Within this iterative and regressive temporal framework, structural racism can come undone just as easily as it has been done, as *Forrest Gump* so cleanly illustrates. *Forrest Gump*'s utopianism marks the way in which nostalgia and utopianism are entangled for potential conservative ends, that privileges forgetting and erasure. However, just as Aristophanes looks to the agrarian past in *Acharnians* and *Birds* in a combined gesture of political conservatism and idealistic utopianism, so too might the political

[109] The "reversible" time of Deen's deposition forms an alternate model for theatricality. Rather than mark the limits of the theatrical at that which cannot be reversed, as Josette Feral does, for example, I describe the iterative and regressive slippage through time in Deen's deposition, *Forrest Gump*, and the Booker Wright films as distinctly performative. (Feral and Bermingham)

conservatism of this "iterative and regressive temporal logic" contain the seeds of a liberatory utopianism.

Writing a section of this dissertation about Paula Deen has been, largely, an exercise in rewriting. While ancient texts remain thankfully stable, contemporary food culture is ever shifting. The vicissitudes of Deen's career themselves demonstrate the way in which ideologies of southern food are regressive, citational, and ever-changing. Deen's message has shifted dramatically over the course of her career and most rapidly within the last three years: from spirited queen of American culinary excess to restrained diabetic to spokeswoman for down-home cooking to repentant racist. Deen purportedly markets this vision of "a simpler time" in the Old South, yet with each public relations bungle has been forced to reconcile her formerly lucrative simplification and exaggeration of southern food culture with untenable political views and attitudes towards health. Thus, in this section, I will take as my evidence the turns of her popular persona—the press announcements, legal proceedings, and advertisements—that have caused my inbox to flood with concerned emails over how Deen's changing political life might impact my dissertation.

Thus, this section also marks a turn from case studies that might be classified as "highbrow"—by those, perhaps, who have not read the comedies themselves—to popular culture assembled across a range of media. Though the Greek examples are at a historical remove and have the disciplinary verdigris of "classics" rather than, perhaps, the more tendentious "popular cultural studies" I argue that all case studies in this dissertation are mass culture. As Raymond Williams reminds us: "culture is ordinary. That is where we must start" (in Szeman and Kaposy 53). When considering

the relationship between mass culture and agriculture, the ordinary is even more emphatically where we must start. Popular culture particularly embodies the push and pull between hegemonic conservatism and utopian novelty that I describe. Raymond Williams riffs on the difference between *populist* culture that functions as a kind of groundswell (the Buford Highway might provide an example of this) and hegemonic culture merely marketed as populist mass culture (e.g. Paula Deen's homespun country cooking):

> This brings us to the most crucial distinction between different senses of "popular" culture. There is a kind of culture that has been developed by a people or by the majority of a people to express their own meanings and values, over a range from customs to works. There is also a different kind of culture that has been developed for a people by an internal or external social group, and embedded in them by a range of processes from repressive imposition to commercial saturation. The distinctions between these two kinds are not simple; influential interaction constantly occurs. (Williams, "On High and Popular Culture")[110]

In this chapter, I describe this very influential interaction between the hegemonic dominant values that Deen offers and an attempt by people, say, immigrant cooks on the Buford Highway, to express their own meanings and values. This tension within popular culture is precisely the tension between nostalgia and utopian thinking which structures the dissertation as a whole.

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[110] Indeed, I find William's definitions of cultural hegemony more broadly compelling than Gramsci's for use within a dissertation about performance. William's description as hegemony as processual rather than static seems to more fully encompass the way in which dominant popular, mass culture is constantly negotiated and occasionally genuinely resisted: "A lived hegemony is always a process" (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 112); "the reality of the cultural process must then always include the efforts of those who are in one way or another outside or at the edge of the specific hegemony" (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 113). In other words, dominant southern culture is not a static relationship between superstructure and base but constantly negotiated between corporately sponsored, antihistorical Deen and those at the edge of this specific hegemony.

In order to map this tension between nostalgia and utopian thinking, I plot three contradictions within the recent career of Paula Deen on this axis: a contradiction between televisual public and domestic private personas, between region and nation, and between health and excess. Deen refuses to look back to the past even while repeatedly selling a narrative of a simpler time in the Old South. Deen's willing antihistorical nostalgia that actively disavows historical investments in past culinary labor (performed, of course, by the lower-class, women, people of color, or usually all three). By looking at her performance of antihistorical nostalgia, I develop a theory of nostalgia itself within contemporary southern food culture as ahistorical. Deen doesn't, to borrow a phrase from John T. Edge, "pay down the debts of pleasure that we southerners owe the cooks who came before us" (Edge).

Deen's marketing of Old Southern warmth and family values focuses not on preserving family heritage recipes but by inventing new ones. Initially, she did cook seasonal southern food related to the Georgia landscape, recipes with clear and traceable history, rooted in community knowledge and the embodied practice of daily cooking. Some of these items are still on the menu at The Lady & Sons (collards, butter beans). Then around 2006, a division happened—Deen began inventing new dishes, with more butter, deep-fried. At the same time, her sons began revisiting the heritage dishes that Deen had first been selling, as though sweeping up after her—Bobby's Lighter Barbecue Pork Sandwich, Bobby's Lighter Corn Spoon Bread, Bobby's Lighter Oyster Stew. Deen offered a buttery staple of the Midwest—Gooey Butter Cake—rather than southern layer or pound cakes. Bobby Deen lightened it up by using low-fat cream cheese.

Thus, I argue that nostalgia within the context of southern food, in the figure of Paula Deen, is in fact deeply anti-historical. Deen's roots as humble "bag lunch lady," cooking family recipes within the traditional foodway of the southern box lunch are part of her "family-owned" domestically-friendly brand, yet no longer the brand she sells. The Deen empire is now bifurcated, with the Deen sons "lightening up" the sugar, salt, and fat content of traditional southern foods while Paula Deen invents new ways to add sugar, salt, and fat to American favorites. Through Deen's personal brand, this addition of sugar, salt and fat in fact becomes a shorthand for "southern", despite her focus on invention rather than tradition. In this way, a hamburger, stuffing, or cheesecake, is marked, through Deen's guiding hand and a pass through the deep-fryer, as "southern."

Nostalgia as televisually mediated

Perhaps this antihistorical approach to southern food has to do with media. Thus, a first step in theorizing the South's antihistorical nostalgia might be to turn to the performative qualities of the medium through which this nostalgia is being rent from cultural context. Certainly television, thrumming with speed, consumed individually, transferring cooking from an act of embodied performance to one of passive consumption, is a likely culprit for the Paula-Deen-ification of southern food. As the T.V. object replaces the hearth as the metonymic center of the American home (Baudrillard), food moves out of the kitchen and onto the screen.

Ted Lee claims that Paula Deen's simplification of southern food is endemic to the ontology of televisual performance. Lee has clearly absorbed Marshall McLuhan's views about television ability to impact the range of experiences that can be

communicated; if the medium is the message, then twenty minute cooking shows are going to fundamentally change the representation of labor-intensive and time-consuming southern cookery. Lee muses, "The problem with television is that there's no time to tell the full story…we're looking at our watch and thinking 'how do we tell a really compelling story given, you know, the 90 seconds we have on this person'" (T Lee). To Lee, the strictures of the televisual medium have fundamentally changed the way that audiences think about food: "But the radio and TV were not just the electronification of speech and gesture but the electronification of the entire range of human personal expressiveness" (McLuhan, McLuhan, and Zingrone 271). However, for Ted Lee, this electronification of southern food through Deen's food network shows that "the global village" comes at the expense of regional identity.

He tells the story of the inability for the framework of Paula Deen's televisual narrative of southern identity to encompass the complex and changing realities of southern identity. His anecdote makes clear the difference between the rigidly controlled narrative of southern identity offered by Deen's media empire—a narrative that does not allow mobility outside the State of Georgia—and the geographic mobility that accompanies even those widely recognized as authorities on southern food:

> TL: The first time we were on Paula's show, she read the cue card wrong, so what she'd understood is that we were born in the South and then raised in New York, and we missed the foods— you know, our story is so crazy because it was like a yoyo, we were born in New York, raised in the South, then we went to college in the Northeast, then we came back to the South—you know, it's like, you can't do that! So what she read off the thing was we were born in the South, then we went North and then "they so missed everything" and we were like, "Well

> actually we were born in the North—" and she was just like, so broken-hearted.

Thus, Deen's southern nostalgia marks the geographic South as the heart of southern identity—to leave the South is to miss it. Yet this narrative, carefully edited through the medium of television, fails to account for actual historical shifts in southern populations: from the Great Migration out of the South to massive waves of immigration to the Deep South.

This is, of course, deeply unsurprising; yet to note the way in which Deen's narrative is curated and performed on a massive scale in living rooms throughout the world marks the erasure of other narratives of southern identity. Deen's fixedness in Georgia obfuscates Lee's "yoyo" between North and South, or, to take another example, the way in which eating "down home" foods functioned as a sign of resistance during the Great Migration (Williams-Forson; Darden and Darden). In the next chapter, I argue that the performative space of the cookbook provides a unique generic space for a more complex narratives of southern identity. Here, I note that due to the medium of television, Deen's nostalgia is marked by televisual flattening and erasure.

Nostalgia at the border between regional history and American exceptionalism

I disagree with Lee that the Food Network *created* Paula Deen. Rather, I argue that Deen's culinary creations are marked by and invested in still larger ideological projects of culinary American cultural memory-making. Specifically, Deen's culinary creations play at the very border between nation and region. Thus, the Lady's Brunch Burger, with its bacon, egg, and two donut buns, is entangled with much larger

tensions between southern identity and American excess, outside the generic problematics of TV cooking shows. The Lady's Brunch Burger owes at least as much to a larger tradition of American exceptionalism marked by culinary indulgence as to the competitive hype of network television.

I turn to the folkway of the state or county fair to articulate the tension between nation and region played out through foodways. The state fair, with its tension between the carnival midway, marked by Americana and excess, and the agricultural exhibitions, which stress regional pride and identity, allows us to trace the coopting of regional identity by broader American ideologies of excess in some of Deen's more puzzling creations, like Fried Butter Balls. The fact that this invention, fried butter, has little to do with the big-haired, sweet-as-pie brand of Old South nostalgia that Deen peddles is precisely the point. Fried Butter Balls and Stuffing on a Stick, the two recipes to which I now draw my attention, use state fair gustemes (frying unusual items, food on a stick) to signify doubly much in the same way that Midway foods offered at state fairs are able to carry multiple meanings of both regional pride and national identity.

Midway food is double, as it is both connected to a state fair tradition that prizes agricultural community, and a carnival state of exception where food is pushed to the limits of edibility. One the one hand, fried butter is artery-stopping Midway chow, fast food set opposite to the labor intensive homemade pies, canned dilly beans, or prize cattle up for judging in side halls. Yet in its very association with State Fairs, fried butter appropriates an existing emblem of regional pride.

Thus, I read Deen's foods through the Midway, a space which transforms the agricultural and community-based ideologies of the state fair into new symbologies of American pride and excess, in the figure of fried foods on a stick. It is easy to see what is invented, excessive, or ahistorical about fried butter. It is less clear how fried butter is nostalgic, what it has to do with the foodways of the American South. I argue that the fried butter of the state fair midway helps illuminate the relationship between this extreme, celebratory act of culinary invention and nostalgia for regional, agricultural values.

Fried Butter Balls aired in 2006 on the show *Paula's Party*, in an episode entitled, "Everything's Better with Butter." Deen's obsession with butter is well-known: her smiling face is even stamped on a line of Paula Deen branded butters. The fact that the recipe for fried butter aired on *Paula's Party*, instead of Deen's more domestic shows, *Paula's Best Dishes* or *Paula's Home Cooking*, fits with Deen's transgressive celebration of butter far to excess— the opening sequence for Paula's Party is set to disco music, while Paula dances in its shimmering light, with CGI confetti. *Paula's Party* already marks the half-hour of entertainment that follows as social and celebratory, distinct from the everyday; the recipefor deep-fried butter follows from this established idiom.

It did not take long for fried butter to move into the ludic space of the State Fair. In 2009, Abel Gonzales, Jr. won the "Most Creative" title at the Texas State Fair "Big Tex Choice Awards," a "friendly food fight among Fair concessioners" (State Fair of Texas). Fried butter then turned up at the Iowa State Fair in 2011, where Larry Fyfe upped the individual serving to a full stick of butter and figured out how to

skewer the concoction on a stick (Fritsch). Leslie Prosterman, writing on the Illinois State Fair, predictably notes that the fair is a ludic space, set apart from the daily agricultural life of rural communities (Prosterman 192). As such, she argues, there is a running tension between "real food," which she describes as sit-down, prepared by a community organization like the Elks or Rotary, and consisting of "wholesome" ingredients. Prosterman's examples of ludic food are relatively tame, corndogs and barbeque, but her structuralist groundwork lays the foundation for increasingly marked diversions from everyday eating—funnel cake becomes "deep-fried bubble-gum flavored marshmallows with frosting and sprinkles." Once we are in the realm of deep-fried bubblegum, the symbolic transcendence of the everyday becomes the central characteristic of these foodways, more than associations with identity, memory, or taste. Therefore, Deen's ludic foods offer a narrative of American exceptionalism and capitalist excess that stands opposite the midway from bounty of harvest.

The "foods on a stick" phenomenon, a hallmark of the Iowa State Fair, also marks the distinction between the sit-down meals provided by community organizations (like a Rotary pancake breakfast for fair workers) and the grab-and-go foods of the Midway (Prosterman). Indeed, the Iowa State Fair boasts more than 60 kinds of food available "on-a-stick" (Iowa State Fair). Deen, however, takes this phenomenon to another level, offering stuffing on a stick that is deep-fried as part of a Thanksgiving episode of *Paula's Best Dishes* in 2007. I argue that stuffing on a stick is more than a stomach-turning novelty. Stuffing on a stick alludes at once to the ambulatory foods of carnival and to the associations of Thanksgiving stuffing with

kinship and comfort. By frying stuffing and putting it on a stick as though she were a fair vendor, Deen disrupts the associations of Thanksgiving with a sit-down meal, tightly-knit family bonds, and non-professionalism: she renders it spectacular. I argue that it is no less than a Thanksgiving spectacle of American dominance. By offering thanksgiving on-a-stick, Deen again associates American Exceptionalism with culinary excess. Eating foods of the state fair marks Thanksgiving celebrates a vision of America that was "embracing freedom at a time when Europe and the rest of the world were mired in monarchies and despotism….we settled the frontier, become the world's foremost advocate of economic freedom…" (Gingrich 6). The culinary excess of Deen's thanksgiving stuffing-on-a-stick mirrors neoconservative values (like Newt Gingrich's) about capitalist excess; both culinary and capitalist excesses are entwined with an exceptionalist vision of the United States as "having a unique character that makes America the greatest country in the world" (Gingrich 7).

Although the association of fried dough with nationalism appears at first blush to be fairly extreme, a spirit of state fair inventiveness that appropriates American agricultural values creates an ideological matrix where these gustemes (unusual fried foods, foods on a stick) can speak volumes about American culture. County fairs are sites of agricultural celebration, harvest-time gatherings of all sorts of bounty, from quilts to pies:

> County fairs are different. Fairs and small-town festivals, rodeos, pageants, and powwows take advantage of long, hot, lazy afternoons, when the crop is in the ground, the sun is in the sky, and there isn't much to do but wait for the harvest. These are outdoor events, and the flat, sharp line of the horizon, at the edge of the earth, is always close at hand. The land, the soil—the rhythms of festival life in the countryside

> of Middle America are agricultural and its rituals tied to the eternal verities of place. (Pratt and Marling 22)

They are also deep in the lineage of World's Fairs and carnivals, bragging expositions of American innovation and excellence. Indeed, the 1904 St. Louis World Fair is the purported birthplace of such American foodways as the hamburger, cotton candy, and the ice cream cone. A lineage runs straight from this fair to the dozens of State and County fairs where annual culinary inventions are trotted out, judged, and enjoyed. The site of the State Fair Midway, with its fried butter on a stick, is able to encompass both.

Deen's signature dishes, then, deep-fried butter balls, fried cheesecake, stuffing on a stick, the Lady's Brunch Burger—these clearly exceptional, performative maybe even celebratory statements of anti-history as much as they are actual *foods*. Like the fried foods on a stick of the Midway, these dishes demonstrate nostalgia on a slant: they are ahistorical, but they appropriate regional (agricultural) cultures as part of a nationalist twin vision of excess consumption and brave invention. They do not merely offer eaters a "Cracker Barrel" version of the past, homey country cooking scored to dueling banjos.[111] Cracker Barrel nostalgia, to oversimplify, takes heritage dishes and divorces them from the cultural and material circumstances of their invention: poverty, slavery, sharecropping, the southern landscape. On the other hand, Deen's greasy

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[111] For the uninitiated, from Cracker Barrel: "What Dan had in mind was the kind of place he'd been to hundreds of times as a boy. It was a place called the country store, something every small community once had. Out west, they called them trading posts; up north, they were general stores. Where Dan grew up, in Middle Tennessee, they were old country stores, and Dan figured maybe folks traveling on the big new highways might appreciate a clean, comfortable, relaxed place to stop in for a good meal and some shopping that would offer up unique gifts and self-indulgences, many reminiscent of America's country heritage."

inventions, take fried butter balls, tap into American ideologies of exceptionalism, inventiveness, and appropriated agrarianism. The Lady's Brunch Burger is a punchline, but also a potent display of American cultural hegemony, economic excess, and distance from an agrarian government and economy. If eating a burger sandwiched between two donuts speaks to the future, it is because it imagines a world without cholesterol, in which the very limits of human digestion are transcended. Deen's inventions are nostalgic only insofar as they create new narratives connecting fried foods on a stick to a vision of deep-fried southern culture that never, of course, existed in the past.

Thus, by contextualizing and "reading" Deen's recent career rather than, say, the ideological work done by Cracker Barrel, I theorize nostalgia in the context of the contemporary American South not merely as a hearkening to a past that never existed but moreover as an active and performative reinstatiation of American values. Deen's nostalgia is tied to her diabetes, to an American exceptionalism with a very real cost. This all-consuming nostalgia, that is both uprooted from history and even the discourse of comfort foods, incorporates even regional history in a new version of the American past based on plenty. If no one saw Deen's racist slurs coming, perhaps, it was only because no one looked closely at the associations of Deen's novelty dishes with much larger and more dangerous ideologies of white American exceptionalism and capitalist excess.

Nostalgia and contemporary health concerns: on diabetes and kimchi grits

The relationship between this fantasy-past loaded with butter brings up the final and most important topic in the discussion of the relationship between Deen's

diabetes announcement and southern culinary nostalgia: health. Deen's announcement was, again, hardly surprising given the fried butter and the Lady's Brunch Burger, but again can stand in for larger trends in southern cooking and speak more deeply to what, exactly, lies at the heart of this nostalgia. In this section, I argue that Deen's nostalgia is in conflict with health issues that affect primarily lower-class and/or African American individuals.

Soul food restaurateur Dexter Weaver ("Weaver D"), in Athens, GA, is known for his fried chicken, chittlins, and three-cheese mac and cheese. His food is not the invented Americana of *Paula's Party*, but heritage recipes based on food he ate and cooked growing up in Georgia and Baltimore (Weaver). In an interview with oral historian Amy Evans, Weaver disclosed his diabetes and emphasized the baked and vegetarian offerings at Weaver D's Delicious Fine Foods:

> DW: We get a lot of vegetarians in and we also—we just appeal to just a wide range of people—those that are diabetic. I've been a diabetic now for about two years, so I really try watching my fats in my foods and the salt and the seasonings, so it's not what you will say greasy food or any of that. We'll cook it more healthier because, as we get older, all of us, you know, are eating more healthy, and a lot of people emphasize on baked chicken—baked items. Sometimes I might do baked pork chops. Sometimes I might do baked fish. That's just every now and then. And then a lot of food I cook for ourselves back there is baked. (Weaver)

When I interviewed him, Weaver also stressed the multitude of baked and vegetarian offerings at Weaver D's Delicious Fine Foods. At the same time that Weaver is vocally aware of health problems like diabetes in the African American community in Athens, he also remains invested in narratives that equate southern food with meat, cheese, and butter.

Weaver made fun of those with dietary restrictions, winking in falsetto, “DW: Yeah, they can come here and eat vegetarian items. We get some that come in here. And some (high pitched voice) "oooh, I can't eat cheese" (rolls eyes) "I don't eat butter" — and shit (snickers)” (Weaver). The reality of diabetes is odds with the ideology of nostalgic southern food, rooted, for Weaver, in the heritage meat-and-threes that have made him famous. By making fun of people who avoid cheese and butter, while eating baked rather than fried food for the staff in the back, Weaver illuminates the conflict between *nostalgia* for the *idea* of fried or buttery southern food and the reality of a changing populace.

