

International conference

Baku Slavic University, Nancy II University (CERCLE),
Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines University (CHCSC)
(Research Program NAFTES "New approaches to cultural boundaries", MSH Lorraine, Topic One)

THE TASTE OF OTHERS From the experience of Otherness to gastronomic appropriation in Europe from the 18th to the 21st Century

Bakou (Azerbaïdjan), mid-October 2010



Call of Papers Before 1st of March 2010

Presentation :

Otherness has been the subject of a number of important works, particularly in the sociological field [1]. The questioning on the discovery and perception of food and cooking of Others is an opportunity to compare their patterns to theoretical studies case [2]. This questioning, often, but not exclusively [3], posed in the wake of colonial history or postcolonial studies and more generally marked by the concerns of anthropology and ethnology, was, in consequence, focused on the colonized Other [4]. But does it not also arise, as argued by Sophie Bessis [5] or Faustine Régner, if the question of Otherness in cuisine is asking about everything which seems to us exotic, only because it isn't part of our cuisine, even if it came from just across the border ? [6]

At a time of globalization shouldn't this question belong to the past ? Certainly not, since the move towards a uniformity of taste, hypothetical yet greatly worried about for several decades, has caused the (re)birth of national identity discourse, regional or even local discourse. We know that the « mixing and mingling » of food and cooking has happened since ancient times [7]. Therefore the representation of the diversity of European cuisine, about which there are many books published recently [8], leads us rather, to the finding of Diderot : « Tastes vary among different nations, just as customs and opinions » [9]. On the other side, the inclusion at this conference, to be held in Baku, of all Eastern Europe (i.e. the new member countries of the European Union and those remaining on its borders), Russia, Turkey and young Caucasian states, also serves to show that historical questions, from the Enlightenment to globalization, and the still ongoing redefinition of the geopolitical, economic and cultural space of Europe, may also serve to illuminate the present.

In fact our conference program is part of a larger research programme on « cultural boundaries », launched in the MSH (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme) Lorraine's framework (Topic One). Cultural differences, quickly transformed at certain periods into cultural conflicts, and from that into the differentiation from the Other, are well known in Europe in terms of language or religion. However, two subjects, both promising in light of their recent bibliography, and doubtless also highly complementary, have been selected to renew in some way the « off centre » approach to this concept : dance and cuisine.

This research, especially those who will have for historical context the formation of European nations [10], may shed more light on the construction of taste or distaste of Others and the building of a cultural boundary between a community – national, regional or local – and its neighbour. Furthermore we presume that the radical opposition of attitudes of the differential and universal, to use the terminology of Tzvetan Todorov, does not cover all of the reactions to the manner of eating of the Other. It is necessary to consider them dynamically, not postulate that they are uniform and defined forever. To better understand the complexity of how the construction of gastronomic otherness, we appeal to all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and we especially encourage focus on three axes, possibly combined in one communication :

- The moment of discovery of dishes, ingredients, alcohol and etiquette belonging to other culinary and food-related traditions.
- Representation of the taste of others (and consequently of one's own) : construction and permanence of stereotypes, or rather shades to these stereotypes, even their denial.
- Changes in taste perception of others that leads to cross the cultural border; evolution that can go to its appropriation or imitation.

The possible usable sources are numerous :

- Literary fiction, travel writing [11], guides and gastronomic literature, press, cinema, pictures, etc.
- Which must be added, for the recent past, to media sources such as television cooking shows, web pages, radio or television documentaries, etc.

Regarding the last category quoted here, we specify that some reportage refers to a subject almost identical with our concerns. It would be interesting to analyze them in our conference. We think in particular about *Nationalism on the Menu* by Djordje Naskovic and David Muntaner, produced in the former Yugoslavia in 2007. But even if there are not only « food films » [12] in the fictional movies that developed a speech about gourmet, we must also bear in mind that many movies mention « in passing » the Food and the cuisine and that these extracts may be an important part of our Text corpus.

Organization :

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Proposals for papers (abstract, CV, contact information)

must be received before 1st of March 2010 at the following addresses:

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[1] Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres*, Paris, Seuil, 1989 ; Dominique Schnapper, *La relation à l'autre. Au cœur de la pensée sociologique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1998.

[2] Cf. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, « La construction de l'Autre. Approches culturelles et socio-historiques », in Marie Antoinette Hily et Marie-Louise Lefebvre (dir.), *Identité collective et altérité*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1999, p. 79-92.