Deen, to an even larger extent, provides recipes for foods that are excessively high in fat, “thrill food,” while acknowledging her own diabetes. The vehemence of the backlash points to the stakes of her announcement. Dexter Weaver’s testimony above marks the fact that such a contradiction is not individual hypocrisy, but rather a deep conflict between the heritage of high-calorie southern foodways rooted in sustaining agricultural labor and the future of southern cooking in a post-industrial culture where obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are very real. Thus, Weaver’s soul food and Deen’s calorie-bombs are not only in conflict with Weaver and Deen’s personal health—they also challenge the ability for a nostalgic fantasy-vision of southern food to incorporate the demands of a changing reality.

Placing Deen’s nostalgic inventions alongside contemporary “New Southern” dishes that explicitly refute that nostalgia draws the distinction between looking back and looking forward even more clearly. Athens and Atlanta, GA chef Hugh Acheson’s response to her diabetes sets the very stakes for Deen’s diabetes at the intersection

between memory and futurity in the American South—the life and death not just of diabetic Deen but of southern culture. The whole moment, I think, bears repeating.

> The question was, "Do you think that southern food has had a start and a finish or do you think it's something that continues to evolve?"...I talked about how we do a dish It is Carolina Middlin' Rice Grits with Kimchi, Pork Belly and Pickled Radish. The rice grits are the broken kernels of Carolina Gold rice, which historically were an important staple of the rice workers, predominantly the Gullah population, in the Lowcountry of South Carolina. The whole kernels of rice would be exported while the broken kernels were kept by the locals and used to make porridges and paps, starches that when cooked are akin to the consistency of grits. It is a dish that bounces between an homage to history and a celebration of the current. Its core is that very historical rice porridge, yet then it takes a current tangent and is suffused with chopped up house-made kimchi, an ode to the modern proliferation of Asian cultures in the South. Paula looked at me with moderate confusion and disdain and blurted out to her masses, "What's wrong with just butter and salt in grits?" ("Hugh Acheson")

Here, then, Acheson capitulates the mantra of the New Southern Food Movement: that contemporary southern food actively connects itself to a regional heritage and imagines a global, "new" South that is in conversation with national, elite "farm to table" movements. Such a performative gesture, however, too often elides the historical role played by African Americans in creating southern cuisine, the economic structures that lead to "farm to table" cooking *before* the phrase had cultural capital. It is telling that even Acheson's historical excursis on the ingenious use of undesirable rice bits to create sustaining and delicious food by Gullah people is overpowered by Deen's ideological performance of the ahistorical Old South. Deen's stance—in her fairly transparent marketing of xenophobia, in actively refusing a global South, in leaning in to a bacon-wrapped vision of American exceptionalism—demonstrates the powerful hold of the Old South within this contemporary debate. Deen's diabetes,

then, and the public outrage and mockery that surrounds it, marks a contestation over the ability for southern food to move outside the South. The snark, ire, and antagonism that characterize most responses to Deen's announcement hinge, then, on policing the distance that southern culture is allowed to travel—both geographically and imaginatively. If southern food is defined as American excess (bacon-wrapped mac and cheese), then those that point to Deen's "greasy villainy" both claim to speak for and apart from this purported white, working-class populace. For Acheson, southern food must travel geographically in order to travel away from these associations. His nouvelle southern cuisine comes from the inclusion of Asian flavors, pushing a definition of southern food in the image of the "world-inflected South." Deen, on the other hand, sells a nostalgic fantasy of southern heritage, inviting viewers daily into her TV kitchen: "from my house to yours, y'all."

The conversation is about more than grits and kimchi—the livid response of Acheson and many others to Deen's diabetes announcement challenges Deen's self-styled role as spokesperson for gastronomical pleasure, southern culture and American excess. At the very heart of these associations is cultural memory. When Paula Deen asks, "What's wrong with just butter and salt in grits?" she is in fact asking whether southern culture continues to traffic and to whose benefit. By positioning herself as a working-class fat female up against svelte, Canadian-born, white, professional and James-Beard-award-winning Acheson, Deen locates her question about "plain grits" within southern narratives that define authentic southern culture in terms of domestic space, the working class, familial knowledge, and southern land itself, even as these attempts at self-definition ultimately fail to replace a definition of southern culture that

pays full homage to the legacy of slavery. Deen offers instead a persistent and antihistorical nostalgia. In this section, I have argued that Deen's nostalgia is inextricable from its televisual mediation. I have argued that this nostalgia manipulates images of American Exceptionalism associated with the State Fair. And lastly, I argue that Deen's buttery grits are at odds not only with Acheson's vision of a multicultural future (kimchi grits) and with the historical realities of poverty and slavery (cornmeal, after all, traditionally allotted to slaves). Deen's buttery grits are also out of touch with the exigencies of the present: health concerns that affect Deen herself which contradict nostalgic visions of southern excess.

Antihistory and temporal estrangement

In early 2013, Paula Deen was sued by the manager of one of her restaurants, Uncle Bubba's Shrimp and Oyster House. Lisa Jackson claimed that Deen's brother, Bubba Hiers, who owned the restaurant, was guilty of racial discrimination and sexual harassment. As owner of the Deen Corporation, Paula Deen was called in to testify. On the subject of racial discrimination, Deen was asked, "have you ever used the N word?" Her response, "Yes, of course." These three words, which ended Deen's career, also drew back a curtain on ways in which the aesthetics of Deen's food are intertwined with racist Old South nostalgia that does not merely reproduce Jim Crow era sentiments, but repackages them alongside images of nationalistic excess (think state fair fried butter) and very contemporary xenophobia (think kimchi-free grits). Here, then, I add to my list of characteristics of Deen's southern culinary nostalgia that its anti-historical thrust erases histories of structural oppression and racial violence.

In her admission of using this slur, Deen again deflects from a conversation about historical appropriation. By super-charging her use of the n-word, rather than pointing to the structural appropriations inherent in her nostalgic comfort foods and media empire, Deen deflects complex dialogue about race relations in the South. By boldly admitting her use of the n-word while tearfully protesting accusations of racism, Deen attempts to historicize her use of the term and disassociate it with larger ideologies of white supremacy. Many—myself included—would argue that this is impossible (Asim; Kennedy).

Rather than address the imbrication of her brand of southern nostalgia with larger racist ideologies, she indicts herself of a much simpler crime: hate speech that Deen characterizes as a brief lapse in judgment. Deen's primary strategy for back-pedaling is temporal estrangement: she quickly adds that she has only used this racial epithet once, a long time ago. By setting her use of hate speech in an unspecified, ahistorical, distant past, Deen once again only underscores the extent to which her relationship with history marked, largely, by ignorance and silent complicity. The "of course" slams closed a temporal boundary between then and now, the "old days" in which racism was endemic and the "now" in which Deen's racism is unthinkable. The flimsiness Deen's excuses only mirror the flimsiness of Deen's imagined temporal boundary between a racist past and a post-racial present.

Deen's slippery use of history is at the heart of her second challenging and problematic statement. Indeed, I argue that this temporal estrangement is at the heart of the southern culinary nostalgia I theorize, and marks the very elision between nostalgia and invention that is so fraught in the field of southern cooking in particular.

When I argue for nostalgia as an anti-history, I posit that time is oriented differently when culinary nostalgia circulates. In this section, I argue that the slippage from the image of segregated restaurants to the image of the plantation is emblematic of this "temporal estrangement" that marks Deen's deposition in the singular and southern culinary nostalgia more broadly. This temporal estrangement is marked by iterative movement ever backwards—and, perhaps, forwards—without ever addressing histories of oppression and violence in the South.

In the 2013 Deen deposition, nostalgia functions not simply to return to culinary memories in the past but to progressively move ever backwards into a fantastic past, and model a future out of this fantasy past. The deposition figures Deen's nostalgia as both ahistorical (Deen cannot place certain events in a historical timeline) but also antihistorical, actively and performatively creating alternate pasts and futures. In an examination by the plantiff's lawyer, Matthew Billips, Deen contextualizes the comment for which she is being charged:

> A: And I remember telling them about a restaurant that my husband and I had recently visited. And I'm wanting to think it was in Tennessee or North Carolina or somewhere, and it was so impressive. The whole entire wait staff was middle-aged black men, and they had on beautiful white jackets with a black bow tie. I mean, it was really impressive. And I remember saying I would love to have servers like that, I said, but I would be afraid somebody would misinterpret.
> Q: White jackets?
> A: Dinner jackets.
> Q: And a bow tie?
> A: And a bow tie and black trousers, and they were incredible.
> Q: Okay. And you said something –
> A: These were men that had made their living off of service and people in a restaurant.
> Q: Okay. And they were all black men?
> A: Yes. Professional servers and waiters.
> Q: And when you described it to Miss Jackson, did you mention the race

> of – well, you had to have mentioned the race of the servers –
> A: Of course I would –
> Q: Okay. So is there any reason that you could not have done something just like that but with people of different races?
> A: Well, that's what made it.
> Franklin: *[Objection]*
> A: That's what made it so impressive. These were professional. I'm not talking about somebody that's been a waiter for two weeks. I'm talking about these were professional middle-aged men, that probably made a very, very good living –
> Q: Okay.
> A: They were trained. The – it – it was the whole picture, the setting of the restaurant, the servers, their professionalism.
> Q: Is there any possibility, in your mind, that you slipped and used the word "n——r"?
> A: No, because that's not what these men were. They were professional black men doing a fabulous job. (Deen)

This was transformed through the argument that followed into a fantasy of a "plantation style wedding," which I will explore more fully later in conjunction with a critique of concepts of "reenactment" within the discipline of Performance Studies. However, I would like to first dwell on this image: middle-aged black waiters, in white dinner jackets with black bow ties, serving dinner with "professionalism." Deen is emphatic that she is not referring to a "plantation theme" wedding: in her own words, these waiters are not "niggers," not slaves.[112]

My first thought upon reading this testimony was not of an Old South antebellum fantasia, while this certainly exists.[113] The scenario that Deen describes marks a confusion between the contemporary and Jim Crow South, marked by black

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[112] A distinction misquoted at large in the popular press. Deen's comment "I would say they were slaves" was in response to a question not about her chosen waitstaff, but to the question, "before the Civil War, those black men and women who were waiting on white people were slaves, right?"
[113] The entire *Gone with the Wind* industry supports this: the privately-owned for-profit Maria Mitchell house museum, as well as theme restaurants and plantation tourism that purport to allow the tourist to "travel through time" (Smith; Hoelscher; Bowman; Adams, *Wounds of Returning*).

waiters wearing white dinner jackets and black bow ties serving white patrons in segregated restaurants. The dining experience she describes marks an insistent holdover, a pathological longing for the site of segregation.[114] This, in turn, marks an insistent return to the antebellum South within even contemporary southern food discourse, marking the antebellum South as a site of return. The Jim Crow South blurs with the contemporary South in Deen's imagination, and the antebellum South is seamlessly intertwined with the Jim Crow from the vantage of the prosecution.

As an example of this first, particular slip backwards to the segregated South, in which Deen describes a contemporary scene of segregated food service, I thought of one particular black waiter in a white dinner jacket: Booker Wright. Booker Wright worked at a restaurant in Greenwood, Mississippi: Lusco's. Unlike the restaurant Deen describes, and unlike "Old South theme restaurants," like Pittypat's Porch or Mary Mac's Tea Room in Atlanta, Lusco's does not actively attempt to keep the past alive in the present.[115] Booker Wright is a figure from the past for Lusco's, after his (forced?) retirement from Lusco's in 1966. Thus, Lusco's has never purported to represent the "Old South": it is an upscale Italian restaurant that has used white waitstaff of mixed genders for several decades. Yet the 1966 image of waiter Booker

[114] Through the phrase, "pathological longing" I am indeed referring to the psychoanalytical and literary-critical concept of melancholia. One certainly might frame the way in which Deen clings to a damaged (segregated) southern past rather than acknowledging and moving past trauma within Freud's paradigm of mourning and melancholy. One might even connect this reading to the work done on racial melancholia by David Eng and Anne Cheng (Cheng, "The Melancholy of Race"; Eng and Han; Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*). But such a reading is outside the scope of this dissertation.

[115] Rather, as I explain below, the Pinkstons have actively tried to foreclose discussions of their restaurant's segregated history and the potential suffering of their black waitstaff during that period.

Wright, standing behind the counter of Lusco's is representative of exactly the performance of servitude Deen describes:

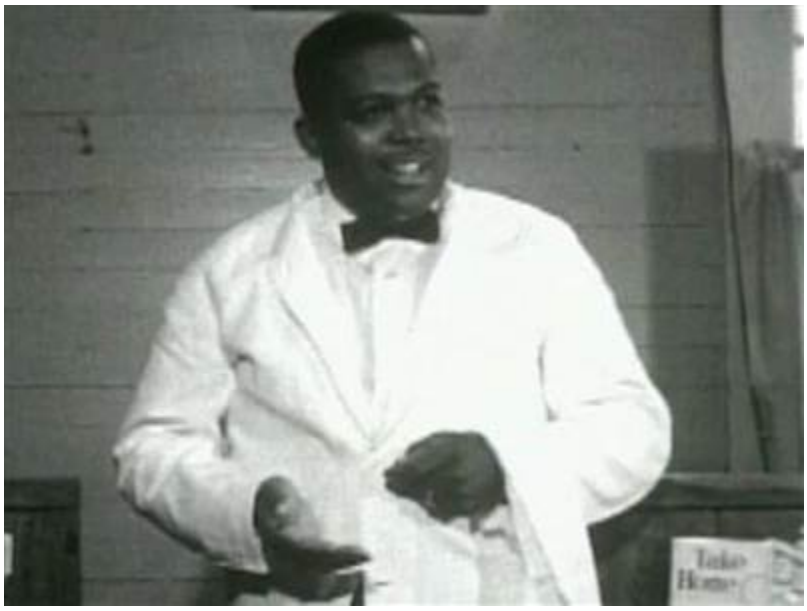

Figure 2: Booker Wright. Still from *Mississippi: A Self Portrait* (1966).

I read this image of Booker Wright as indicative of Deen's idealized black waiter. He is one of Deen's "middle-aged black men, [who] had on beautiful white jackets with a black bow tie" (Deen). Wright was a "professional black m[a]n doing a fabulous job" (Deen). So too does Wright's professionalism and close relationship with Lusco's' owners obscure the political structures—in his case segregation in the Jim Crow South—that created this apparently "close and supportive" relationship. Just as Deen avows that the professionalism and fair wages of the waiters in the restaurant she mentions in her deposition separates these waiters from "niggers," Karen Pinkston, wife of Lusco's owner Andy Pinkston, claimed in an oral history interview that Andy and Booker were "best friends" (Pinkston). So it is clearly difficult, for Deen and the Pinkstons, to separate the friendship that these white southerners may have felt

towards their staff with the structural inequality, racial violence, and fear that has haunted the South since the beginnings of slavery.[116]

The image itself, Wright's white dinner jacket and black bow-tie, costumes Wright as professional. Yet this word, repeated by Deen, might be glossed much more negatively: to call Wright a professional means that he is not an (uppity, uncontrollable) "nigger", rather, Wright is dressed and marked as professional (subservient, docile). By hearkening back to this image of a black waiter like Wright, Deen strains at the limits of legal racial equality in her deposition by pining for an image so strongly connected to the Jim Crow South. That she failed to use hate speech to describe these waiters is not as surprising as the temporal disjunction that her nostalgia for the Jim Crow South creates. In her desire "for servers like that," Deen uses nostalgia to bring the Jim Crow past into the *present*: a far more troubling scenario that figures the Jim Crow South as an inevitable site of return.

I find the case of Booker Wright so fascinating because he transcended the professional image that Lusco's and Deen curate. In 1966, waiter Booker Wright described his experience of waiting tables to a documentary filmmaker from NBC:

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[116] A full examination of this phenomenon is outside the scope of this dissertation; however, a body of scholarship has addressed the myths of friendship between white patrons and the black service industry in the Jim Crow period, most recently Rebecca Sharpless' *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens* (Tucker; Jones; Palmer; Clark-Lewis; Sharpless). No study, to my knowledge, has turned to the ideology of the black waiter in particular; here, I draw on Wright's act of speaking out behind the smile as analogous to the acts of resistance that Sharpless attributes to *cooks* in particular in the pre-Civil Rights era. The afterlife of these relationships is still complicated. Wright's granddaughter is both engaged in a legal battle with Lusco's over the documentary of Booker's story, *Booker's Place*. At the same time, encourages visitors to her blog to patronize the establishment. She notes that "Lusco's is a great resource and they loved Booker" (Johnson). Indeed, when I visited Lusco's in the spring of 2013, proprietor Pinkston employed the same rhetoric of friendship, good will, and support cited above, speaking of Wright and her other former waiters with what seemed genuinely well-meaning, if deeply troubling and paternalistic, language.

> Now as for what my customers, I say my customers, be expecting of me, when I come in, this is the way they want me to dress. Some people are nice. Some not. Some call me Booker. Some call me John. Some call me Jim. Some call me nigger! All of that hurt, but you got to smile. There are some nice people: "Don't talk to Booker like that, his name is Booker." The meaner the man be, the more you smile, although you're crying on the inside. (de Felitta)

Wright was later pistol-whipped, forced to leave Lusco's, and eventually murdered in his own restaurant, Booker's Place; the 2012 documentary, *Booker's Place*, charts the complex fallout from Wright's NBC statement and the story of filmmaker Frank de Felitta's son Raymond de Felitta's interactions with Booker Wright's granddaughter, Yvette Johnson. The consequences of Wright "breaking the frame" within the tumult of the 1960s are clear: the stakes for Wright are life and death. The ethical quandary over Wright's broadcast continues in the conversations in *Booker's Place*. Yet, just as Deen's citation of this image within her deposition has legal and ideological consequences in the very real present, so too does Wright's story continue. The murder of Booker Wright is not something that we can lodge in the past, as part of the civil rights movement, and forget. Historicizing Deen's example of the professional waiter in the figure of Booker Wright, looking closely at the limits placed upon his speech, and parsing the complicated ways that Wright's image speaks to the present (through *Booker's Place*, for example) of the ways in which one Jim Crow-era waiter speaks loud and clear in the present tense.

Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. and the afterlife of the spoken menu minstrel show

Just as the politics of Wright's candid look at the racism endemic to Greenwood, Mississippi in the 1960s show that this structural oppression is not easily

lain to rest, so too does the rest of the broadcast have an afterlife that confuses the past and present. In this section, I further demonstrate the ways in which
Wright was originally included on de Felitta's broadcast because his performance of the ideal black waiter (a performance cited by Deen) was described to de Felitta as "a minstrel scene," "a sing-song of the menu" ("40 Years Later"). This "minstrel scene" is as alive as the vocal discontent that made Wright so infamous. In this section, I argue that Wright's virtuosic and musical recitation of Lusco's menu not only contributed to the performance of the black waiter that slips forward through time in Deen's testimony, but is vital and present as a contemporary trope. In doing so, I explore the ways in which time distorts and bends around the image of the southern black waiter, a figure who is both rooted in the racial violence of 1966 Mississippi and carries seamlessly, troublingly, into the present day. Thus, when I refer to nostalgia as anti-historical, I discuss the way in which nostalgia does not simply look backwards in time, even to an invented past, but rather allows (or perhaps forces) the past to live in the present. The "minstrel scene" that de Felitta encountered is as follows:

> [Voiceover] He tells how an evening goes with white folks who think they know him so well—
> Wright: We don't have a written menu, I'd be glad to tell you everything we're going to serve tonight. Everything we serve is a la carte. We have fresh shrimp cocktail, Lusco's shrimp, fresh oysters on the half shell, baked oysters, oysters Rockefeller, oysters amadine, stewed oysters, fried oysters, French mackerel broil with the sirloin steak, club steak, T bone steak, porterhouse steak, ribeye steak … broiled mushrooms, plain spaghetti meatballs, soft-shell crab, french-fried onions—(de Felitta)

The spoken menu is a narrative strategy repurposed straight from 1960s Mississippi in the most famous cinematic depiction of the American South after *Gone*

with the Wind—Forrest Gump. Forrest's friend, black Alabaman Bubba Blue's list of shrimp preparations is, like the Lusco's menu, vertiginous:

> Shrimp is the fruit of the sea. You can barbecue it, boil it, broil it, bake it, sautee it. There's, um, shrimp kebabs, shrimp creole, shrimp gumbo, pan fried, deep fried, stir fried. There's pineapple shrimp and lemon shrimp, coconut shrimp, pepper shrimp, shrimp soup, shrimp stew, shrimp salad, shrimp and potatoes, shrimp burger, shrimp sandwich... That's, that's about it. (Tisch)

While Bubba Blue delivers this list, the film jumps scenes three times. First, Gump and Blue are checking their guns, then polishing shoes, then scrubbing the floor with a toothbrush. These jump cuts emphasize the length of Blue's list, creating the effect that he is droning on endlessly, perhaps for hours, about the different ways he knows to cook shrimp. It is as Sisyphean to scrub a warehouse floor to military-inspection cleanliness as it is to enumerate the ways in which shrimp can be cooked. As the list drags on, Blue is figured as illiterate and helpless, as he tries to number the stars, and Gump as white audience who might pick or choose among these options. Gump, like the white customer at Lusco's, might free Blue from the ceaseless task of listing dishes by calling out: "stop!" The performative power of this sort of list lies in the ability of the white listener to call it off, while the Wright and Blue can and must go on, it seems, forever.[117]

This same trope of a black waiter dishing up countless variations of seafood is served, daily, at the hundred Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. restaurants that cater to tourists

[117] Even *Forrest Gump* itself might not be "contemporary" but rather provide a dated and naïve 1990s version of nostalgia, closely allied with the 1990s particular neoconservative politics. Newt Gingrich, for example, used the film to denigrate 1960s countercultural movements such as women's liberation and the black power movements during his 1994 election campaign (Wang). I argue, through the Paula Deen deposition and through the afterlife of Booker Wright's interview, that Forrest Gump's ideological impact on narratives of American self-making continues.

from Daytona Beach, Florida to Kuala Lumpur. Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. restaurants reinforce the ideologies of the film and quite literally reinscribe them in the bodies of those who patronize these restaurants. As visitors eat "Mama Blue's southern Charmed Fried Shrimp," they internalize these homespun images of African American servitude. Moreover, through the play on the phrase "southern charm," Mama Blue's culinary labor is figured as magical, "charmed," further downplaying the labor involved in shrimp preparation by insinuating that the shrimp have been conjured rather than cooked.[118] As visitors page through the seemingly endless menu, the bounty of shrimp preparations enumerated by Bubba Blue are combined with the fried-food ethos of American exceptionalism I described earlier.[119] The ten-page menu at Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. is like a stroll down the midway. It's a cornucopia; it's stuffing on a stick. Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., dotting vacation destinations across America with its smiling image of a top-hatted shrimp, is another space in which food substantiates ideologies of American exceptionalism. As the waiter explains the menu to the Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. diner, this nostalgic vision of southern food is

[118] Of course, this rhetorical maneuver also perpetuates the problematic trope of the "magical Negro," an ostensibly antiracist cinematic convention that ultimately undermines notions of black self-determination (Hughey; see also Glenn and Cunningham).

[119] Just as the fried foods of the Midway coopt the existing celebration of agricultural traditions at the county fair, so too does Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. coopt historical foodways in its fantasy performance of southern food. A low-country boil—a heritage foodway that brings together communities in the coastal Carolinas—begins when a pot of bubbling shellfish are poured out onto a picnic table lined with newspaper. Diners gather around, peeling shrimp, sharing community news and gossip, and generally having a good time. At Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., shellfish is served in baskets lined with tissue paper printed with *fake* newspaper print announcing headlines from Forrest Gump's life. By alluding to the low-country boil within the space of a highly corporate chain restaurant based on a movie, Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. erases history in its nostalgic sweep even in the act of alluding to "authentic", historical foodways.

instantiated and performed again, again, again: a paean both to fried shellfish and to the subservient image of Bubba Blue reciting twenty-two kinds of shrimp.

The ongoing popularity of the film *Forrest Gump*, the embodied consumption of this spoken menu at Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. restaurants, and the continuing legal battles over the description of black waiters (both in Deen's deposition and the Lusco's suit) refuse the placement of this image of the black waiter in the past. Although Booker Wright was murdered, his smiling image lives on. When Deen capitalized on the image of the formal black waiter in a white dinner jacket, news media swiftly cried "racism." By looking closely at the ways in which Deen's clear nostalgia for Jim Crow-era "minstrel scenes" of black waiters listing menu items speak to the present, rather than the past, one can see the afterlife of paternalistic attitudes about the black service industry. In *Forrest Gump*, every day at Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., this image of a black waiter mellifluously listing types of shellfish preparations still goes unnoticed and unmarked. This nostalgia, I repeat, is perhaps most clearly seen in the rhetorical performances of Paula Deen's recent deposition, but inheres in countless other mundane, unscandalous cultural performances.

The regressive logic of temporal estrangement

Here, I turn to what I am calling Forrest Gump's "regressive logic" to characterize the "antihistory" of southern nostalgia more generally and the performative tactics of Deen's deposition in particular. In Forrest Gump, the scene in which Gump meets Blue uses a series of jump-cuts that mark history as both regressive—moving back into the past—and iterative, repeating the same set piece while moving backwards in order to count the backwards passage of time. I argue that this particular regressive

logic characterizes nostalgia for southern food. As soon as Blue launches into his love of shrimp, Gump narrates that Blue's mother and grandmother cooked shrimp before him. The film cuts rapidly at the first mention of Blue's mother, a black domestic worker, cooking shrimp for a white man in a jacket and bowtie seated at the table. Mama Blue wears a domestic worker's uniform, a white turban hiding her hair and white apron over a starched, neutral shirtdress. Outside the picture window, a black worker holding a tool, presumably a sharecrop farmer, stands under a tree. Though the scene is short, it is ominous—racialized labor slips ever into the past. In Forrest Gump, the Klu Klux Klan and armed resistance to desegregation recede behind Forrest, who runs ever forward.

In this scene, we see how the film slips even further back into the past, moving from contemporary Savannah to the South of the 1970s to that of the 1950s. As Gump continues, "and her mama before her cooked shrimp," the scene again rapidly cuts to the same scene—a large black woman opening the door to the kitchen and placing a tureen in front of a seated white man with muttonchops and an ascot. This scene is clearly antebellum, and this mama is a slave. She is dressed in a simple brown dress with a white apron, and a colored red hankerchief tied on her head as a turban. Aunt Jemima, make no mistake. Outside the window, a black laborer, presumably a field

slave, rests his hands on his knees, apparently exhausted.[120]

Figure 3: Mama Blue serves shrimp soup. Still from *Forrest Gump* (1994).

Figure 4: Grandma Blue serves shrimp soup. Still from *Forrest Gump* (1994).

Zemeckis' filmic technique of cutting ever backwards forms a regressive fantasy, in which a contemporary scene slips effortless back and back into the past,

[120] Stills from *Forrest Gump* (Tisch).

resting on the scene of subjection that is slave labor.[121] As Gump's story triumphantly moves forward throughout the course of the film, these backwards moves mark Blue's timeline as backwards-facing, ultimately moored in the scene of slavery.

Deen's deposition performs this same gesture in the excerpt below:

> Q: Did you describe it as a – that that would be a true southern wedding, words to that effect?
> A: I don't know.
> Q: Do you recall using the words "really southern plantation wedding"?
> A: Yes, I did say I would love for Bubba to experience a very southern style wedding, and we did that. We did that.
> Q: Okay. You would love for him to experience a southern style plantation wedding?
> A: Yes. (Deen)

As Deen and the prosecution ring the changes between these phrases, the regressive and iterative logic of the argumentation echoes the regressive and iterative storytelling that characterizes *Forrest Gump*. Here, the slippage from southern culture to plantation culture occurs through a series of questions and answers. The image of the professional Jim Crow waiter explored above is now condensed into a "true southern wedding." "A true southern wedding" becomes a "southern plantation wedding" becomes a "southern-style plantation wedding." Deen's monosyllabic response ends this regressive and iterative argumentation. At this point in the deposition, Deen no longer has the tools to separate the contemporary ("southern"), Jim Crow

[121] While I am discussing here the ideological work done by the film editing, the images themselves also bear consideration, particularly the image of Grandmama Blue as a slave. I am particularly interested in the way in which field slave labor is visible only through the frame of the master's house. Images of laboring slaves are indeed rare and it seems fitting that this scene of subjection only be visible refracted through the lens of the Big House window. On the relationship between photography, slavery, and erasure, see Best.

("professional"), and antebellum ("plantation") South. As Deen's apparent aporia suggests, the differences in the cultural imaginary may be minimal.

Re-enactment and the regressive logic of southern nostalgia

The prosecution may be attempting to clarify, but later it seems that they are leading Deen to admit that she is nostalgic for slavery:

> Q: Why did that make it a – if you would have had servers like that, why would that have made it a really southern plantation wedding?
> Franklin: *[Objection]*
> A: Well, it – to me, of course I'm old but I ain't that old, I didn't live back in those days but I've seen the pictures, and the pictures that I've seen, that restaurant represented a certain era in America.
> Q: Okay.
> A: And I was in the south when I went to this restaurant. It was located in the south.
> Q: Okay. What era in America are you referring to?
> A: Well, I don't know. After the Civil War, during the Civil War, before the Civil War. (Deen)

At first, Deen seems to be referring to the Jim Crow South, straining to remember her childhood in the South before the civil rights movement and *de jure* desegregration. Thus, Deen's ignorance is staggering. While she can locate this restaurant in the South, repeat the costume in careful detail, and speak clearly an established script in which white patrons "meant no disrespect" to black waiters or domestic staff, Deen cannot locate or place segregation in time. Her inability to distinguish between time periods in the South speaks to the power of what I am calling the regressive logic of southern nostalgia. That is, Deen's testimony exists in a performative space of iterative regression in which any temporal distinction seems impossible.

Deen cannot temporally locate the figure of the Jim Crow-era black waiter, and thus winds up, at the coaching of the prosecution, back at the romanticized ideal of the

Old South plantation. I argue that this slippage enacts a distinctly southern regressive logic: the kind that allows Forrest to transport back to the scene of domestic Mama Blue and slave Grandmama Blue's cooking. To be clear: this regressive logic is of course a fantasy logic, one that actively represses a more nuanced, balanced, and populist historiography that would (for example) include Mama Blue's voice, rather than Forrest's voice-over. Because the way that time functions within this nostalgia is not historical, which is to say, is not linear and progressive, one must use aesthetic or performative methodologies to trace the way that time functions in Deen's deposition in particular and southern culinary discourse more broadly.

Performance Studies, especially with renewed interest in reenactment and the relationship between performance and history, indeed seems like an ideal vantage from which to view this temporal estrangement. However, in the section that follows, I argue that much of the recent scholarship that handles the way that performance confronts history fails to account for the unique ruptures, foldings, and out-of-jointness of time in the American South. Thus, I read Deen's deposition through distinctly southern performative strategies—particularly the iterative regressive filmic strategies of *Forrest Gump*—in order to complicate and strengthen concurrent conversations in Performance Studies.

I argue that a fantasy of the past in the present is often an act of concealment rather than one of illumination. Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains* attempts to break down "strictly binarized antonyms" of "then and now" (Schneider 90). Schneider writes of the doubleness of disappearance and appearance,

> When we approach performance not as that which disappears (as the archive expects) but as both the act of remaining and a means of re-appearance and "reparticipation" (though not through a metaphysic of presence) we are almost immediately forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh. (101)

Yet Schneider's argument fails to encompass the danger that is done by the regressive logic of the South, a regressive logic that transfers seamlessly between present and past and plantation. It also fails to challenge the way in which this anti-historical nostalgia can undergird a compensatory utopian future.[122] These images in *Forrest Gump*, slipping into the past and imagining a pat post-racial future, do not trouble the present productively. Rather' Gump's revisionist history reduces a series of Leftist movements (most visibly, the Women's Liberation and Black Power movements) to sidebars and punchlines. *Forrest Gump*, then, provides a narrative of history that is simply more accessible for white males who look at the post-war period and see tumult (Wang). Gump's ability to reorganize these social movements into a single cohesive narrative with an optimistic white male at its center does "challenge strict binary antonyms between then and now" but with dangerous repercussions.

Schneider uses Civil War reenactments to discuss an ontology of performance that allows the past and present to productively coexist. The "battle over the future of the past" is indeed a productive and potent question (4). Yet I argue that Schneider's focus on lag, even while using distinctly southern examples of Civil War reenactment, fails to take into account the kind of regressive ontology that characterizes time in

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[122] As before, a "compensatory utopia" is a vision of the future intended to maintain a status quo—a "release valve." Many communist thinkers, in particular, saw the role of utopian thinking as compensatory rather than anticipatory (Ricoeur, Mannheim; see Introduction).

southern discourse. To put it bluntly, perhaps "the past isn't over" for reenactors in Gettysburg and Rhode Island because they enjoy theatrical frisson of the "twice behaved," but the stakes of "living in the past" are very different for Booker Wright's granddaughter who attempts to retell the story of her grandfather's murder and becomes trapped in an antidefamation lawsuit.

The stakes of "living in the past" are different for Dexter Weaver, whose soul food restaurant I mentioned above, Weaver D's, closed in 2014 because, as he noticed, everyone just wants to eat French fries. To push further, I imagine "living in the past" isn't marked by a performative frisson for those who are still living in shotgun shacks while others still in their family's plantation houses.[123] It seems that almost every discussion of southern identity threatens to slip ever backwards into the deep heart of a southern past as Deen and Zemeckis do filmically and rhetorically. Non-performative, non-citational exigencies—such as a "real" wound of aIraq veteran cum reenactor that challenged Schneider within the performative space of reenactment, the lasting architectures of the cotton states—these resist Schneider's reading that this "re-do" of the past is inherently performative or potentially productive.

As Schneider writes,

> everyone I spoke with was deeply excited by their collective investment in a possibility: the possibility of time redoubling, returning in fractured or fugitive moments of affective engagement. And though some I spoke

[123] That is, I am curious whether an analysis of the architecture of the South might form a counterpoint to the ephemerality of the performances that Schneider describes—reenactments whose tents fold at the end of the weekend. Rather than an ephemeral performance that might enable the spectator or actor to briefly inhabit a performative past, southern time more broadly might be inscribed in the buildings I mention above—shotgun shacks and plantation homes. Such a view might be buoyed by the fact that one of the most famous challenges to the totalizing impulse of post-modernism comes in the field of architecture—Kenneth Frampton's "critical regionalism" (Frampton).

> with did fight for "southern justice," many more fought simply for the feel of fighting. (50)

Yet it seems that the stakes are quite different for those who need not reenact to feel this affective doubling. I argue that this affective doubling is not the purview of re-enactment but a condition of southern discourse, even something so presumptively benign as culinary discourse. William Faulkner's axiom inheres, too, in white-washed memories of country foods, "the past is never dead. It's not even past" (Faulkner).

Thus, the way that time doubles and bends in Deen's deposition or *Forrest Gump* does not seem to highlight the deposition as a site of theatrically charged reenactment but mark the experience of talking about southern food culture as such. Again, I argue that these performative strategies are not immanent to performance but to southern discourse in particular. Schneider's use of the Civil War to make claims about performance as temporally double is both felicitous and under-historicized. Civil War reenactments open up a field of inquiry through which Schneider can make broad claims about performative time, yet she never links time with place; her claims about time lack the historical grit of the particular longings, doublings, and melancholies of the terrain in which the aftermath of this war has been played out.

Moving from reenactment to living history, I note that the living history of the South is not characterized by the "time warps" and "wargasms" that Schneider reports from Northern reenactors. Despite advertisements that plantation tourists might enjoy "a traditional full planter's brunch" or sleeping in "a mahogany bed that has been in the family for generations" (Adams 59), plantation tourism never really succeeds. That is, while reenactments allow the hobbyist to feel the rough fabric of a Union uniform,

to hear the crunching of frosted grass under his boots and carry the weight of a musket on his shoulder, plantation tourism does not attempt to provide this sensory realness. Plantation tours refuse to blur the "then and now" through sensory affect because they so precisely omit slave labor and its material manifestations. These tours in fact foreclose sensory experiences of domestic life; they seldom feature slave quarters, working kitchens, laundries, or sites of labor. Indeed, plantations are often referred to as genteel sites to display antique furniture, "antebellum homes" rather than plantations (Adams, "Local Color" 163) In cultural historian Jessica Adam's parlance, these sites offer "plantations without slaves" (Adams, *Wounds of Returning* 54). She continues, "Though slavery has become irrelevant to the plantation, the slaveless plantation house is central to 'American History'" (Adams, *Wounds of Returning* 59).

This is a very different kind of temporal estrangement than the one that Schneider describes. The frisson described by Schneider in which the temporal doubling of performance is both immanent to performance and epistemologically at least potentially generative. Schneider concludes with a utopian embrace of queer performance as successfully "reclaiming" reenactment. Utopianism within the regressive and iterative framework I have described above through Deen's rhetoric and Zemeckis' filmic syntax is not generative but merely compensatory. To return again to the regressive "shrimp soup" scene in Forrest Gump, the imaginary quality of this iterative regression is emphasized by the utopian inversion of this trope toward the end of the film. When Gump gives Mrs. Blue the proceeds of his Apple investments, she faints dead away. Gump then narrates that she has now hired a white servant to serve her, in a fantasy inversion of the established trope.

The small scale of this scene places the onus for racial reconciliation and structural economic redress on the individual: “In this parable of the economics of contemporary black-white relations, the debt to be paid by Gump to Bubba’s family—half the profits of the shrimp business—is defined not by hierarchy or history but as an honor to intimate male friendship” (Wiegman 131). Moreover, such a social inversion requires the death of Bubba Blue—the whole film seems to point to his death as inevitable, even an act of martyrdom that enables Gump’s story to go on. That Gump survives the war while his black buddy dies, that Gump’s boat survives while the predominantly black shrimping fleet is wiped out—these are not accidents of history that lead to Mama Blue’s change in social position. To borrow a phrase, they “are crucial to Gump’s simultaneous claim to and transcendence of injury, and they do so within a context that disaffiliates white masculinity from the historical power and privilege of its social and economic position” (Wiegman n.22).

Figure 5: Mama Blue is served shrimp soup. Still from *Forrest Gump* (1994).

I argue that director Zemekis' attempt to move past Bubba Blue's endless regression into the past by substituting a post-racial fantasy of inverted domestic labor merely recreates the temporal estrangements that allow Deen to conceal real histories of oppression and violence through a nostalgic slip backwards through time. Simply reversing the skin color of the maid is a chimerical act of redress; it is a white fantasy of individual redress easily coopted by 1990s "virtuecrats" rather than a structural re-ordering of race relations (Wang).

What form of utopia might be non-compensatory? If Deen's nostalgia is masquerading as the future of the South, where might we locate "the utopian turn" in contemporary southern food? In the next chapter, I parse the particular phenomenon of the "New Southern Food Movement" that explicitly uses language of futurity to reimagine the relationship between southern and national food discourse. Here, I offer as a coda another version of "the utopian turn" in southern cooking. I turn to the immigrant South as both a non-compensatory utopian development in the South. At the same time, I end this section pondering the way that these immigrant foodways are converted by white eaters into cultural capital.

Atlanta's Buford Highway

When I first talked to cookbook author Ted Lee, I intimated that I had recently been visiting the Buford Highway area in North Atlanta, he exclaimed exuberantly, "That, to me, is the future of southern food" (Lee). Paul and Angela Knipple are southern food writers; when I asked them about *World in a Skillet*, their cookbook documenting recipes from first-generation immigrant chefs in the South, they replied, "we were talking… about the future of southern food, in a way, and all these people

coming and introducing their dishes, and how it's going to gradually integrate with and help evolve southern food" (Knipple and Knipple). For these white southern food authors, the immigrant South provides an image of the future, a way to revitalize and evolve southern food traditions from their perceived location in a black and white past.

The Buford Highway is both a metaphor for the changing immigrant South and a very real strip of highway that stretches from North Atlanta to the suburb of Buford, Georgia. The visual landscape of the Buford Highway, signs advertising "Mercado Hispanico" translated into Chinese, next to the iconic Waffle House sign, is a convenient metonymy for the demographic shifts that mark Atlanta as the South's global city. Images of the multilingual signage, such as Kate Medley's photograph of the plaza that contains the Buford Highway Farmer's Market, compress numerous demographic narratives into a single image.

Figure 6: Signs on Buford Highway, Atlanta Georgia (2010).

This image, for example, tells the story of economic downturns in states traditionally hospitable to immigrants, Texas and California, leading immigrants and

refugees to Atlanta's Sun Belt in the 1990s (Walcott). It speaks of churches and cultural groups reaching out to immigrants from Southeast Asia after 1975, creating large pockets of Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian immigrants in southern cities like Atlanta (Walcott). It speaks too, of the white flight to other suburbs that left so many empty shopping centers and rental apartments open in this region, creating multi-ethnic neighborhoods instead a single China or Koreatown (Kruse; Walcott; McDaniel and Drever; Wang and Walcott). Those who sing the praises of Buford Highway, then, compress these overlapping strands and complex patterns of migration into one coherent narrative of delicious 'multi-culturalism.' There are those that feel that the Buford Highway is the future of American southern food, and it smells like bulgogi smoke mingling with the sizzling char of pupusas reveultas in a shared parking lot.