[3] The recent field study of "culinary tourism" has also begun to address the issue of otherness, cf. Lucy M. Long (dir.), « Culinary Tourism. Eating and Otherness », *Southern Folklore*, vol. 55, n°3, 1998 et Lucy M. Long (dir.), *Culinary tourism*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

[4] David Burton, *French Colonial Cookery. A Cook's Tour of the French-Speaking*, London, Faber and Faber, 2000 ; *La cuisine coloniale*, Paris, Hachette, 2002 ; Damien Mosley, « Breaking Bread. The Role of Taste in Colonialism », in *Food, Culture, and Society*, vol. 7, n°2, automne 2004, p. 49-62 ; Igor Cusack, « African Cuisines. Recipes for Nation-Building ? » in M. Ackbar Abbas et John Nguyet Erni (dir.), *Internationalizing cultural studies. An anthology*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004, p. 361-381 ; Hélène d'Almeida-Topor, *Le goût de l'étranger. Les saveurs venues d'ailleurs depuis la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2006 ; Denis Saillard, « La cuisine », in Jean-Pierre Rioux (dir.), *Dictionnaire de la France coloniale*, Paris, Flammarion, 2007, p. 759-764.

[5] Sophie Bessis (dir.), *Mille et une bouches. Cuisines et identités culturelles*, Paris, Autrement, coll. "Mutations/Mangeurs", n°154, 1995. See in particular S. Bessis, « Avant-propos », p. 9-13 ; Franco La Cecla, « Faux contact », p. 82-88 ; Paul Rozin, « Goûts et dégoûts », p. 96-105 ; Annie Hubert, « Destins transculturels », p.114-118 ; Rolande Bonnain, « Un emblème disputé », p. 163-167. It is certainly possible that our own research leads, on some key points, to opposite conclusions on the foundations laid by this pioneering work. See also Evgenija Krăsteva-Blagoeva, « Tasting the Balkans. Food and Identity », *Ethnologia Balkanica*, n°12, 2008, p. 25-36 ; les deux dernières livraisons (11/2007 et 12/2008) de cette revue portent sur *Region, Regional Identity and Regionalism in Southeastern Europe*.

[6] Faustine Régner, *L'exotisme culinaire. Essai sur les saveurs de l'Autre*, Paris, PUF, 2004.

[7] Martin Bruegel et Bruno Laurioux (dir.), *Histoire et identités alimentaires en Europe*, Paris, Hachette, 2002 ; Gilles Fumey, « Brassages et métissages de l'Europe culinaire », in *Géographie et Cultures*, n°50 "Géographie des saveurs", octobre 2004, p. 7-27 ; Jean-Pierre Corbeau (dir.), « Cuisine, alimentation, métissages », Rouen, *Bastidiana*, n°30-31, 2000 ; Jean-Robert Pitte et Massimo Montanari (dir.), *Les frontières alimentaires*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2009 ; Olivier Etchevarria et Gilles Fumey, *Atlas mondial des cuisines et gastronomies*, Paris, Autrement, 2^e éd. 2009.

[8] Cf. e.g. Darra Goldstein et Kathrin Merkle (dir.), *Cultures culinaires d'Europe. Identité, diversité et dialogue*, Strasbourg, Conseil de l'Europe, 2006.

[9] Diderot, *Encyclopedia*, 1st edition, 1765, Volume 14, p. 430, article "Rue": "Rue, sf (Bot.) *Ruta*, type of plant to flower in pink, most often composed of four petals concave and arranged in circles. [...] In England, Holland and Germany, they are cooked in the streets in several stews. In Italy they eat the young shoots in salads. But no use of this food is made in France. Tastes vary among different nations, as the customs and opinions. [...]"

[10] On the construction of national cuisines and "national dishes", cf. especially Priscilla P. Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste. The Triumph of French cuisine*, The University of Chicago Press, 2004 ; Derek J. Oddy et Lydia Petranová (dir.), *The diffusion of food culture in Europe from the late eighteenth century to the present day*, Prague, Academia, 2005 ; Françoise Hache-Bissette et Denis Saillard (dir.), *Gastronomie et identité culturelle française. Discours et représentations (XIX^e - XX^e siècles)*, Paris, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2007 et 2^e éd. 2009 ; Frédéric Duhart et F. Xavier Médina, « Les espaces de la *paella* en Europe », in J.-R. Pitte et M. Montanari (dir.), *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 301-318 ; Peter Scholliers, *Food culture in Belgium*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 2009.

[11] Is it just a collection of negative stereotypes on the cuisine of the Other? And if so, why? Cf. Martine Courtois, « Sans pain ni vin », in S. Bessis (dir.), *op. cit.*, p. 89-95.

[12] Helene A. Shugart, "Consuming" Otherness "in the Food Film Genre", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 25, No. 1, March 2008, 68-90.