In oral history interviews conducted by the Southern Foodways Alliance, restaurant owners on the Buford Highway stress the importance of their multi-cultural community and the surrounding area to foster their business. While demographers and urban planners view the Buford Highway as a uniquely multi-layered site of immigration with widespread immigrant entrepreneurship despite national origin (see above), these entrepreneurs themselves highlight the importance of their white customers to the identity of the region. Thus, I mark the dangers of southern utopianism in this case study as well as the utopian possibilities.

In the regressive iterations of southern history characterized by the descent of Paula Deen, nostalgia became so "unstuck in time" that it in fact encompasses a utopian future. If Deen cannot tell the difference between before the civil war, the civil

war, and after the civil war, how might we distinguish the present from the *future*? Whereas the regressive shrimp soup scene in Forrest Gump marks southern time as both iterative and regressive, it also makes space for its converse—a utopian vision of Mama Blue on top. The discourse surrounding immigrant-owned businesses in Atlanta marks, in effect, the converse: the fusion of immigrant cuisines with heritage southern foodways is always marked as a teleological move forward, not one that slips seamlessly forward and backward in time.

Yet oral history interviews of immigrant-owned restaurants raises a complex question of Ted Lee and Paul and Angela Knipple's pronouncements that the immigrant South marks the future of southern cooking. Do immigrant foodways[124] in the South mark the future of immigrant communities and economic growth in the South? Is a comingling or "fusion" of southern food with immigrant cuisines inherent to this futurity? The utopian discourse surrounding immigrant cooking in the South is clearly part of a much larger conversation about "multiculturalism" in America; here, I simply note that the claims of utopianism laid on the Buford Highway may be contingent on the combination of these foodways with historically southern foodways, filtering these new foods through a white imaginary. In sum, I characterize southern utopianism, in the figure of the multi-ethnic, immigrant South, as both alive and well

[124] I use the phrase "immigrant foodways" rather than "ethnic food" because "ethnic food" seems to homogenize all non-Western foodways. I later explore more fully the association of "ethnic food" with a white imaginary in which ethnic food is meant to be consumed by presumptively "non-ethnic" White eaters. A joke beloved of my seventy-five year old white father: "In China, it's not called Chinese food. It's just food!"

and as eminently compatible with white neo-liberalism that would tokenize or subsume immigrant subcultures in the South.

The Buford Highway has boomed alongside increasing immigrant populations, but in these oral histories I examine below, restaurant owners stress the way in which the Buford Highway provides a market for them to cater to non-racially-marked audiences. One restaurant owner, Mirza Chowdhury, stresses that his food remains authentically Bangladeshi, proudly describing the Bangladeshi regional specialties that his restaurant offers and the Bangladeshi "spellings, names, and terms" (Chowdhury). He claims that the diners who come in search of ethnic foods to the Buford Highway are "adventurous," primed to discover and enjoy his authentic Bangladeshi food, which he claims is the only truly Bangladeshi restaurant in the U.S. South (Chowdhury). Chowdhury's narrative is one of discovery, "people actually who are looking for ethnic food drive down the road and find that they have found a restaurant where they don't even know this cuisine because this is the only Bangladeshi restaurant and then they come in and *venture* in" (italics mine; Chowdhury).

Chowdhury insists both on the adventurousness of his clientele and the fact that they are mainstream, "This is the ultimate example of mainstream clientele coming from everywhere. I really cannot say that any particular demographics or any particular race or any particular income level or any particular political persuasion or any particular religious persuasion or any ethnic person group that comes over here– it's everyone." 'Mainstream' is a key word in Chowdhury's vocabulary. Chowdhury's insistence on the Bangladeshi authenticity of his restaurant comes not only from the food but also from the *hospitality*. All dishes are served family-style, and Chowdhury

reaches out to new guests, “there’s a particular way of eating the food, which obviously I just suggest to the guest” (Chowdhury).

Thus, the multiplicity of cuisines on the Buford Highway are supported, in Chowdhury’s mind, by the structure of the Buford Highway itself. The region is supported by *adventurous* eaters who are *mainstream;* mainstream standing, I suppose, either a white or post-racial imaginary subject. This becomes all the more clear when Chowdhury negatively describes ethnic enclaves of the Buford Highway:

> [Buford Highway] has a huge amount of ethnic businesses but they are purely ethnic-oriented. They’re not mainstream ethnic businesses. They have a Salvadorian restaurant, which only Salvadorian people come. They have a Mexican restaurant where only Mexicans come. They have an Ethiopian restaurant where only Ethiopians come. Honestly in this shopping center, of all the restaurants, this is the only restaurant where you get what I call mainstream clientele that come into the restaurant and not just from that ethnic background. (Chowdhury)

Thus, each ethnic enclave of the Buford Highway is not, for Chowdhury—and perhaps, one might speculate, for the Knipples or Lee—as utopian on its own. The combined thrust of Buford Highway, the language of commingling, the mixture of southern food with Mexican or East-Asian sauces, multi-racial clientele served by Bangladeshi staff: this seems to be the limit to the power of the Buford Highway to stand for the utopian future of the South.

This narrative is fairly different from that of another establishment on the Buford Highway, Taqueria del Sol. Owner and chef Eddie Herndandez has put his own spin on southern food by using Mexican spices and chilies (Hernandez). Hernadez follows this fusion model, and to great success: Taqueria del Sol now has eight locations across the South and in Pennsylvania. For Eddie Hernandez, his Buford

Highway restaurant allows him a chance to showcase his innovative "twists" on southern and South-Western recipes.

Hernandez describes his food not in relation to other immigrant-owned businesses that cater to immigrants from the same nation, but in relation to heritage foods of Atlanta. He describes being taken by his business partner to Mary Mac's Tea Room in Atlanta, an Old South theme restaurants with white tablecloths that serves traditional southern foods, conservatively prepared: collards, fried chicken, cheese grits. Hernandez describes his take on the experience,

> Well I think Mary Mac's greens are good because they still make them the old way, the way they originally were done, the Old South you know. And I don't make them like the Old South. I don't think about trying to do things like they used to do them, but to do them the way I think I will eat them. If I was given turnip greens in Mexico I will eat them the way we serve them today. (Hernandez)

"Eddie's Greens" are rich with Mexican peppers, the tamales with cracklins and turnip greens. The way that Eddie Hernandez calls chile verde "gravy" stresses the continuities between southern and Mexican food while stressing the discontinuities between Taqueria del Sol and Mary Mac's Tea Room.

Yet despite the differences between Hernandez' "fusion" and Chowdhury's "authentic Bangladeshi cuisine", both Eddie Hernandez and Mizra Chowdhury see themselves as singularly "mainstream" restaurants on the Buford Highway. Hernandez repeats Chowdhury's message about the Buford Highway as site for "adventurous eaters" to expand their palates:

> There was two taqueria(s) and it had nothing to do with the American public. They were designed for Latin people and they didn't care about whether you ever went there or not. They were not looking for any other market. They were designed for the Latin people and the Latin people

> only. Plus, we're talking 2000; where tongue was not even close to being on the menu or brains or tripe, and that was the menu in their taqueria(s). I wanted to bring the taco knowledge to the masses, but I had to present it in a way that they can relate to it. The little twist on the chicken taco, a lime jalapeno mayonnaise, so see now you still got your little Mexican sidekick in there but also it's fried chicken and people knows about fried chicken and they like their fried chicken. Our job was to present the food in a way that the customers will understand and to try to do a good job where they like it and come back.

I fear that the utopian discourse of the Buford Highway is future-facing, yes, but highly contingent. Hernandez' popularity and accolades in magazines like Bon Appetit seems to hinge on the inclusion of familiar southern ingredients. Fried chicken tacos, collards with Mexican chiles: yes. Brain and tongue: no. The discourse of omnivorousness and adventurousness might supplant the embodied practice of understanding and appreciating immigrant foodways on their own terms. Is even the demographic incorporation of immigrants within the South utopian, despite the fact that immigrants who recreate their home country within a new American context and do not assimilate or integrate are disparaged by Hernandez and Chowdhury?

Despite my misgivings about the ways in which naming the context of "fusion" invalidates Mexican or Bangladeshi foods on their own terms, there is still a kind of joy associated with novelty that seems hard to repress. When I told Ted Lee, cookbook author, chef, and big-time southern food enthusiast, that I had recently been visiting the Buford Highway region of Atlanta, he launched into a rhapsodic description of the region which I repeat here:

> TL: But that to me is the future of southern food. That's what's so exciting to me, and it's fundamentally not a new— it's a new southern story in a sense, but the story of the South is— from the outset, is the story of new immigrants. I mean, unless you were a native American, you came from somewhere else and you brought your culture with you

> and you had to adapt to this new world, and that is a story that the South will be telling for the rest of its life…you can just really sense cultures adapting to southern ingredients and southern traditions.

Again, Ted Lee stresses the utopianism of immigrant foodways insofar as they fuse with southern foodways: yet it is hard to theorize away this enthusiasm and passion. It is this very tension between a qualified acceptance of the New that might, in fact, privilege existing power structures and the radical power of the New that leads me to call the Buford Highway utopian. My concept of burgeoning culinary utopianism is, again, indebted to Ernst Bloch's dictum that compensation and anticipation are interwoven. Lee's incantation, "it's so fun, it's so fun" reminds me of Bloch's heightened language about the power of concrete utopia, despite it all: "what remains is the unfinished dream forward, which is only discredited by the bourgeoisie, and which can be seriously called utopia" (Bloch 119).

Lee gives the example of Heirloom Market BBQ in Atlanta as to the way in which this "adaptation" of non-Western flavors to southern foodways marks the future of southern cooking, "it's this mashup of Korean and Central Texan barbeque in Atlanta. That is the story of Atlanta, really…That is the next 100 years, processing that and making links between traditions and new tradition" (Lee). Here, Lee explicitly claims that the future of southern food will be tracing the relationship between immigrant cuisines and the heritage foodways of the South (here, Georgia).

Lee's choice example of Heirloom Market BBQ is a felicitious one, because of the conjunction of southern and Korean foodways. On their website, the two chefs of Heirloom Market BBQ discuss the intersection of southern and Korean food:

> Jiyeon, a South Korean ex-pat, grew up with the flavors of grilled meats, pickled vegetables, and a constant array of side dishes. Her culinary training and travels in the states has led to a deep rooted love for "Seoul" food or classic southern cuisine. Cody (a Texas born, Tennessee raised, Atlanta trained Chef) has spent countless hours cooking, eating, and appreciating everything BBQ. (Jiyeon LLC)

Here, the preserving and barbecuing traditions of the American South (represented as a large and inclusive region through Cody's far-ranging credentials) and of Korea coalesce in Jiyeon's pun: this is "Seoul food." Perhaps even this pun, a seemingly benign speech-act, offers a vision of cross-racial praxis that might transcend the nostalgic thrall of black and white South seen through a "lenticular" lens.[125]

The Heirloom BBQ Market is not on the Buford Highway, yet it borrows Hernandez and Chowdhury's appeals to "adventurous" and "mainstream" (as I understand Chowdhury, "non-ethnically-marked") eaters. Here, I turn to the sociological concept of cultural omnivorousness to describe the way in which these two phrases have come to be intertwined. Discourse that describes immigrant cooking as the future of southern food has its limits: the extent to which it intentionally fuses with southern food or markets itself for mainstream consumption.

This utopian discourse is clearly related to a larger shift in the use of aesthetic breadth, rather than depth, to signify cultural elitism. In a 1996 paper, sociologists Peterson and Kern track a change in "highbrow" social stratification from "snobbishness" to "omnivorousness":

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[125] I return to the way in which Korean-American southern food cooks stress the similarity of these cooking traditions in the next chapter, when I turn to Korean-American chef and cookbook author Edward Lee.

> Appreciation of fine arts became a mark of high status in the late nineteenth century as part of an attempt to distinguish "highbrowed" Anglo Saxons from the new "lowbrowed" immigrants, whose popular entertainments were said to corrupt morals and thus were to be shunned (Levine 1988; DiMaggio 1991). In recent years, however, many high-status persons are far from being snobs and are eclectic, even "omnivorous," in their tastes (Peterson and Simkus 1992). This suggests a qualitative shift in the basis for marking elite status-from snobbish exclusion to omnivorous appropriation. (Peterson and Kern)

That is, Peterson and Kern quantify a shift from upper-class white snobbishness—cutting off musical tastes below the high-water mark of opera and classical music—to a model that privileges cultural borrowings from lowbrow forms marked by people that are "Black, youth, isolated rural folks" (Peterson and Kern). I argue that this method of demonstrating class structure has transformed into food. While certainly there is a luxury food culture that prizes truffle salt and gold leaf, so too is being an "adventurous" regular at Panahar Bangladeshi Place a class marker.

This "omnivorousness" is not the racially segregated country-club exclusivity that Deen, perhaps, refers to when describing professional black waiters. But cultural omnivorousness does demarcate limits, and those limits mark the extent to which marking immigrant cooking as the future of the South allows for greater self-determination and economic vitality for immigrant communities. Bethany Bryson describes "multicultural capital," "I suggest that cultural tolerance should not be conceptualized as an indiscriminate tendency to be nonexclusive, but as a reordering of group boundaries that trades race for class" (Bryson). The limits that Bryson notes for even white, upper-class cultural omnivores, that the most tolerant aesthetes most dislike musical styles associated with low education, maps fairly cleanly onto the

example of the immigrant food of the South. Highbrow White southerners embrace Acheson's kimchi grits but sneer at Waffle House.

In the next chapter, I examine the food movement that created kimchi grits at, perhaps, self-incriminating length (they are delicious). In my analysis of contemporary mass-market southern food cookbooks, I argue that this "new South movement" has as a core value a return to heritage southern foodstuffs, yet is marked by a widespread refusal to engage with the political and cultural history of the South. Here, I note the way in which even immigrant foodways, associated with futurity, with fusion, change, and renewal, are incorporated into a cultural project is in large part concerned with "high-brow" upper-class non-immigrant self-making.

I argue for a more robust theory than Schneider's reenactment because, it seems to me, that living out-of-time is always performative but also *always* about class. It is, to take an example from the Brooklyn food movement, the Mast Brother's ability to take a month on a tall ship shipping cacao beans from the Caribbean and their Brooklyn studio that marks their chocolate as worthy of elite consumption. The Mast Brothers' antebellum beards, the time-and-material consuming letterpressed wrappers, all signal clearly the fact that these chocolate bars are both old-timey (nostalgic for analogue processing procedures) and utopian (ushering in a new era of hand-crafted foods, a better world) ("The Twee Party"). When the product of antebellum reenactment is a chocolate bar, rather than a military formation, the fact that being outside-of-time is a *white, elite* pursuit becomes more obvious.

Thus, I argue that performing "outside of time" in the contemporary South—either Deen's performance of regressive nostalgia or the Buford Highway's

utopianism—displaces a conversation about race by reinscribing upper-class privilege. While sorghum and moonshine are making a resurgence in part thanks to the national New Southern Food Movement I detail in the following chapter, certain labor-intensive foods are becoming extinct. While for some chefs, scarcity and association with southern heritage are celebrated, Bryson's findings on the limits of omnivorousness prove instructive and ominous. When I visited Dexter Weaver, whose recently closed restaurant I described earlier, I asked if there were any southern foodways that he thought would soon disappear. Chittlins, he responded, "they take too long." Weaver has stopped offering them in his restaurant, even stopped making them at his own family Christmas celebration. Why do chittlins take "too long" to clean and cook but a single-origin chocolate bar made by bearded men in Brooklyn should "rest" for thirty days? I argue that sociological theories of an omnivorousness that substitutes class markers for racial ones might clarify the intersections of race and class in the broad claims about the future of the South. As fusion food or the multi-ethnic signage of the Buford Highway becomes a shorthand for the New South, we must pay attention to the ways in which this utopian turn to the future may undergird less favorable cultural dynamics (omnivorous white self-making) as well as genuinely anticipatory dreams of a better world.

In order to lay the groundwork for the chapter that follows about the "New" southern food movement, I seek first to explore how some of the utopian turns in the South, such as the rapid economic growth of culinary communities like the Buford Highway, are bound up in a project of white self-building as much as they provide self-determination of actual immigrants: they are both compensatory and anticipatory.

To repeat, I have modeled this antihistorical nostalgia on the recent career of Paula Deen. I have shown the way in which televisual media, an affinity for State Fair gustemes, and an ambivalence about health-based dietary restrictions contribute to her performative definition of southern culture rooted in culinary and capitalist excess—a nostalgic definition of southern cooking that transcends historical time. To discuss the aesthetics of this temporal regression, I have turned to *Forrest Gump*, ultimately concluding that *Forrest Gump* offers a utopianism that reinforces white power. On the other hand, the discourse surrounding Atlanta's Buford Highway might provide a more racially diverse vision of the future of southern food, even as it may support ideological structures that privilege cultural omnivorousness as an elite class marker. Armed with these definitions of nostalgia and utopianism, I will plot these "New southern" cookbooks along this axis between Old South nostalgia marked by antihistorical, regressive slippage and a genuinely anticipatory utopianism.

Chapter Four: Nostalgia and Utopianism in Contemporary Southern Food Cookbooks

Memory believes before knowing remembers.
Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders.

William Faulkner, *Light in August*

But in the South, country ham is not a thirty-dollar a pound product. It's more like a three dollar a pound product. I just think the more food becomes culture, the more people want to know, the more people want to know the story of the people who make their food. And that's the important part, is just knowing the story, and telling a better— not telling a better story, but telling a fuller story of how it came to be, you know?

Ted Lee

"Telling a better—telling a fuller story"

I am not from the South. I have never even, for that matter, really lived in the South; never had a southern grandmother, never tilled southern soil, never raised a southern child. What interests me—in these two chapters on the relationship between nostalgia and utopianism in contemporary southern food discourse—is the fact that I am not uncommon in this regard. So many of the cookbooks I read or chefs and authors I interviewed aren't from the South, never had a southern grandmother. In fact, none of the cookbook authors actually *lives* in the nostalgic haze I described in the previous chapter; few had what Ted Lee describes as an "ur-southern-soulful upbringing." Rather than pointing to this as a failing of some "authentic" southernness, I will draw attention to the ways in which southern culture, and southern food culture in particular, is then rendered *performative*. In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate first, that southern food is shifting from set of regional, heritage foodways to a nationally recognized cuisine in which southern elements are open for hybrid or simply up-scale reinterpretation. Secondly, I then argue that this "new turn" in

southern cooking might demonstrate the dangerous power of nostalgia to overtake a historical awareness of African American labor's role in southern food culture— at the same time that this "utopian turn" foregrounds the pleasures of eating southern food in a way that offer a commensal, interracial and more egalitarian vision of the South.

I'll begin with a conversation with Ted Lee, one half of the Lee Brothers, cookbook author, recipe developer, Charleston native and Brooklyn resident:

> LK: Yeah. But I think—acknowledging all of it—when I first started writing about food, people would often ask if I learned how to cook from my family and it's like, my mother didn't cook, you know, and my grandma—you know, my family is Jewish, and I would love to think that my Jewish grandmother—but like, she made bran muffins.
> TL: Yeah.
> LK: By the time I knew her she was just really into Splenda and bran muffins. So if I want to know how to cook, like, a rock-hard bran muffin, I have a recipe.
> TL: Yeah.
> LK: Brisket? No.
> TL: That's another thing—
> LK: So if I want to make a brisket, like, I make a brisket and I'm like, here's a brisket, it's pretty good. But it's not my grandmother's recipe.
> TL: Right. Right. That's the thing about telling the truth in the South, is like, you know, not everyone had an ur-soulful southern soulful upbringing even though they consider themselves very southern. And so you find people who, you know, don't know how to make anything other than minute grits. And that's— you know, there's no judgment call really. That's just a fact of growing up in the midcentury. You know, it's like, the moment you are able to cook those grits in a minute, you are never turning back. Because it was like, there were other things to do, you know?

So I first avow my minute-grits, the stale bran muffins I ate as a child, all the weirdness and richness of loving the South and southern food without being in any real way southern. I claim my own experiences of southern food's transition from a

regional, heritage foodway to a national, discursive performance of nostalgia as exemplary, not exceptional.[126]

Southern food seems to have a unique power to change meanings, to both remain rooted in its regional heritage, offering associations with tradition, home, and comfort, and at the same time traffic nationally, destabilizing the boundaries of its own definition. In this way, by generating multiple and co-existent meanings, by unfolding processually through time, by implicating a network of social actors both inside and outside the region, southern food is ripe for a performance analysis. In this chapter, I attempt such a performance analysis of the way that southern food generates southern culture through the medium of the cookbook. In the following section, I theorize the relationship between cookbooks and performance.[127] Next, I trace the trajectory of a southern cookbook—from grits to pickles—in order to discuss the myriad culinary places in which these southern cookbooks erase African American labor, posit a nostalgic rather than a traumatic past, and finally redefine the region as site of constant redefinition pushing forward towards a new or global South. In this chapter, I situate this "new turn in the South" more explicitly within the theoretical paradigms of nostalgia and utopianism developed in the previous chapter.

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[126] Foodways: "The traditional customs or habits of a group of people concerning food and eating" (OED). Or "If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed" (Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal").

[127] While "cookbooks as performance" enjoyed a brief heyday through the work of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimlett, I find that the implications of this theoretical paradigm have yet to be explored fully (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, "The Moral Sublime: The Temple Emanuel Fair and Its Cookbook, Denver, 1888"; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, "Kitchen Judaism"). While there have been several anthologies or articles that question the cultural work done by cookbooks, very few move outside a sociological methodology to theorize the work being done by cookbooks as a social *performance* (Theophano; Bower; Silva; Floyd and Forster; Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*; Inness; Leonardi). To my knowledge, none focus explicitly on the American South.

First, I define what I call the "New Southern Food Movement." In the last ten years, southern food has transcended its historical status as a "regional" or "heritage" set of foodways and moved into gourmet, national food culture. One might define the "New Southern Food Movement" as the "foodie-fication" of a long un-sung regional foodway. The surge of coverage of southern food within international food journalism,[128] the proliferation of ham biscuits across Brooklyn,[129] the PBS cameras following southern chefs Vivian Howard and Sean Brock on "A Chef's Life" and "Mind of a Chef": this is the New Southern Food Movement.

What I call the New Southern Food Movement is new: in this chapter, I analyze cookbooks written within the last ten years and use oral history materials with living chefs and authors. I am interested in the way in which nostalgia creates an antihistorical fantasy past, yet search for this discourse in the very contemporary present (2004 and beyond) rather than turning to the actual historical work done by community cookbooks, for example. The New Southern Food Movement is also southern. I have chosen to use southern food to describe the culinary fusion between the past and future in the South because the New Southern Food Movement wears both the heritage of southern foodways and the future of gourmet cuisine on its sleeve. I can think of no other American foodway that so clearly negotiates very real national traumas (slavery, sharecropping, and subsistence farming, first and foremost) through the creative and potentially healing acts of cooking and eating. To return to Frederic

[128] See for example: Goulding; Klein; Rodell; "Lardcore"; Ozersky; Moskin; M. Lee and Lee, "Southern Exposure".
[129] See for example: Balestier; Mischner.

Jameson's theory of the political unconscious from Chapter Two, the New Southern Food Movement creates an aesthetic solution to a political conflict—the utopian farm-to-table ethos of the New Southern Food Movement responds *directly* to an increasingly unstable industrial food system located, in large part, in the South.[130] The New Southern Food Movement is also responding to the widespread income inequality, political polarization, and "obesity epidemic" that trouble the South in particular: I argue that no other regional food carries the same charge because few other regions are marked by such widespread and severe poverty.[131] Thus, here I respond to a frequently asked question: "Why southern food?" Other American regional cuisines *do not* negotiate the line between an ongoing past and a pervasive nostalgia through internationally circulated media. Other regional cuisines do not stand at the vanguard of American gourmet cooking through their use of heritage ingredients. I am not arguing that the South has more history— as W. Brundage writes,

> To claim that the American South is historically richer than other regions of the United States is sophistry…If characterizations of southern memory are to be meaningful, attention should be given to what kind of history southerners have valued, what in their past they have chosen to remember and forget, how they have disseminated the past they have recalled, and to what uses those memories have been put. (Brundage 2–3).

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[130] Take, for example, the headquarters locations of businesses selected as representative of American agribusiness in the documentary *Food, Inc*: Monsanto: Creve Coeur, MO; Tyson Foods: Springdale, AR; Smithfield Foods: Smithfield, VA.

[131] The eight lowest-income states, according to the 2012 U.S. census, are almost all southern (formerly Confederate) states. It is no accident that a map of the United States by income affords yet another way to map the geographic borders of the U.S. South; on such a map, the Deep South falls first into sharp relief. From lowest to highest median household income: Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, New Mexico, Alabama (US Census Bureau).

Southern food manipulates this history more explicitly and to different ends than other regional cuisines—I argue that the New Southern Food Movement harnesses heritage foods to make claims about the future of the South. New Southern food is uniquely concerned with an imagined future that transcends the political exigencies of a troubled present.

Starters

E. Patrick Johnson's oral history of black gay men in the South opens with a summary statement of this uniquely southern orneriness: "The South, like all regions of the country, is a site of contradictions. The central role once played there by America's "peculiar institution" perhaps makes its social and cultural inner workings more complex" (Johnson 2008, 1). Comedian Aziz Ansari highlights one of these contradictions, namely between the pain of racism and the pleasure of southern food, within the ludic space of his stand-up routine, "Oh! That guy just said the n-word! Oh! Fried chicken and biscuits! I hate racists… but I love a good biscuit" (Ansari). I argue that Ansari's dilemma is both serious and endemic to representations of southern food. Indeed, southern food has long been a lens for examining the racial politics of the South, from the importance of de-segregating restaurants to the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act (Katzenberg vs. McClung) to the way that chicken allowed black women a degree of self-definition and self-reliance (Williams-forson).

The inner workings of southern cooking and eating bear the convoluted marks of an active disengagement with the "peculiar institutions" of slavery, sharecropping, and Jim Crow. This disengagement requires that rather than look backwards to a "long history of grotesque racial violence, etched in the American imagination" (Johnson

2008, 1), these cookbooks paint a nostalgic picture, sometimes literally (through the use of hazy photographic filters), of a peaceful agrarian South, recreating this fantasy past through the space of the cookbook. In this paper, I argue that this nostalgia operates as a site of erasure—the erasure of the labor of slaves, sharecroppers, and black domestic staff in creating "southern cooking."

Yet this nostalgia is paired with an incessant movement forward for southern cuisine. A spate of contemporary cookbooks both unquestioningly capitalize on the tug of southern nostalgia on international heartstrings while at the same time insisting on the novelty of southern cuisine. Expat French-Canadian Hugh Acheson's recent *A New Turn in the South: Southern Flavors Reinvented for Your Kitchen* bears out this rhetorical gesture within the title itself: the presumptively white, non-southern reader will be able to cook traditional "southern flavors" thanks to Acheson's own intervention, a "new turn" (Acheson). Thus, this new face of southern food that has emerged in the last five years is also legible as part of larger national, gourmet discourses that fetishize both hyper-local hand-production and European imports. In this "turn", foodways that are historically related to surviving poverty and even resisting social oppression are transformed as European and gourmet: for Acheson, frying skate (beloved in Europe but not commonly served in America) instead of catfish, or braising celery (a recession meal if there ever was one) in saffron, a most expensive spice (Acheson 2011, 163, 223). Thus, in this "new turn," inexpensive foods historically associated with southern poverty are transformed into internationally gourmet foods. southern cooking is increasingly being represented as southern cuisine.

Yet alongside a reappropriation of subsistence cooking and eating as gourmet, elite food, there is also a "new turn" that more accurately represents the demographics of the South—the unique experiences of first-generation immigrants to the South (Knipple and Knipple) or celebrating mostly undocumented communities that have been thriving in the South for a long time—as in Marcie Cohen Ferris' *Matzoh Ball Gumbo* (Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo*). Nearly every cookbook I examine offers both a nostalgic gesture and a forward-facing one, so I offer the Lee Brothers' introduction to *Simple, Fresh, Southern* as a quick example: "we're inspired by southern traditions and ingredients and often by our library of southern cookbooks. But the truth is we rarely, if ever, cook directly from them" (T. Lee and Lee). By replacing a "folk archive" based on generational experience—and, importantly, entrusted to women and published through community groups such as church bulletins or civic organizations—the Lee Bros. position themselves as the improvisatory masters of new southern cuisine. Indeed, one looking for a figurehead for the new southern movement might do worse than Ted Lee, skateboarding around Williamsburg, Brooklyn in a worn South Carolina shirt. The Lee Brothers' love of novelty is tempered only by their enthusiasm for southern heritage cooking.

Can southern food have it both ways—looking backwards towards an idealized agrarian past and forward towards a multicultural utopia in which the labor of food production is stylized and therefore erased? What happens when southern food leaves the South and enters the public imagination? In this paper, I contend that contemporary cookbooks that represent southern culture outside of the South substitute nostalgic fantasies for the historical legacy of southern food, which is

inextricable from economic conditions of slavery and sharecropping. This nostalgia, in turn, transforms into language of innovation and globalization, both divorcing an ideology of traditionalism from historically-based traditions and creating an increasingly vibrant future for southern food.

I argue that this imaginative production of both the past and future South in southern cookbooks is an act of surrogation, after Joseph Roach's description of circum-Atlantic culture in *Cities of the Dead*, in which memorial performances (such as New Orleans funeral parades) attempt to, but never replace, those lost. Roach writes, "into the cavities created through loss by death or other forms of departure... survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternatives. Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds" (Roach 2). What, indeed, would succeeding even mean in a context where to remember the past means to confront ongoing racial prejudice and class struggle? The American South has numbers of distinct indigenous peoples, has been settled by so many, has microclimates so regional, major cash crops so diverse, and settlement and immigration patterns to disparate that even the "sentimental rubric," the nostalgic dreams of an "ideal and desired South" differ greatly by region (Silber).

For the purposes of this paper, like Silber, I define primarily the borders of the "ideal and desired" South, an performative geography that does not make it less powerful but rather all the more subject to the "tangible products and powerful mechanisms" of southern culture (Silber 3). Scott Romine's offers a more Deleuzean definition of the "ideal South": "the 'real'/'South', a set of anxious, transient, even artificial intersections, sutures, or common surfaces between two concepts that are

themselves remarkably fluid" (Romine 2). Like this two scholars, my interest in cultural memory and performance offers a wide degree of latitude in a definition of "the South." I have selected each of these cookbook authors because of the word "southern" in their cookbook title or their relationship with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I am less interested in parsing border-cases than exploring what additional richness each location allows, from the "indisputably southern" Mississippi Delta, with its sizeable and visible Lebanese population, to the arguably-Midwestern Louisville, which in Kentucky bourbon provides the nation and world with one of the South's most visible exports. Yet despite these fairly stable state lines, part of my argument on the way that cookbooks are able to redraw, or more precisely, erase the boundary between southern and non-southern through the discursive production of nostalgia across regional boundaries.

Despite the heterogeneity of the South across time and place, and despite Romine's allusive and "deterritorialized" definition of the South (9), there is a distinctly southern culinary ethos I wish to explore. In order to explore, in this chapter, the way in which the New Southern Food Movement looks out from the vantages of Atlanta and Charleston to a hazy version of the countryside, I must first stress the way in which the hardships of the countryside are in fact immanent to a definition of southern culture and southern food. Marcie Cohen Ferris uses African American chef Edna Lewis to ground her work on southern food and material culture:

> The early cooking of southern food was primarily done by blacks, men and women. It was then, and it still is now." If there is a "chestnut" of southern food, this is it. One could elaborate on agriculture, climate, geography, historical events, global economic forces, and the shifting of people from place to place to describe the history of southern food, but

> its roots lie in these twenty-one words. (Ferris, "The 'Stuff' of Southern Food" 278)

Taking Lewis as my guide, I too stress the ways in which southern food is always already indebted to African American culinary and agricultural labor. Why southern food and not New England food? Southern food speaks to the colossal loss of African American labor from American national consciousness.[132]

Ferris continues, citing the Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, "The South 'is found wherever southern culture is found,' existing as 'a state of mind both within and without its geographic boundaries,' including southern diasporic sites in Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York City" (Ferris, "The 'Stuff' of Southern Food" 285). Ferris goes on to describe food trucks parked along Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn selling Tupelo honey and smoked ham—a kind of diaspora on wheels. To this, I add a diaspora by mail: The Lee Brothers run a "performance art" mail order southern food business (T. Lee). For $32.50, Matt and Ted Lee will overnight a five pound tub of boiled peanuts to your door (M. Lee and Lee, "The Lee Bros. Boiled Peanut Catalogue"). I agree with Lee that this peanut business qualifies as "performance art" because the performative act of cooking and mailing boiled peanuts inverts the standing labor relations, spatial relationships, and racial politics of the South.

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[132] It speaks, too, of the erasure of Native American foodways from indigenous regions, and of the invisibility of migrant or undocumented laborers that undergird the American food system. I do not relegate Native American and immigrant labor to a footnote. I argue, rather, that this erasure is not particular to the South but nationally and dishearteningly pervasive. For the coopting of Native American foodways within the southern food tradition, see Green's "Mother Corn and the Dixie Pig." For demographic research on the role of Mexican immigrants in southern agriculture, see "USDA Economic Research Service - RDRR99". For a case study of the lived experiences of Mexican-Americans working in the South, see e.g. Mohl.

These tensions, then, create a friction which I find uniquely southern and take here as my object of study— tension between the historical South as defined by the eleven states of the confederacy and the "ideal and desired South"; tension between the "diasporic" availability of southern foods through means both high-brow and low" that relies precisely upon the original unavailability of these goods and insularity of so many southern foodways. These cookbooks I examine all look back to the past, stressing the importance of heritage and history, often without naming the heritage or history of slavery or sharecropping in any certain terms. Hugh Acheson provides a short-hand example of a gesture towards history that refuses to name or engage with the origins of these foodway: "Agriculture has played a dominant role in Georgia for more than two and a half centuries, and it remains the most important sector of the economy today. None of my restaurants would exist without tomatoes from Woodland Gardens, eggs from Jan at Hope Springs Farm, or grits from Mills Farm" (Acheson). It hardly bears repeating that the contemporary small family farmers Acheson lists, providing local foods for white-tablecloth restaurants, are a world away from the history of slaves, sharecroppers, domestic laborers, that characterize Georgia's long agricultural history that Acheson valorizes. In light of this paradox, I characterize the culinary discourse exemplified by these contemporary cookbooks as the kind of "public displays of forgetting" (3) that Roach describes. "Improvised narratives of authenticity and origin" for white southern chefs threaten to "congeal into full-blown myths of legitimacy" (3). Thus, the stakes of this debate concern the manipulation of American history and southern culture into utopian "post-racial" fantasies that deny the very real historical and ongoing racial and economic politics of the South.

And yet, there is a way in which the very act of wishing for a better South creates it. Tara McPherson writes on the utopian potential of the imagined South, "Dixie's past offers up brief glimpses of what forms such an alliance [cross-racial praxis and alliance] might take, as well as powerful lessons about the difficulty of reconstructing southerners and their emotional repertoires" (McPherson). Food itself allows the possibility for connection despite contradiction. Edward Lee stresses the continuity of culinary traditions and the way that foodstuffs can form a cross-cultural bridge—the smoke of a Korean barbecue not altogether different from that of a smoker in South Carolina, "my Korean forefathers' love of pickling is rivaled only by southerners' love of pickling" (E. Lee 2013a, vii). The lactobacterial tang of a fermented pickle speaks its own language, knows no nationality.

Importantly, it is food, not tokenizing Lee's Korean American heritage, that is able to make these connections and enact a more open and expansive southern cuisine. "I can't stand the word 'fusion,'" Lee explains, "not only because it is dated, but because it implies a kind of culinary racism, suggesting that foods from Eastern cultures are so radically different that they need to be artificially introduced or 'fused' with Western cuisines to give them legitimacy" (E. Lee, *Smoke and Pickles*). That is, the real possibility for cross-racial praxis comes not from discursive and indeed racist fusion of "authentic" southern food with other foodways, but from adequately representing the rich and complex heritage traditions that are the site of southern nostalgia. After discussing the way in which cookbooks function as social performances at the border between the scripted and the embodied, I will return to the dangers and dreams of reinventing the South's culinary heritage.

Cookbooks as performance

While the cultural movements I am interested in inhere in countless unrecorded moments of daily life, this paper focuses on the cookbook as a particular crucible for the creation of southern nostalgia and idealism. These cookbooks *perform* southern culture on the international culinary stage. I define "performance" as a mode, rather than object of analysis: looking closely at those undocumented, private, everyday movements of cooking and eating allows for an analysis of the nuance and complexity embedded in cultural self-definitions of southernness. Cooking and eating, certainly, are uncharted embodied practices—ones that are surrounded by a nexus of desires and disgusts—that create a complex matrix of identifications and cross-identifications.[133] Food choice enables a social actor to tap into personal memory, attempt to connect with other times, places, or cultures (with, of course, varying degrees of success and sincerity), to create a narrative of belonging or exotic exploration, to craft an identity. In short, participating in food culture—by buying a cookbook, looking at pictures of food on the internet, eating, cooking, shopping for groceries—is to perform in a social drama that carries actual meaning and cultural consequence. Like the embodied practices described by Taylor in her volume, or those such as dance or song described by performance scholars specifically focusing on the African diaspora (Gilroy; Hartman; Taylor), I argue that eating can create tactical resistance to structural

[133] By "embodied knowledge", I turn to the eloquent capitulation by Joseph Roach, whose work I explore throughout this paper: "expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in words and images (or in the silences between them), and imaginary movements dreamed in minds...a psychic rehearsal for physical action drwan from the repertoire that culture provides" (Roach 1996, 26).

strategies of dominance.[134] I celebrate eating as a performance, a set of choices that conserves memory and consolidates identity, rather than a passive act of consumption.[135] I see this project as a grateful addendum to the historical work of reclaiming Africanisms in American culture by moving from this historical work towards a study of the performative identity-formation in contemporary southern food cookbooks—and the way in which this is bound up with the systematic erasure of blackness (Harris, *High on the Hog*; Opie; Latshaw; *African American Foodways*; Harris, *Welcome Table;* Eisnach and Covey).

Why books as opposed to filmed performances like cooking shows or practices of everyday life like hosting a dinner party or cooking with a relative? Like theatrical scripts, the very genre of these books defines their relationship to a reader as not narrative but performative. Regardless of whether the reader cooks from these cookbooks, the intention set by the author to determine an embodied response on the part of the reader (that is, to cook a recipe from the book) places cookbooks in a category of "performance texts" that share a unique epistemological orientation that I wish to explore. For example, a recipe card with my grandmother's recipe for sugar cookies allows me to imagine, across time and space, the scene of her baking, and experience the nexus of positive cultural associations with grandmotherly cookie baking more generally. I am able to performatively re-create those positive

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[134] General examples of food's ability to function as a tool of resistance are almost infinite: those who wielding consumption and lack of consumption as a tool to resist political power (hunger strikers), to assert ecological or ethical values (vegans, freegans, and fasting saints); to resist hetero-normative hegemony (AIDS patients teaching cooking classes, feminist-lesbian-vegetarians).

[135] For which I am indebted to the work of Michel DeCerteau, especially *Practice of Everyday Life, Part II.*

associations through the act of reading alone, regardless of the fact by the time I met her, my grandmother did not cook or bake—I have never eaten and will not prepare or consume these cookies. Nostalgia works powerfully and affectively far outside of material physical experiences.

Thus, written recipes are a medium for knowledge to move from a writer to a reader in a way that both engages with the power of the written word to transcend time and space and demands an embodied response, if only a psychic or affective one. The contagiousness of nostalgia through affect and imagination speaks to the particular ability of southern cooking to signify hominess, kinship, and comfort even for those with no connection to the geographic South. A written recipe allows the writer to image bodily performances of cooking and eating on the part of readers, and the readers to imagine bodily performances on the part of the author. It is in this imaginative space that identities are constructed (again, across time and space). These written texts, then, create an *imaginative* space to perform identity or consolidate cultural memory, they enable and empower the act of cooking yet do not depend on it—I am drawn to cookbooks, rather than an ethnographic study of cooking or eating, for each of these reasons.

And so cooking stands at the intersection between the stabilizing and the performative, the logocentric and the experiential, the archive and the repertoire. The imaginative space of the cookbook offers the home cook freewheeling access to foreign times, places, or communities, yet it also fixes cuisine into a selection of curated practices. Thus, I argue that the cookbook as a performance text offers a way to thrice-behave the already curated, ritualistic and performative act of eating or

cooking. Cooking (or even imagining cooking) based on the recipes of another opens a space of negotiation between the written word and the practice of cooking—a space of negotiation between the archive and the repertoire that defines performance. The written word allows these embodied practices to travel beyond interpersonal transmission, thus rendering studies scholar.

Culinary mimesis and cooking by feel

The sentimental image of a young girl learning to cook at her grandmother's knee returns throughout many southern food cookbooks, from Junior League illustrations to Deen's folksy prefaces; less frequently imagined (which is to say, not in these books) is the great-grandmother learning these recipes from a slave, or teaching preferred recipes to a slave who would do the cooking. Beth Latshaw opens her sociological study of consumption of southern foodstuffs by race with this sentiment:

> According to [Maria] Franklin, in the antebellum South, black women found a sense of empowerment and control (even amid atrocious conditions) when working in plantation kitchens, often teaching white mistresses cooking techniques and sharing recipes utilizing African ingredients like okra. In this vein of thought, many southern food traditions emerged during enslavement, persisted over time, and ultimately came to signify a sense of "blackness" or cultural identity and heritage for African Americans, becoming a "core diet" even for southern blacks who migrated North. As John Egerton notes, many plantation mistresses and white southern housewives likely followed the instruction of black women in southern kitchens, and thus, it has been claimed that such lessons culminated in the recipes that serve as a foundation for southern cooking today. (Latshaw)

Such remembering is an important basis for discourses of southern cooking, especially given the trend of cookbooks that would ignore or manipulate the foundational importance of black cooks to contemporary southern cuisine. However, even a

remembering that focuses on "southern food traditions" ends up stabilizing "a core diet" that privileges the sociological facts of food consumption over the performed relation of cooking and eating to social memory. In order to answer these questions about the importance of race to cultural memory in the South, Latshaw turns to analysis of quanta: okra consumption by class, race, state. I attempt to attend to the slippery question of the way in which identity is performed through the discourse of southern food.

Thus, the performative quality of the cookbook is bound up with another conundrum—the very artificiality of the recipe itself. The ethos of southern cooking demands that cooking be learned experientially, by imitating a family member. Thus, the written recipe sometimes has little to do with cooking, rather it serves as its own sociocultural artifact of race, gender, and class status divorced from any actual act of cooking or eating. The rise of "coffee-table-cookbooks" speaks to the divide between cookbooks as a script for embodied performance and cookbooks as performative writing that asserts the author's own cultural identities. In this section, I turn to the ways in which contemporary southern food cookbook authors negotiate their relationship with a putative reader. I argue that a degree of anxiety about the "authority" or authorship of the written recipe itself stems from a larger cultural concern about the South's relationship with the concept of "authenticity."[136]The historically experiential focus of southern cooking causes certain "New southern food

[136] See, for example, Warnes 2013.

cookbooks" to stress the importance of experience and imitation while offering written recipes.

One finds, then, a running tension between cookbooks as a site of knowledge production and the representation of learning to cook as an organic process that occurs in the home through female relatives. It is this embodied knowledge of how to cook by feel that is at stake throughout these debates over "the new turn in the South," so I pause my argument for a moment here to explore precisely how these images of learning to cook in the home by feel are discursively produced. By calling attention to the ways in which this culinary authority is actively produced and performed within the space of the cookbook, one can more easily see the ways in which this authority is then able to create nostalgic fantasies or even "counter-memories" (Roach 26). These counter-memories, Roach reminds us, describe another side of the nostalgic antihistories I describe in the previous chapter. Deen's imagined docile and professional black waiter creates a counter-memory that erases the living legacy of Booker Wright's mourning family, a counter-memory that marks "the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publically enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences" (Roach 26).

Some of the authors I interviewed balanced between learning to cook from their parents or grandparents and an awareness of the artificial construct of "homemade" baked goods, while others raised questions about the entire process by which learning to cook becomes naturalized. Others, of course, simply totemize the mimetic process of learning to cook from a female family member to the point that it becomes a mandatory signifier of authentic southern cooking. Cheryl Day, of Back in

the Day Bakery in Savannah, Georgia, undermined the nostalgic image of an amateur culinary education by her clear acknowledgement of her professional training, in which she and her husband hired Jane Thompson of the late Mondo Bakery in Atlanta to serve as a mentor when they opened the bakery as a second career. At the same time, Day not only referred to her real life grandmother as an inspiration throughout the interview, she described her role in the cookbook as an imaginary grandmother.

> CD: And then we kind of likened those details that we put, we put a lot of tips and details, to have a grandma over your shoulder you know, not really knowing exactly what she's doing but just the little details of the things that she may or may not do that you may or may not notice that she may or may not have written down, we just wanted to write all those things down, and make it where people could do the recipes with success. …
> LK: Were those kind of family tips and tricks? Or things that you learned in—
> CD: I would say a combination. I remember I was one of those people that, when I was watching my grandmother bake, I would watch, like every detail. And we have a mentor, a young woman by the name of Jane Thompson, and she— I would watch every detail. Because I knew that if you were making certain things, that those were the little things that she may not mention that were going to make the difference. So we did that. (Day and Day)

Thus, Day both undermines and reproduces the trope that learning to cook occurs within the family and in the home. Most importantly, Day stresses the importance of imitation rather than direct advice for the production of culinary knowledge.

Key to Day's use of the "learning to cook by imitating a grandmother" trope is its doubleness, its slipperiness, and its ability to encompass both a genuine nostalgia for southern kinship and the reality of a small business owner learning to cook in a professional setting. "Learning to cook by imitating a grandmother," then, like so many of the culinary tropes associated with the regional cuisine of the American

South, is essentially surrogative, a “improvised narrative of authenticity and origin” (Roach 1999, 3) which ultimately fails to conceal but only highlights the impossibility of a seamless “ur-southern” narrative of learning to cook by imitating a female relative.

Such advice expands beyond the scope of the kitchen. Food writer and cooking instructor Sheri Castle’s *New Southern Garden Cookbook* echoes this position of cookbook author both as avuncular guide and culinary authority. Her cookbook features “What Else Works?” insets alerting readers to possible substitutions, “so that cooks have other options when that ingredient isn’t available in peak seasonal form or can take advantage of an ingredient that is even more appealing than what they set out to find” (Castle, *The New Southern Garden Cookbook Enjoying the Best from Homegrown Gardens, Farmers’ Markets, Roadside Stands, and CSA Farm Boxes*). By offering a simple list of substitutions at the end of each recipe: strawberries for blueberries, escarole for kale, Castle scripts an encounter at the farmer’s market in which the reader judges seasonality for herself. Castle explains:

> That's how I got into that thing, "what else works," because things are interchangeable. I wanted to do some education. I am a teacher. The longest chapter in the book is greens: greens flummox people. And I knew this, I had just never articulated this: greens fall into three categories. Those you can eat raw, those can eat with just a light amount of cooking, and those that need a lot of cooking to make them palatable. If you can figure out which category it falls into, you can figure out how to cook it. (Castle)

By breaking down greens into categories, Castle’s book both positions Castle as authority and educator and as shopping companion and friend. The recipe both creates and undermines its own written authority.

Ted Lee, similarly, demystifies sites of culinary authority. Here, Lee does not use a cookbook to work through the relationship between written recipes and embodied acts of cooking, but rather speaks honestly about his own process of learning to cook southern food from non-family members. At the same time, he holds up learning to cook from a family member as an ideal, even a "conventional" one, compared to the way of learning to cook popularly represented on reality food TV:

> TL: How do you think Edna Lewis learned to cook, because she was like, on a cooking show? No. It was tradition, and being exposed to a person who had a knowledge, that then the knowledge that was passed on from generation to generation—the idea that somehow you do your time and you go to cooking school and then you graduate and then you get humiliated in a restaurant kitchen and then you somehow show your talent and then you get on a cooking show and then you get a publicist—that's certainly a way to do it, that has validity.
> Maybe it's more conventional, in some spheres, to come through, "I learned it from my mother who learned it from her grandmother." I mean, the way I came to it was disordered. Now that I think about it. Because like, I had to learn about southern cooking from other people, because my parents were hobbyist cooks, and they taught me about home cooking, but they were not southern cooks themselves, so I had to learn about it from other people. (T. Lee)

Lee rightly points to the divergent mythologies that dictate "acceptable" means of learning to cook: the wringer of reality television or the pastoral ideal of inherited family knowledge. His disavowal of either path speaks to the slippery and double epistemological position of the cookbook. Cookbooks are certainly textual authorities for an embodied behavior, yet the authors performatively disavow this scriptural authority for one that is mimetic and performative.

I argue that this site of confusion over the status of the recipe is uniquely southern. That is, the failure of the southern food recipe to capture the complex ways we learn to cook might be particularly endemic to the *southern* food recipe. To

provide a contrary example, Madhur Jaffrey, perhaps the most famous Indian cookbook writer, indeed extends non-Indians an invitation to India's cuisines. She emphasizes the simplicity of much Indian cooking and repeatedly urges home cooks to prepare only one dish with simple sides, cheering, "don't be put off", "don't be discouraged" while listing mail-order companies to supply rare ingredients (Jaffrey 4). Her encouragement of the reader to cook a cuisine Jaffrey fears is "intimidating" brings Indian cuisine closer to the American home cook—in direct contrast to the distancing between author and home cook created by a definition of southern food as instinctive.

> Of course, cookbooks in general both open themselves to a wide variety of readers, an unknowable readership. Elizabeth Engelhardt writes on community cookbooks in the early 20th century:
> scholarship on cookbooks often gets bogged down in what we cannot know with certainty about them as texts…cookbooks cannot tell us much about what Silber would call 'the real South.' In addition, we cannot know the color (or religion, or gender) of the hands that paged through and cooked from the finished cookbook. (Engelhardt)

Engelhardt goes on to trace the ambiguity of racialized recipes in community cookbooks of the mid twentieth century. It seems obvious that using cookbooks as artifacts that tell us what people were cooking and eating is a chimerical effort. Yet, unlike, for example, Indian cookbooks which strive to bring the reader closer,[137] southern cookbooks actively play upon these sites of unknowing. Thus, I disagree with Engelhardt; there is much that we *do* know about these cookbooks. The addresses to the reader, the treatment of history, the aspirational image of the perfect hostess—each

[137] Of course, the discourse of ease and accessibility in Indian cookbooks for American audiences, such as Jaffrey's described above, is itself performative (Roy).

of these *performative* qualities of the cookbook does tell us about the "Real South" in its daily, citational, nostalgic *cultural performance*. As a performative, rather than a sociological document, the cookbook can tell us about how the future of the South is being imagined, and the ways in which the history of the South are being memorialized—or not.

The very ethos of southern food itself is characterized by experiential knowledge, as Sheila Ferguson's introduction to the late 1980s classic *Soul Food* makes explicit, "you cook by instinct...these skills are hard to teach quickly. They must be felt, loving, and come straight from the heart and soul " (Ferguson). Southern food might be a discursive production, performatively reproduced through the space of the cookbook. Yet I posit that this very performativity justifies the series of nostalgic fantasies and counter-memories I have described. The antihistorical nostalgia and utopian imagining which characterize the New Southern Food Movement thrive in the epistemologically messy and explicitly performative medium of the print cookbook. In the sections that follow, I move through the culinary categories to speak both materially and metaphorically about the ways in which different foods perform this surrogative work in the space of the cookbook. In the following section, I discuss recipes for appetizers that celebrate process over product. I argue that they stress the embodied act of cooking in order to point to a generic contradiction between embodied and archival knowledge.

Appetizers: archiving loss

Because southern food cookbooks contain a paradox between the value placed on embodied knowledge and the printed genre itself, these contemporary cookbooks

become the most evocative when the authors point to this very gap between the written word and the culinary scenario. This is the moment in which the performative writing of the cookbook opens the hood, as it were, and shows the engine of the surrogative gesture. Pointing to the gap between the experience of southern food and the written recipe allows the reader to watch the process of surrogation: an attempt by collective memory to smooth over the ragged edges of history. Writers gesture to pasts the reader cannot share; a Mississipian acknowledges that she is writing for an audience she cannot know; Paula Deen writes a book on entertaining in order to account for the improvisatory chaos that hostessing entails. Demonstrating these gaps draws attention to the ways in which the creation of a more stable narrative, like Deen's narrative of happy black waiters or Acheson's of a peaceful, class-less agricultural society, is ultimately a narrative of surrogation.

Describing Eudora Welty's notes for a cookbook that she never completed, cookbook author Martha Hall Foose admiringly details the index of favorite recipes that Welty would keep on the back flyleaf of her cookbooks, noting that this archive "gave us something to go on other than spots and spatters and the occasional onion skin" (Foose, *A Southerly Course* 201). Of course, even mentioning these stains archives the material traces of Welty's cooking just as much as her rough notes and indices. I argue that it is precisely the ability of these food stains to communicate outside linguistic semiosis that gives these traces their power and Welty her status as a local hero. Welty's notes and food detritus, nestled in her copy of *Joy of Cooking*, the sketchy quality of her cookbook preparations, stand for, if not preserve, "the comforting sounds and smells of the kitchens of the South" (201). These essentially

southern sounds and smells are always deferred in *A Southerly Course*; first through the medium of the book itself, then as Foose points outside her own kitchen to Eudora Welty as consummate southern woman, and again as Welty herself fails to conclusively anthologize southern cuisine. And so longing and nostalgia, homesickness, the invoked but never embodied, make up the ethos of southern cuisine. Into these lacunae fall the "improvised narratives of authenticity and origin" Roach describes (Roach 3).

Foose remarks that southern food is representative of an essentially southern longing and nostalgia throughout *A Southerly Course*. Sometimes this appears as an attempt to communicate southern culinary practices that defy the genre of the recipes, because they depend so heavily on experiential factors. For example, this gap between Foose's daily practice of southern life and her cookbook surfaces in a recipe for Bacon Crackers that "may barely qualify as a recipe" (Bacon Crackers, 25). Despite her own disqualification of these crackers as "a recipe"—which I take to mean as archival, scripted, powerful—she continues, "it's not a timesaver, that's for sure, because these take forever to assemble" as she refers to "hours devoted to crafting these irresistible bowtie-shaped snacks." The practice of wrapping Club crackers in bacon, then, has meaning and weight for Foose, just as the final product functions as a meaningful foodway. That is, just because the recipe "barely qualifies as a recipe... That doesn't stop my friend Neck-bone Red from dropping me a note to inquire if I am going to be bringing bacon crackers whenever she knows I will be at a party" (25). What counts about these crackers is the *embodied practice* of their preparation, the combination of flavors and textures in the food itself, and the immaterial but pervasive and real desire

created by the smell of sizzling bacon. By practice, I mean in the sociological sense—via Pierre Bourdieu, Erving Goffman and Michel deCerteau most specifically—as "'ways of operating' [that] constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production" (Certeau xiii).[138] That is, the bacon cracker is a user's active response to the fact that such an object is desirable and cannot be purchased, only made.

Foose can document the final crackers in photographs and outline instructions for their preparation, but Foose cannot document the *practice* of these appetizers—the time involved in making them and the desire that they generate. Thus, this alleged non-recipe activates the ideology at the heart of this cookbook—that at the heart of southern cuisine is a series of practices that defy narrative description. These shorthands—Welty's stains, Foose's hours in the kitchen wrapping crackers in bacon—all work against the power of the cookbook by insisting on the "aura" of the hand-made product, the semantic value of pre-discursive labor. These cookbooks, then, in their inherent contradiction between written medium and personal practice support a definition of southern culture with this contradiction at its very heart.

Grains: continuity versus discontinuity

If southern culinary ethos is "homesick for the place in which we still live" (Foose, *A Southerly Course*, 9), what strategies might serve to combine a dream of a southern future with an unblinking awareness of the South's past? I return to the language of surrogation, in which homesickness never allows for an actual return

[138] See (Bourdieu; Certeau, Giard, and Mayol; Goffman).

home but instead creates identity and solidarity based on a sense of regional trauma, insularity, or loss. Being homesick for the place in which you live is much like being nostalgic for a past that never was.

I posit that looking through the performative gestures of the cookbook towards the material act of cooking and eating might blueprint the kind of utopian future for southern cooking towards which these contemporary cookbooks gesture. When I asked Martha Hall Foose about the phrase "homesick for the place in which we still live," she gestured to the power of food to begin open and honest conversations about "the facts":

> MF: I think it's one of the things that I struggle most with as a writer, that there's this mythologizing that we do in the South, and then there's the facts. And it's hard to square them all with each other. And in taking those ideas or using those questions to fuel what it is that I'm doing, it's the crux of the matter down here. And when you write about food and when you're sharing food with people, you can really address a lot more deeper issues…(Foose)

Thus, by describing techniques, by drawing connections between recipes and modes of cooking, culinary historians look past this contemporary archive that often ideologically imposes a white reader, a fantasy-history. Foose describes her inclusion of a Lebanese rice dish in her cookbook as analogous to the inclusion of tabbouleh at a Baptist church picnic in the Mississippi Delta:

> MF: Sometimes what might not at first blush appear to be like an old family recipe or something that has been on tables around here for forty years—at first blush you wouldn't think—but then it's like, oh, it fits right into what was happening then and what moved forward from there. So a lot of things that you might not think are recipes like that really are. Like tabbouleh, for example. It's not—I was talking with Jimmy, sweet, sweet Jimmy Thomas, you know, in Leland, if you went to a Baptist church picnic, you might have sweet potato casserole with marshmallows and tabbouleh, which would seem crazy for somebody

> not from here, but seems perfectly reasonable in Leland. So it—I don't know, it's complicated. (Foose; Foose, *Screen Doors and Sweet Tea*)

That is, paying close attention to the sensory DNA of certain dishes allows for a more complete history of the South, avoiding what Tara McPherson calls the "lenticular vision" that characterizes ideologies of the American South, a monocular way of seeing that "represses connections, allows whiteness to float free from blackness" (McPherson). Here, whiteness does not float free from blackness, nor does blackness, here signified by Black blues musician Jimmy Thomas, float free of Lebaneseness.

Sheri Castle concurs, "There's also a tabbouleh in the book. I caught a lot of grief from my editor, who would say, 'This isn't southern!' And I'm like, 'Oh. Yes. It. Is.' I think people don't realize the extreme ethnic diversity across the South… I think if I had skipped over that it would have been a disservice to the whole topic" (Castle). I have heard the groan-inducing joke that conflicts in the Middle East might be easily resolved through a shared love of falafel and hummus too often, but here, I perform a similar rhetorical gesture; I trace the "intertextuality" between rice dishes in southern cooking to stress the similarities between many southern heritage rice dishes.

Often, the distinctions between rice dishes are ideological rather than culinary. southern rice casseroles, in particular, because rice is cheaply and widely available in the Lowcountry, and a useful vehicle to "stretch" other more expensive ingredients, usually share the same technique (brown meat, cook aromatics, add liquid, add rice and beans, simmer) and vary only in the seasonings (tomatoes or spinach, ham hock or smoked turkey necks). Yet despite the shared recipe, the ideological distinctions between these dishes are surprisingly vast. Hoppin' John, for instance, with the

vernacular apostrophe encoded in the name, "is primarily associated with peoples of African ancestry, and with justice" (Hess and Weir)—the dish "surely goes back to the first cultivation of rice by African slaves" (Hess and Weir 1998, 102). Rice luminary Karen Hess summarizes, "In the United States, particularly outside the South, rice-and-bean dishes are largely considered to be lowly fare, all very well as ethnic manifestations, which have lately taken on a kind of inverse chic, but hardly cuisine" (94). By way of contrast, "the pilau was regarded as French in Carolina, and surely this is significant. That is, entitled recipes 'French Pilau' would seem to indicate that they had come from France" (Hess and Weir 1998, 57). Of course, Hoppin' John *is* a pilau, and even these supposedly European pilaus were prepared by slaves and later usually African American domestic staff.

Hortense Spillers writes about the nexus between Big House cooking and the resource-driven, potentially resistant dishes concocted by slaves. While these cookbooks tend to draw distinctions between "folkloric" Hoppin' John, with its connotations of Old World superstition and the more pedigreed European pilaf, the technique used to prepare the rice in these dishes is almost the same. Despite the different flavor profiles of Hoppin' John and pilaf—and their different connotations in terms of race, class, and social memory—the consistency of the rice is the same in both dishes. Thus, defining southern food as practices, as a series of repertoires, creates an intertextuality and a field of exchange that an examination of these foods as discrete gustemes, flavors, or foodstuffs cannot.

Indeed, even Hortense Spillers uses diasporic cuisine as an introductory metaphor to her multi-stranded and intersectional essays, "If the rice pilau and those

separate grains [of rice, in Hoppin' John] are close in texture, then a kind of 'intertextuality' was taking place here that we have not suspected before. The rice pilaf or pilau of the region was prepared by black cooks..." (51). And so in addition to the historical work done tracing food*stuffs* across the black Atlantic—for example tracing the pilaf from the Middle East to Europe to West Africa to the Caribbean and United States as in the work of Karen Hess or Jessica Harris, which Spillers quotes extensively—one can also trace food*ways*. The identical technique of cooking these two rice dishes stresses continuity over disjunction. Karen Hess iterates this sentiment in slightly different language, "History is rarely tidy. What can be said is that dishes of such sophistication [pilafs] are not transmitted by the simple exchange of receipts alone; much as with the cultivation of rice, the African-Americans who did the cooking in South Carolina had to have had long experience in rice cookery" (Hess and Weir). Remembering the enslaved labor devoted to producing these dishes destabilizes their meanings by stressing these dishes as process, as event, or as performance rather than two semantically different, stable and archival recipes preserved on opposite pages of a cookbook.

Of the three cookbook authors, the Lee brothers describe this dynamic the most explicitly. In the headnote for their pilaf, they both remark on and downplay the African diaspora's relationship to southern food by tracing West African foods to their North African or European antecedents.

> A purloo (or perlo or pilau or pilaf, if you prefer) is a rice dish that enhances flavor by cooking the main ingredient—often a chicken or some other protein—and the rice together, all in the same pot. It's an efficient method that Karen Hess, in her definitive *The Carolina Rice Kitchen: The African Connection*, follows from its origins in Middle

> Eastern technique to northern Africa, to eastern Africa, and then to the colonial American South. (T. Lee and Lee)

The Lee brothers, then, in following Hess' work and describing the purloo as a "method" rather than a dish do attend to the hybridity and creolization of American southern cuisine. However, these performed practices are recast as part of national, locovore, or gourmet even as they are emphasized as performance.

Matt and Ted Lee change the stakes of pilaf cookery from an embodied tactic emblematic of slave resistance and the resiliency of African diasporic cooking (as Hess or Spillers would have it, for example) to a coping mechanism for urban plenty. So on the one hand, Hess and Spillers find power and resistance in the textural similarity of Hoppin' John to Big House cooking, in the fact that the "secret spice mix" for pilafs were guarded by slave cooks, absent in white-authored cookbooks of the antebellum period: "in spite of being slaves, they guarded their domain as cooks have always done" (Hess and Weir). And, on the other hand, the same pilaf as cooked by the Lee brothers is a sign of plenty, not scarcity: "This dish is a perfect home for those three Brussels sprouts in the vegetable drawer, or that half an eggplant, or the last ear of corn… put the carrot half in there too, alone with the celery tops" (T. Lee and Lee). The pilaf, so thoroughly a procedure rather than ingredient driven recipe, is defined as an especially open dish. However, even here, as the Lee brothers explicitly frame this cookbook as a way for non-southerners to incorporate southern flavors into their hurried weekday cooking, pilaf is resignified as food for the white, urban, and upper-class: "a super hip dish." In the Lee brothers' vegetarian iteration, pilaf is both a 'heritage' southern dish and re-framed for the creative-class potluck—it re-signifies a

traditional Charleston dish, even while noting its geographical origins, within a racially unmarked and ahistorical national context. *Simple, Fresh, Southern*: all yes. But what is lost when southern food moves forward? A close attention to rice dishes shows that false distinctions drawn between rice dishes can erase the African American heritage of much southern cooking, while an attention to the existing diversity of grain dishes on the southern table creates a more representative and inclusive vision of southern culture.

Drinks: substitution and surrogation

Visions of the gourmet South often root themselves in place by calling for locally produced southern foods—it is the Carolina Gold rice, with its historical association with Gullah culinary improvisation, that label Acheson's kimchi rice grits "southern." In this section, I discuss the way in which southern cocktail culture employs the language of surrogation to mark a "lost" authentic past. The limits to imagining a culinary South that is global, national, gourmet and elite show up in cookbooks through the challenge of substitutions. Because the use of actual heritage foods like she-crabs and sorghum allow a redefinition of southern food as gourmet and southern culture as forward-looking, cookbooks that call for these ingredients or offer substitutes for non-southern readers participate in a much more charged exchange than simple substitutions. As I explain below, replacing a hunted turtle with veal has much broader implications for the definition of southern culture than subbing out baking cocoa for baking powder in a batch of brownies. These cookbooks attempt to popularize southern cooking outside the South—this traffic is both inherent to the genre of the print cookbook and explicit in the globalized, "New South" rhetoric in the

prefaces—yet they routinely call for ingredients that carry different meaning inside and outside the South.

Edward Lee, for example, offers a recipe for Rhubarb-Mint Tea with Moonshine with a proviso that moonshine is, by definition, not a commodity that is widely available for purchase. "You probably won't find moonshine at your local wine shop, but if you can get your hands on some, this is one of most delicious and the prettiest drinks I've ever had," he explains (E. Lee, *Smoke and Pickles*). By calling for moonshine, and by *calling attention* to unlikely fact that the reader will have access to un-aged bourbon (Lee does note that some manufacturers make moonshine available for purchase), Lee crafts a recipe for nostalgia. This recipe is then a script for southern identity built on an impossible substitution. Even if the reader purchases moonshine at a local liquor store, the mythology of bootlegging demands that this purchased liquor only surrogates moonshine. Even an encyclopedic definition of moonshine toys with the liquor's surrogative status: "Some distillers are even going into legitimate business by dusting off family moonshine recipes, applying for permits, and selling, well, not exactly *moonshine* since they are paying taxes on it, but a spirit every bit as authentic as those first distilled on American soil" (Edge 201). Lee's performative gesture, then, allows the reader to imaginatively enjoy a moonshine cocktail, maybe even a virgin Rhubarb Mint Tea, maybe even ask at the local store if they carry "the white dog." Each of these outcomes, even or especially the ones in which the reader fails to enjoy this "most delicious" drink as written, reinforces the surrogative failure of this "ideal and desired" vision of southern drinking.

The framing of this recipe looks backwards, certainly, to an idealized and even dangerously stereotypical swill-drinking South. Yet it also actively connects traditional southern alcohols, even those traditionally associated with poverty and alcoholism like moonshine, with a national gourmet interest in cocktails. Lee's Rhubarb Mint Tea with Moonshine is distinctly *upscale*. It is this globalizing, urbanizing influence that Lee describes when he suggests that the reader may have access to moonshine through "a number of bourbon distilleries [that] are bottling white dog for eager imbibers" (E. Lee 2013a, 222). A New York Times dining section expose points to the currency and cultural capital of moonshine, referring to most commercially available moonshines as "the work of young microdistillers" or "hobby distillers of a foodie bent" (Simonson). Lee is selling not a drink, but a dream of the past distinctly rooted in the present.

Walker Percy writes of the tension between the affectation of drinking and a real nostalgia for the cheap bourbon of his Mississippi Delta childhood: "Scotch drinkers (not all, of course) I think of as upward-mobile Americans, Houston and New Orleans businessmen who graduate from Bourbon about the same time they shed seersuckers for Lilly slacks. Of course, by now these same folk may have gone back to Bourbon and seersucker for the same reason, because too many Houston oilmen drink Scotch" (Percy). The demographics tend to agree that drinking bourbon neat is a performance of southern authenticity that is deliberate and even reactionary. In the same way that taxable moonshine is both "not exactly moonshine" and "authentic," so too is neat bourbon both ceaselessly surrogated and authentic. Bourbon can be shed for scotch and expensive pants, but when one returns, it will be only be to a nostalgic

vision of the Old South: “Although consumer profiles note that the average Jack Daniel drinker is an upwardly mobile, college-educated urban male, it is clear that he still finds a place in his heart for a little southern town that has not changed much and for a whiskey that ‘hasn’t changed at all” (Edge 188) Bourbon might create a Proustian experience of southern sense memory, but even this nostalgia is always already discursively produced.

Alcohol, then, serves as a perfect synecdoche for many southern foodways’ relationship for larger food culture. In the previous chapter, I described the ways in which cultural omnivorousness as an elite class marker demands a steady flow of novel and authentic foodways. Within this cultural frame, the historically rich cocktail culture of the South (particularly when it comes to moonshine, by definition an “artisanal” and “small-batch” product) becomes a marker of elite, urban nostalgia. Sourcing the most “authentic” moonshine does different cultural work simultaneously: it hearkens to the real importance of bootleg alcohol to certain pockets of Appalachian southern culture, it grants cultural capital to “cultural omnivores” taking back historically lower-class and over-looked Appalachian foodways, and it perpetuates a nostalgic anti-history in which cartoonish caricatures threaten to simplify heterogeneous southern culture for an international imaginary.

Meats: hunting, experience, and the South outside the South

Likewise, these southern cookbooks repeatedly call for local vegetable ingredients that are not available outside the region, while marketing these cookbooks nationally or intentionally. I must conclude that these impossible substitutions, which render many of the recipes in these cookbooks “uncookable” outside the South, are

intentional. These substitutions, then, are above and beyond the act of combining cocoa powder and butter to make up for a lack of baking chocolate—they are surrogative, performative gestures enacted through the cookbook. In this section, I argue that the relationship between culinary substitution and nostalgic surrogation is at its height when recipes call for locally hunted meats.

Truly impossible substitutions trap southern cooking between an authentic past (Paula's plain grits) and a globalized future (Acheson's kimchi grits). Edward Lee frames this not as a binding Catch-22, but as movement in two different directions: "I think it's always one foot going forward and one foot in the past" (E. Lee, "Interview with Edward Lee"). Southern food seems particularly bound up with the discourse of both forward and backward, of both future and past. John T. Edge uses nearly the same metaphor to describe the Lee brothers' first cookbook in his dustjacket praise, "The Brothers Lee chronicle a South unbound by geography. They celebrate a people loosed from the burden of history but still mindful of the ties that bind. In the Lee South, boiled peanuts and edamame play well together. So do black and white, young and old, native and outlander. You'll feel welcome here" (Edge, in (M. Lee and Lee, *The Lee Bros. Southern Cookbook*).

The tension between southern heritage and the changing South destabilizes even a definition of the South based on land, landscape, or ecology. Geographic limitations to southern culture—the Mason-Dixon Line, highway 40, the Potomac River—are easily overcome by culinary discourse's inclusive sweep. The Lee Bros. southern Cookbook, for example, seems to have made good on John T. Edge's assertions, and its own subtitle, "Stories and Recipes of Southerners and Would-be

Southerners." New York based cookbook author and food blogger Deb Perelman describes their project as "a cookbook written by and I'd like to believe for Manhattanites with a thing for southern home cooking" (Perelman). Thus, to take Matt and Ted Lee as representative of the new slurry of southern cookbooks gaining rising national appeal, the South is being defined quite literally as "unbound by geography:" even the Lee brothers themselves can productively identify as both Manhattanites and southerners.

What allows this extensive cultural traffic outside of the very regional bounds that define this cuisine? Even the land itself refuses a positive and stable definition of the South within these texts. First, the cookbooks both call for and specify local ingredients, despite the (inter)national distribution of these cookbooks, creating a slippage between the material circumstances of cooking and eating in the South and the performative representation of these circumstances. In particular, I trace the transition between the actual act of eating regionally-specific foods and the discursive production of "local-ness" that inheres in international ideologies of gourmet "locovorism."

When Foose suggests turtle soup, those who do not have access to the inherited skill set of trapping and cleaning turtles for meat must make mock-turtle soup out of veal. Thus, despite the very different stakes of eating luxury meat killed in an industrial feedlot and hunting, the reader who cooks Foose's mock-turtle soup reads the same notes, observes the same photographs, and follows the same recipe as the local who cooks the turtle soup. Thus, the reader taps into the same nexus of nostalgia and southernness as the local who cooks the turtle. As fellow southern chef Edna

Lewis rhapsodizes about her childhood in the sharecropping town of Freetown, Virginia,

> Southern is an evening of turtle soup. We would find the turtle, having been washed out of the stream in a thunderstorm, crawling toward the house, so we would pick it up, keep it for a few days, then clean and cut it up. There would be great excitement if it contained eggs, which we would add to the stew. After cooking the turtle slowly for hours, we would strain the broth, season it well, add good Sherry, chop up some of the meat, and make dumplings to add to the soup with the eggs. (*Gourmet*, 2008)

By offering a substitution of such an experience Foose builds necessarily incomplete surrogations into the recipe itself.[139] An attempt to close that geographic gap by replacing a lacking ingredient with a more widely available one only serves to make substitutions for experience, for the material conditions that make southern cooking possible. When a reader makes a substitution of a widely available ingredient for a local one, the result is, like Roach's effigy, "a contrivance that enables the processes regulating performance—kinesthetic imagination, vortices of behavior, and displaced transmission—to produce memory through surrogation" (36). These imaginings create southern culture in its absence, as its absence. If southern is, for Edna Lewis, centrally and eloquently about turtle soup, making veal soup involves a production of memory rather than an act of location. Substitution, then, and surrogation—these are the mechanisms by which southern food, or a southern regional consciousness are created and circulate widely outside even the contested borders of the South.

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[139] I am alluding again to Joseph Roach's work in *Cities of the Dead.* While Roach writes about explicit *performances* of historical memory and blackness in the American South (New Orleans), I argue that performances of southern culture through cookbook writing that erase blackness from southern culture both engages in a similar work (surrogation) and has similar stakes for historiography of the American South.

Foose's oscillation between sourcing meats "experientially"—that is, by hunting—and the gourmet, urban equivalent (sourcing game meats through an upscale exotic meat purveyor) allows her authorial presence, and therefore her self-definition of southern-ness—to double itself as both "authentic" and "far-reaching." Of course, I argue that there is an intense semantic difference between a rabbit shot with a slingshot and a rabbit purchased for $35 from Whole Foods, which serves two. There is not only the ethical question of "meeting one's meat",[140] but also a complete reorientation from the local, scavenged, and free to the gourmet, expensive, and difficult to procure. Instead of participating in a local foodway, one who purchases game meats at market not only surrogates the original recipes connection to a specific (southern) experience and landscape without actually accessing an original, but in fact pays for that privilege. Thus, the many recipes that call for game meats in these cookbooks propagate discourses of locovorism without the lived socioeconomic consequences of eating local foods.

Foose continues, "Out in Galveston Bay right around Thanksgiving the flounder run... A hook baited with shrimp and an angler patient enough to give the hook time to set can come home with the two-fish limit" (158). In this introduction to her recipe for broiled flounder, Foose both localizes her cuisine, inasmuch as suggesting that the reader either is a resident of Alabama or has the physical ability to catch a flounder running in the Gulf of Mexico. The same goes for her treatment of

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[140] In the sense that a physical proximity to one's meat (e.g. the PETA "Meet Your Meat" videos) and the actual act of killing an animal (e.g. Michael Pollan's *The Omnivores Dilemma*) creates a more sustainable, ethical food culture.

pigeon, describing two methods for acquiring "pigeons or squab"—"practicing shooting around the silos" or "at the market called squab" (172). This geographic conflict between regional and national seems as endemic to a definition of southern food and southern culture as both past and future.

This rhetorical maneuvering seems endemic to the group of cookbooks I analyze. The Lee Bros. also focus on meat as a way to root their cuisine in place while situating their meat specifically as part of a gourmet/bourgeois orientation towards food. In their recipe for quail, they admit,

> This is a super-hip dish that doesn't take much time.[141] In fact, purchasing the birds may be your biggest challenge. If you live in hunt country, you probably experience the same swings of plenitude and scarcity that we do: during the season, it seems like everyone's looking to give them away; at other times nobody's gifting, and you have to buy them from an upscale butcher. This last option tends to be costlier, but it isn't all bad, because you can ask the butcher to butterfly them (cut out the backbone so they lie flat in the skillet) and trim the legs for you. (56)

Again, this introduction marks an oscillation between local and national discourses, connecting local foods to a set of localized experiences (quails are free if you live in hunt country) at the same time as connecting them to wider-spread (outside hunt country) discourses of luxury, in which an admittedly upscale butcher enacts those experiences, at cost.

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[141] Ted Lee, in particular, seems to love the word "hip" and even uses "hipster" as a compliment, rather than a pejorative term to describe white, well-heeled urbanites. Here, the language of the New South unwittingly bears the traces of larger historical appropriations. First, it is impossible to decouple the use of "hip" from the linguistic appropriation of the term "hipster" from the black vernacular born from jazz culture. The historical shifts in the use of this term only ghost much larger trends of cultural appropriation from black musical communities into the white mainstream.

Even sourcing non-hunted meats is treated with the same doubleness of imported luxury and authentic southernness in *Simple Fresh Southern*. The text contains an entire page on how to determine the quality of country ham. Country ham is dry-cured ham in either salt and a salt and sugar mixture. Some country hams are smoked. Country ham is traditionally soaked and cooked in slices with a red-eye gravy, although it can also be sliced thinly like prosciutto and eaten raw. The Lee Bros. explain country ham as a luxury product, comparing it to prosciutto or Serrano and offering mail-order sources. In this instance, the way in which the local ingredient and its procurement is described places ham shopping more closely in line with the gourmet import of expensive and hard to find ingredients than connecting southern food with southern terroir or the traditional methods of cooking country ham.

Yet singing the praises of "importing" country ham into New York is not solely an act of cultural appropriation. Where plantation tourism (or even, for my money, the queer Civil War-inspired performance art that Schneider celebrates in *Performing Remains*) might demonstrate the dangers of nostalgia, food is so deeply associated with pleasure and commensality that it becomes difficult to merely malign. For example, Ted Lee describes 2005 in New York City as "the year of the country ham." Restaurateur David Chang put a country ham tasting plate on the menu at Ssäm Bar at the height of his restaurant group's expansion. "Country hams" remains a subheading of the menu, seemingly out of place alongside pork buns and Asian noodles. Lee describes Chang's country ham tasting menu:

> In the South, you would never serve four different hams. You would serve the one from the next county over. But from David Chang's perspective, it was pure enthusiasm. He was giving New York

> consumers an education in terroir. I'm stereotyping the South, and I'm stereotyping the North. Like, the North is the place where all the southern food gets processed through this geekdom intellectual curation standpoint, and the South is like, "No, this is my partisan ham." (T. Lee).

So too, might *Simple, Fresh, Southern*'s country ham buying guide be an exercise in uprooting country ham from its terroir and placing this heritage foodway on the international food scene.

Paying thirty dollars a pound for country ham upscale renders it available as a marker of cultural capital for "cultural omnivores" seeking authentic southern foodways, creating nostalgic narratives that might be dangerously continuous and stable. On the other hand, David Chang's enthusiasm for country ham is genuine, contagious, and understandable. As I argue throughout this dissertation, a nostalgia for up-scale country ham cannot be extricated from a certain utopian impulse. Edward Lee describes the way in which his New Southern cooking is related to southern food producers of heritage foods:

> I use a country ham in ways that country ham producers have never done before. They go, "Oh, that's kind of weird, I never would have done that." And people have been making country ham for seven— six, seven generations. Nancy Newsom would say, "I never eat my ham that way." And I go, "Well, I do." And there's a little fear in that, that she's saying "that's not how you're supposed to eat my ham." But actually far from it, she says "That's exciting. I can't believe in all these years that I've been doing this, I've never thought it eat it that way." And, to me, that means if I can get a younger generation, or different people, or quote unquote foodies, to want to eat it that way, that kind of ensures or guarantees that people are going to be buying ham from her for another generation. So in that way I'm sort of connecting the dots a little bit, and saying, "Listen, if that means that people are going to buy your ham, and you can do it for another, for an eighth generation, then my work is done." (E. Lee, "Interview with Edward Lee")

An interview with Scott's hams shows that perhaps David Chang's enthusiasm for terroir may not have alienated all culinary producers: "Mrs. Scott wasn't familiar with Momofuku's reputation as a country ham catalyst. 'They ordered some stuff from us,'she said, her soft face nodding beneath her hair net as she spoke. 'We also give out samples at flea markets'" (Muhlke).

Just as the issue of sourcing southern ingredients outside the South comes to a head when recipes call for hunted or distinctly southern meats, so too does the issue of sourcing ingredients shed light on the many cuisines in the South. Ed Lee's *Smoke and Pickles* often calls for Asian ingredients, citing that they can be found in Asian supermarkets or online. I argue that this gesture, like the one performed by Paul and Angela Knipple in tracing the geography of immigrant restaurants in the South, shines a light on the existing and vibrant Asian American communities in the South. One could, then, turn to Lee for a recipe for upscale fried chicken and find themselves in a Mexican grocery that they didn't know existed buying chipotles in adobo.

Preserves: celebrating and reinventing southern culture

This same shift from local practice to national ideology occurs with canning. Pickling has become so associated with the predominantly white creative class that the "we can pickle that!" spoof on IFC's *Portlandia* speaks for itself (Krisel). The resurgence of canning among highly-educated, white, non-farmers makes trouble for the representation of preserving in these texts. When Paula Deen includes canning recipes, she does not adequately outline the canning techniques that would ensure food safety. This repertoire of actions, these practices (bubbling the jar, checking the seal), are elided as pickle or preserves recipes become about producing an aesthetic object

rather than going through the proper motions. Martha Hall Foose calls for homemade fig preserves (in the notes, an annual gift from a friend) without any indication that the reader might learn to make these preserves for herself.

In explicit contrast, Edna Lewis' recipes for preserves in her classic *The Taste of Country Cooking* are woven into the fabric of Freetown, VA's social fabric. The arrangement of this book into menus based on seasons and events ties this text particularly to the South. For example, Revival Week

> began with the first spring planting. Revival was like a prize held out during the long, hot summer days when work stretched from the first morning's light until late evening. Memories of slavery lingered with us still, and Revival was in a way a kind of rejoicing. The fruits of our hard labor were now our own. (117)

The linkage of African American cultural life, the history of slavery, and the seasonal calendar makes the harvest central to both recipes for preserves and cultural identity. Whereas canning for Deen, Foose, and the Lee Bros. is a leisure activity, for Lewis preserving the harvest is inextricable from the homestead economy.[142]

Martha Hall Foose's recipe for marinated olives creates a particularly problematic slippage between the land and identity. In this specific example, this discrepancy between preserving a local harvest and manifesting ideologically "slow food" that is marked primarily by its connection to the "gourmet" class widens further. In a sidebar note, the olive grower (Chef John Folse) cautions, "First choose the

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[142] While Lewis' writing forms a clear contrast to the performative repositioning of canning as a leisure activity by Foose, Deen, and the Lee Bros., perhaps even Lewis' "strategic essentialism" merits some words of consternation (Spivak). Perhaps tying these culinary practices to subsistence farming may in fact undo the generative, positive affect that comes from using one's hands in an industrialized, alienated society. The optional recreation of farm labor by upper-class subjects may in fact be in direct response or resistance to industrial agricultural systems that have rendered canning unneccessary, as produce is readily available year-round.

heritage of your people. Herein lies the spice and flavor of your very palate. Choose secondly the ingredients of your area. Herein lies the uniqueness of your creations" (Foose 21). Folse both offensively and effusively insists that the reader stick to their own national, ethnic, or racial foodways and local foodstuffs *within* a recipe for all but the closest-to-home an unattainably local recipe. If a reader cannot source uncured pickles, they must purchase, wash, and re-season olives according to the recipe. This act of substitution stands directly opposed to the essentializing rhetoric in the footnote.

Lastly, the Lee brothers use a similar frame to move between canning for fun and canning as repertoire of inherited southern behaviors in their chapter on refrigerator pickles in *Simple, Fresh, Southern*: "These are not pickles to store on a shelf in the garage so that next spring somebody can find the dusty jar while looking for a bottle of motor oil for the Buick. These are pickles you keep at the front of your fridge" (76). That is, the Lee Bros. frame refrigerator pickles as a discovery of the old foods in the new hip vernacular, "laid-back" (76), "not your mama's" (79), part of an evening's entertaining. While the flavor combinations remain fairly stable for the Lee Bros. (such as watermelon and onion pickles), techniques must be reframed as part of an urban entertaining savvy to remain legible as meaningful performances. If southern food is seen as a repertoire of techniques as opposed to an archive of foodstuffs, the ability for these performances (such as hunting or pickling) to be transmuted into other cultural contexts—both by the print media and the freedom associated with being unmarked by race or class—is enhanced. This seems liberatory—southern food for all!—but ultimately hides and undermines the original location of these repertoires of

behavior in the geographic South and in the bodies of individuals shaped by the economic need to preserve a harvest.

Indeed, those spearheading the "new turn" in southern cooking explicitly refer to history as a burden. Edward Lee speaks to the freedom of being a transplant from Brooklyn, that as a Korean-American and a Northerner he can "get away with" cooking whatever he wants—there is no grandmother telling him "that's not how you make it" (E. Lee, "Interview with Edward Lee"). So too Hugh Acheson describes his adoptive southern cooking using the same language, "while my southern friends and family had their mothers' recipes to preserve and pass down, I had a relatively blank slate to reinterpret southern food my way: to take a fresh approach and turn the traditions on their heads a little bit" (Acheson). The space of the cookbook, then, allows for these chefs and authors to look forward to a "Global South" but only when unburdened by history. Ted Lee's mail-order boiled peanuts via Charleston and Williamsburg, New York mark southern food, but more importantly, southern identity, as both stabilized through the act of surrogation and performative, in flux.

Andrew Warnes describes this conflict as between keywords *authenticity* and *invention:* "the habit of treating authenticity and invention as mutually exclusive…tends to encourage us to deal with… southern culture by placing some of it into one and some into the other camp" (Warnes 346) . I argue that trading this paradigm for one in nostalgia abuts utopian thinking allows for both the political work of a revisionist history and an empowering imaginary. Warnes describes the dichotomy between John Egerton's "nostalgic, full of Jeffersonian touches" embrace of authenticity in his classic *Southern Food* and academic Scott Romine's "smart and

withering critique" of authenticity in *The Real South* (Warnes 347; Romine; Egerton, *Southern Food*). While these debates characterize the burgeoning field of southern food studies, the actual recipes of the New Southern Food Movement seems to "invent formal solutions to unresolvable social contradiction" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 79). The Lee Brothers, Martha Hall Foose, Edward Lee, Hugh Acheson, Sheri Castle, Cheryl Day—these chefs and cookbook authors are organic philosophers in the Gramscian mold. Their recipes balance the performativity of southern culture with a respect for the history of traditionally southern foodways. In sum, I argue that whatever nostalgic haze threatens to cloud these authors' awareness of the (gendered, racial, and classed) history of their region is tempered with their utopian imagining of a more delicious, healthy, and accessible South.

Within the field of Southern Studies, the rise of the "Global South" has proven to be an antidote against pat binaries like black/white, North/South, region/nation. In their preface to a special edition on the Global South, Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer remark that "The U.S. South is not an enclave of hyperregionalism but a porous space through which other places have always circulated" (*Global Contexts, Local Literatures*). Yet despite the fact that it is "old news to point to the changing demographic face of the South" (Griffin and McFarland) extending this academic conversation to encompass southern food is a relatively recent phenomenon. Perhaps Castle and Foose's tabbouleh recipes are as meaningful a way to document the "porous space" of the South as any.

Contemporary "New Southern Food" cookbooks skirt the line between southern heritage and culinary invention. As such, they provide an additional model

for Roach's model of surrogation. As Joseph Roach writes of surrogation, this simultaneous act of preserving "authentic" foodways and recreating southern food anew creates, "counter-memory" (Roach 1996, 26). These cookbooks mark the very space between "history as it is discursively produced and memory as it is publically enacted" (Roach). I argue that "New Southern Food Movement" cookbooks mark the space between history and memory. And while the historical record is changing as academics turn to the "ideal and desired" or "global South," southern cooking still has one foot in the past and one foot facing forward. The creative space of the cookbook, with its ability to stand between the authority of the written history and the movement of bodies in kitchens and communities, harnesses this paradox within its own medium. I return to the epigram,"Memory believes before knowing remembers" (Faulkner). Judging by the recent spate of well-received and popular regional southern cookbooks, Faulkner's evocative axiom still holds. Memory's beliefs may threaten to overshadow knowledge's memory. To return to Ansari's joke, the delights of fried chicken threaten to overshadow more difficult conversations about the lasting history of racial and economic oppression in southern states. Conversely, the work done by these chefs and cookbook authors might be described as imagining a better world. At the risk of sounding extreme, I argue that Chang's country ham tasting menu, Lee's "not your mama's" pickles, Castle's velvety collards "wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 19). Repopularizing foods historically associated with slavery and poverty might be, against the odds, an act of utopian thinking. Looking back can also be a way of looking forward. Memory can also believe in a better world.

In Defense of the City of Pigs: Some Conclusions

The world was supposed to have ended twice while I was writing this dissertation. The 2011 rapture evangelized by the Christian right never gained much traction. As I walked to my car the morning after the supposed apocalypse, some enterprising comedian had left a full outfit on the stairs of the parking garage as though lifted up to Heaven mid-step. Passerbys laughed tentatively. The alleged 2012 apocalypse "predicted by the Mayans" was also met with tentative laughter. It is fashionable, perhaps, to predict the end: the end of the world, the death of theatre, the end of history. In this dissertation, I argue that at moments of crisis, time itself comes under attack. Predicting the end of days is, of course, an attack on linear time. But there are many other ways for time to performatively double-back or bend—without breaking.[143] In many ways, the most dynamic contribution of this dissertation is to hold a different placard: "the beginning is near!"

More specifically, this dissertation argues that the beginning has always been near. One of the first theoretical maneuvers of this project was to develop a definition of utopian thinking that can and must inhere in even the most end-times of times. That is, I have defined utopianism quite differently than a "standard" assumption that utopias are defined by formal qualities. Instead of defining utopia as a place (or a no-

[143] Here again I draw on Richard Schechner's axiom that theatre as a medium is immanently concerned with the doubling of time. I am also alluding to recent works in Performance and Cultural studies that explicitly link temporality and performativity as theoretical concepts, such as Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains*. So too the debate over queer futurity is couched within a basic understanding of temporality as performative: Jose Estaban Munoz's *Cruising Utopia*, Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place*.

place) with clear cultural rules, I define utopia as a blurring of the present and future that mirrors the blurring of present and past inherent to nostalgia. Drawing on the work of Ernst Bloch and Frederic Jameson, I argue that this kernel of utopian thinking inheres in even the most cautionary dystopias. To hammer the point home, I perform two close-readings of plays, separating the utopian impulses of the central section of the plays from their dystopian conclusions.

This analysis of the permeable boundaries between nostalgia and utopianism is my attempt to answer a broader, ontological question; in this dissertation, I set out to question the relationship between food and performance. I am particularly interested in food's performative ontology: what does food do, rather than where does food appear in performance? I draw from the rich and varied literature in anthropology and sociology looking at particular foodways' relationships to religious, ethnic, racial, geographic and gendered communities. Unlike an approach in the social sciences, this foodways research does not start from a cuisine, community, or food and then work outward. Rather, this dissertation is the first scholarly attempt of which I am aware to approach the study of food guided by one ontological, unbounded, and, yes, unruly question. It is one of the fundamental questions of performance studies—the relationship between the past, present, and future. In this dissertation, I demonstrate the ways in which food has a particular ability to performatively bend and double time. Nostalgia (bending time towards the past) and utopianism (bending towards the future) thus frame the axis along which I track the performative work done by cooking and eating.

In sum, I ask, how does food in performance help us understand who we are and where we are going? In my current work, I address the relationship between nostalgia and utopian thinking in two case studies: the ancient Greek comedies of Aristophanes and cookbooks from the contemporary American South. In these two examples, nostalgia for food is entangled with utopian rhetoric, and moving back towards an agricultural, pre-democratic government is figured as a utopian turn. This nostalgia often operates as a revisionist history that erases slave labor and scarcity. However, what I call "the utopian turn" also offers both new dramatic possibilities for characters on the Greek comic stage and a more inclusive definition of the South for contemporary chefs and cookbook authors. My dissertation case studies—one squarely situated in dramatic criticism, the other using performance and oral history as methodological lenses—situate my work at the intersection between theatre and performance studies, American Studies and Classics.

Tracing food along this axis demonstrates the ways in which food performatively bends and doubles time. When I refer to this shifting boundary between the past, present and future as performative, I mean that in the most potent sense of the word. As performance is by (my) definition ideologically invested, these culinary performances of nostalgia and utopian thinking are also ideologically invested in the politics of the present. That time becomes slippery around the issue of cooking and eating makes this trope more important—more ideologically potent—not less.

My central argument is that food in performance becomes unstuck in time (moving back to an imagined nostalgic past or forwards towards an imagined utopian future) in order to critique contemporary political crises and create aesthetic solutions. I use Frederic Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* as a model for the ways in which texts do "unconscious" political work that might even contradict their explicit political message; I define the political crises into which these texts intervene as crises between modes of production. In particular, both of my case studies are concerned with a change in the mode of food's production. Agricultural labor is in crisis within both my case studies: performative solutions to alienation from agrarian life range from utopian comedies to kimchi grits.

In both my case studies, this disenfranchisement from an agrarian government of small family farms paints the agricultural past with a nostalgic haze. The labor of farming and the figure of the laboring slave are erased. Part of this project, then, is a revisionist history in which I attempt to re-value the culinary and agricultural labor usually performed by non-hegemonic subjects: people of color, women, the lower-class. Both case studies are united in the systematic erasure of slavery. In the final chapter, I refer to the way in which these nostalgic depictions of agriculture erase the historical role of culinary and agrarian labor as an act of surrogation. I draw from the work of Joseph Roach to show the way in which the nostalgic fantasies that substitute for embodied histories of (often forced) labor necessarily fail.

In all four chapters, I explore the link between nostalgia, utopia, and the erasure of labor through representations of food. The first half of the dissertation

outlines the utopias presented in Aristophanes' comedies, which paradoxically both look back nostalgically to a pre-democratic, agrarian society and represent that society as full of urban, imported luxury foods. This is a profoundly critical, yet simultaneously utopian, portrayal of Athenian political life through the images of food and agriculture. The second half of the dissertation traces the same theoretical questions in the contemporary American South. Using a horizontal approach across popular media, I examine representations of the South in which the South's agrarian past is figured as free from labor, in which southern food is figured as gourmet, luxury food. Nostalgic popular media *perform* southern food as comforting and free from labor—just as Aristophanes nostalgically performs agricultural plenty on the comic stage. Cookbooks, TV cooking shows, and movies promote images of ease and plenty while they erase the historical facts of slave labor and sharecropping—the African and African American origins of southern food.

This research offers several unique interventions. This comparative project allows for new horizons within the field of classics and performance studies: historians who study food in the ancient world rarely address the cultural value placed upon various foods, and scholars who write from a 'food studies' perspective rarely move from sociological examples to broader conclusions that open dialogue about the role of food in cultural memory. Thus, both the Greek and American examples offer new perspectives on food and culture in their respective disciplines, and presented in tandem provide a comprehensive theoretical approach to culinary nostalgia. As a scholar of food and culture, I am interested in communicating the ideological conflicts that underscore even seemingly banal acts of cooking and eating. This dissertation,

with its focus on comparative cultural history and theoretical investigation of nostalgia and utopia, has prepared me well to speak to both popular and academic audiences as I move forward.

This axis between the past and future—and food's performative ability to make it bend and break—is this dissertation's theoretical contribution to the field of performance studies. This dissertation, then, only begins to answer an ontological question about the performative work done by the culinary. I sought examples that stood at the intersection between looking back towards an agrarian past and imagining a better future. The two sites of my investigation, fifth-century Athens and the contemporary American South, help to root this theoretical apparatus in place. I do not suggest that these examples are linked through some shared resonance outside of the subject of this dissertation; I argue instead that in these case studies, one might recoup a kernel of utopian thinking from an otherwise conservative, nostalgic turn to an agricultural past.

One need not look far for further examples of this agrarian turn surrogating embodied labor yet promising a utopian future. A second volume could discuss contemporary farm tours in California's central valley, the Canadian back-to-the-land movement among World War II veterans, the Grahamites. Through what culinary metaphors was the nineteenth-century century Back to Africa movement enacted? What did they eat on the Black Star Line? I am personally interested in the historically-charged agricultural labor performed at Parchman Farm State Penitentiary in Mississippi: a site synonymous with suffering, a prison modeled on a plantation, yet

also a site of resistance for the Freedom Riders. How does the utopian hope to use prison labor to provide produce to Mississippi's public schools and food deserts balance the continued forced agricultural labor of primarily black bodies in the Mississippi Delta? It is my great hope that this dissertation asks more questions than it answers.

The city of pigs

To describe both the threat and the promise of the expanding scope of this project, I turn to the far past rather than the Californian present: to Plato's *Republic*. In Book Two, Socrates and Glaucon begin discussing justice and imagining a just city. This simple moderate city might be fit only for pigs, according to Glaucon, but it illuminates some overarching facets of my argument. The city of pigs highlights three claims made by my dissertation at large: first, that culinary ideologies are political; second, that nostalgia for a simpler agriculture can be found in both ancient and contemporary examples; and third, that when talking about food, things can get quickly out of hand. It is this last point—the utopian potential of an expanding scope—with which I will conclude. Socrates dwells briefly on his description of the healthy city before moving on to describe the city with a fever; I use the escalation of Socrates and Glaucon's urban planning to demonstrate the ways in which broad ontological questions of food are insatiable. Like Socrates' pause between these two utopian cities, this conclusion is a comma rather than a full stop.

Toward the beginning of the *Republic*, Socrates imagines a primitive city. The most basic building blocks of political philosophy? Food, shelter, simple clothing. Each man produces what he needs and his needs are simple.

> Here Glaucon broke in: "No relishes apparently," he said… "True" said I; "I forgot that they will also have relishes—salt, of course, and olives and cheese and onions and greens, the sort of things they boil in the country, they will boil up together. But for dessert we will serve them figs and chickpeas and beans, and they will toast myrtle-berries and acorns before the fire, washing them down with moderate potations and so, living in peace and health, they will probably die in old age and hand on a like life to their offspring. (2.372c-d)

Socrates describes a moderate life of quiet luxury. Peace is figured as a vegetarian diet, a stew, not too much. In Plato's most basic city, the simple goodness of the food is both an intensely practical concern and a metaphor for the idealized stability of this model of governance. Plato is trying to define justice, but he ends up talking about stews and rustic desserts.

The good life is described not only in terms of food, but in terms of moderate, rather than luxury food. Glaucon then argues that such a city is merely a city of pigs: that we should have luxury goods, should have excess, should eat meat. Glaucon and Socrates then explore the ramifications of adding culinary luxury to this simple farm life. There must be more furniture and flute girls, embroidery rather than simple garments. And land feuds over the grazing rights of animals raised for meat will lead to war. What began as a cursory or even pat depiction of a healthy city—maybe even Socrates' ideal city—is allowed to escalate into a city of luxury that is finessed and fine-tuned over the course of the *Republic* into an idealized model of governance that

has ghosted Western political philosophy since. These culinary ideologies are inherently political.

Plato's "good and healthy" city establishes a yeoman farmer ideal that resonates, remarkably, in contemporary America. Locating the origin of the contemporary slow foods movement in a work of ancient political philosophy may seem absurd, but Socrates offers a version of Michael Pollan's farm-to-table mantra: "eat food, not too much, mostly plants" (Pollan). Catherine McKeen writes, "One might compare Plato's attitude towards the food of those in the city of pigs to contemporary movements for 'clean', unprocessed, or organic foods" (McKeen 72). What strikes me in both examples—the Republic's "healthy" city of pigs and Pollan's contemporary agro-topia—is the way in which these culinary choices are so clearly enmeshed with political ideologies and organizations. Both Plato's city of pigs and contemporary examples of "clean eating" are carefully constructed utopian images. They are prescriptive, rather than diagnostic. And they have the potential to slip, dangerously, into authoritative displays of utopian control: Glaucon's warring city of luxury. Again, resonances between agrarian ideologies in the ancient and contemporary world exist in a number of genres. In this dissertation, I have focused largely on popular culture. I offer *The Republic* as an example of the way that this nostalgic utopianism might inhere within elite discourses as well.

Finally, I turn to the city of pigs to admit the limitations of this project. This project, like Plato's discussion of food in the healthy city, teeters at the edge of a manageable discussion. At one point, he lets go of the reins and agrees to imagine a

limitless, luxury city with Glaucon. Here, I do the same. Peter Thompson writes of Bloch's project, "While a materialist, he also saw that the route from hunger to hope had taken humanity on a series of ideological and theological byways. These byways were not always, however, blind alleys or dead ends. Instead he searched in them for what was valuable and productive within them" (Thompson and Žižek 24). And so my great hope is that not all these alleys have been blind.

As Jameson writes of Utopian science fiction, "Indeed, in the case of the Utopian texts, the most reliable political test lies not in any judgment on the individual work in question so much as in its capacity to generate new ones, Utopian visions that include those of the past, and modify or correct them" (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* xv). That is, I hope that in my desire to provide a comprehensive theory for food's performative turn towards the past and future I have not traced blind alleys but created a heuristic for others to "include, modify and correct." Food's performative relationship to the past and future offers a theoretical model which could itself be refined. The burgeoning subfields within these case studies—southern foodways research and food in Old Comedy—also continue to benefit from the theoretical contributions of performance and cultural studies.

It is a cliché to open—or perhaps close—writing on utopia with Oscar Wilde's dictum, "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at" (Wilde and Dowling 141). Rather than rest at this pat conclusion, I'll use Wilde's axiom to once again demonstrate the ability of utopian thinking to transcend blueprint

utopias or dangerous nostalgic fantasies of laborlessness. Wilde's quip is rarely placed alongside the rest of the paragraph from his *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*:

> The fact is, that civilisation requires slaves. The Greeks were quite right there. Unless there are slaves to do the ugly, horrible, uninteresting work, culture and contemplation become almost impossible. Human slavery is wrong, insecure, and demoralising. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends. (Wilde and Dowling 141)

Wilde's turn to mechanical slavery bring out another set of political, ontological, and historical questions. I only focus here on the way that he frames the problem of utopia as a problem of labor: utopia demands a surplus of labor but views human slavery as (an understatement that I repeat with a grimace) "demoralizing". Wilde's turn to the mechanical slave parallels the other mental gymnastics I have catalogued above that supplants an embodied history of agrarian and culinary labor with a nostalgic fantasy.

Nonetheless, Wilde's essay is persistently utopian. While the anarchic blueprints he offers verge on ludicrous, the persistence of his utopian thinking is clear. "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at…" Wilde muses, "for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail" (Wilde and Dowling 141). Looking out and setting sail is too often an act of imperial dominance. Looking out, indeed, is what transforms Socrates' restful city of pigs into the city-at-war marked by excessive consumption that too closely resembles my political present. Yet Wilde reminds us that looking out and setting sail is, fundamentally, a utopian act of faith and hope. It is, perhaps, at the heart of being human.

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