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## Drunken Space

*Wine is truly a universal that knows how to make itself singular, but only if it finds a philosopher who knows how to drink.*  
—Gaston Bachelard, *La terre et les rêveries du repos*

Moderation is often presented as one of the ideals of gastronomy. Writing of the origins of modern gastronomy, Grimod de la Reynière's *Almanach des gourmands* (1803) and *Manuel des Amphitryons* (1808), Jean-Claude Bonnet explains, "More than providing culinary information, Grimod applied himself to creating a culinary style that associated gastronomy and writing. This gourmet literature comprises a literary genre, perverse writing, and a staging of the artist, for according to Grimod, the gourmet is simultaneously a scholar, a libertine, and an aesthete."<sup>1</sup> This melange of scholarship, libertinage, and culinary aestheticism indeed suggested a new gastronomic imperative. However, even if, as Bonnet rightly suggests, "the sexual metaphor is a semantic operative" in Grimod, and even if "Grimod realizes all the possible commutations between the erotic and the gastronomic,"<sup>2</sup> a certain psychological equilibrium is necessary for all three aspects of the gastronomic art to function properly. Drunken debauchery is excluded, for it would obviate the scholarly, literary, and aesthetic aspects of the experience. Grimod was to codify, in the *Manuel des Amphitryons*, the "elements of politesse" that would guide the emerging bourgeoisie in its table manners and culinary experiences. Note the "eight qualities indispensable to the formation of a fine epi-

cure: fortune, taste, an innate sense of good food, a penchant for munificence, love of order, gracious manners, amenity of heart, and attractiveness of spirit.”<sup>3</sup> From these qualities would be derived a strict code of civility at table, one that would regulate specific means of serving and tasting food and wine. Needless to say, this was not a discourse of drunkenness, excess, and transgression, but of appreciation, moderation, and conviviality.

Following on Grimod’s foundations, one of the aphorisms that opens Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin’s famous *Physiologie du goût* (1825) is, “Whoever causes himself indigestion or drunkenness does not know how to eat or drink.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Brillat-Savarin distinguishes the pleasures of eating as such from the pleasures of the table: while the former entail the satiety of the sensual, animal part of man, the latter constitute a civilized experience, that of “considered sensation [*sensation réfléchie*].”<sup>5</sup> In his introduction to the *Physiologie du goût*, Roland Barthes explains how for Brillat-Savarin the significance of this new form of hedonism—gastronomic pleasure—is overdetermined, stemming from several causes; these are organized according to a system of conviviality (a new form of reunion), at the core of which exists, “communication as a pleasure [*jouissance*]—and not as a function.”<sup>6</sup> Culinary pleasure is not mere excitation, but, as Grimod already insisted, it is taste as reflected and shaped by culture and ensconced in conversation and writing. As such, for Brillat-Savarin wine has no particular gastronomic privilege, much less an intoxicating role; it is an integral part of the meal, and should in no way lead to ecstasy or paroxysm. Rather, it has the function of rendering the body “brilliant,” amplifying the conviviality and sociability that establishes the coherence of the group dining at table, and consequently ameliorating conversation, the very basis of the gastronomic genre. Barthes continues his analysis to reveal how Brillat-Savarin (and Barthes himself) inscribes gastronomy within discourse: “Conversation (among several) is, as it were, the law that saves culinary pleasure from all psychotic risk and

keeps the gourmet in a 'healthy' rationality: by speaking, by chatting while he eats, the guest confirms his ego and protects himself from all subjective dispersion, through the imaginary of discourse."<sup>7</sup> Wine, in this scenario, is a conductor of reasoned conversation; its role is not that of an intoxicant, but of an "antidrug."

It is no wonder that Baudelaire begins *Paradis artificiels* (Artificial Paradises) with a scathing critique of Brillat-Savarin—whom he characterizes as an "insipid brioche," suggested by the pastry named after him<sup>8</sup>—noting that nothing whatsoever is to be found on the topic of wine in the *Physiologie du goût*, other than the meager information that wine is an alcoholic drink and that Noah is known as its inventor. For Baudelaire, to the contrary, in Barthes's words, "wine is remembrance and forgetting, joy and melancholy; it is what permits the subject to be transported outside of himself, to make the consistency of his ego cede in favor of strange, foreign and uprooted states; it is the path of deviance; in short, it is a drug."<sup>9</sup> As was already apparent in "Le vin" (Wine) a section of *Les fleurs du mal* (Flowers of Evil), intoxication through wine is acknowledged as a savior of modern humanity, as is also thematized in *Paradis artificiels*:

The profound joys of wine, who amongst you has not known them? Whosoever has had a remorse to appease, a memory to evoke, a pain to drown, a chateau in Spain to build, you have all finally invoked it, mysterious god hidden in the fibers of the vine. How great are the spectacles of wine, illuminated by the inner sun! How true and burning is that second youth that man draws from it! But also how formidable are its overwhelming delights and its enervating enchantments.<sup>10</sup>

The virtue of wine, according to Baudelaire, is not only that it leads to an increase of volition, which constitutes the essence of humankind and the source of artistic creativity; furthermore,

intoxication opens the gates of those artificial paradises where “we flutter toward infinity,”<sup>11</sup> inducing a state of the “hyper-sublime.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in “Hymne à la beauté” (Hymn to Beauty) one of the early poems from *Les fleurs du mal*, Baudelaire directly compares the effects of beauty and of wine, both of which are offered as means of salvation; no matter whether it arises from heaven or hell, the crucial task is to render “the universe less hideous and the present less weighty.”<sup>13</sup> It is as if wine and poetry existed on the same moral, aesthetic, and epistemological levels.

And yet, Baudelaire’s was not an unconditional valorization of intoxication: to the salutary effects of wine (ones however no longer accepted as totally valid by our medical establishment) he opposed the destructive effects of hashish and opium. Though the latter two also permit an indulgence in the “taste for infinity,” he argues that “[w]ine exalts the will, hashish annihilates it. Wine is a psychic support, hashish is a weapon for suicide. Wine renders one pleasant and sociable. Hashish isolates . . . What use is it, in fact, to work, labor, write, produce anything whatsoever, when one can find paradise in an instant? . . . Wine is useful, it produces fruitful results. Hashish is useless and dangerous.”<sup>14</sup> Both hashish and opium create an “artificial ideal,” a dreamlike state, subjugating the will and diminishing freedom, offering a joy that is none other than a solipsistic aggrandizement of the self, a vain “enlarging mirror”<sup>15</sup> that creates the subjective illusion of a “man-god.”<sup>16</sup> Such intoxication is a fruitless, suicidal addiction in which the subject “rushes, from day to day, toward the luminous abyss where he admires his face of Narcissus.”<sup>17</sup>

While the ethical implications of hashish and opium suffer Baudelaire’s reprobation, the aesthetic valorization of these drugs, along with that of wine, follows that of the Romantics, for whom a decided “taste for infinity” was crucial to their art. To these transfigurations of paradise Baudelaire added the aesthetic complexities of synaesthetic correspondences; in hashish hallucinations, for example, “The most singular equivocations,

the most inexplicable transpositions of ideas take place. Sounds have a color, colors have a music. Musical notes are numbers . . .”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, under the effects of such forms of intoxication, the entire aesthetic operation of the psyche seems to be excited to new heights; for example, “Grammar, arid grammar itself, becomes something like an evocatory sorcery; words resuscitate the substantif in its substantial majesty, dressed in flesh and bone; the adjective, that transparent garment that clothes and colors it like a glaze; and the verb, that angel of movement, which gives the sentence its motion.”<sup>19</sup> In their formal effects, such intoxicants create, or at least duplicate, the system of correspondences at the core of Baudelaire’s aesthetic. Compare his lighthearted celebration of wine (which seems to prefigure the specialization of today’s “designer drugs”):

I open the *Kreisleriana* of the divine Hoffmann, and I read a curious recommendation. The conscientious musician must partake of Champagne in order to compose a comic opera. He shall find a frothy gayness therein. Religious music necessitates wines of the Rhine or Jurançon. They contain an inebriating bitterness, as in the depths of profound ideas; but heroic music cannot do without Burgandies. They contain the serious fire and the drive of patriotism.<sup>20</sup>

These considerations would come to sustain one of the great aesthetic encounters of modernity.

Baudelaire records his aesthetic shock in discovering Wagner’s music, in a letter addressed to the musician dated 17 February 1860 (the year of publication of *Paradis artificiels*), concerning selections from *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*: “Generally, these profound harmonies appear to resemble those stimulants that accelerate the pulse of the imagination,” inciting sensations that he characterizes as hyperbolically as possible, specifically described as “the supreme scream of the soul brought to paroxysm.”<sup>21</sup> In the heat of enthusiasm, Baude-

laire's praise characterizes his own emotive state better than it describes the structure of the music, and one might well ask which sorts of stimulants he refers to in this letter.

Rectification is given a year later, in his lengthy and detailed analysis, "Richard Wagner et *Tannhäuser* à Paris," in a paragraph that simultaneously epitomizes the intoxicating nature of aesthetics, the concern with the "coincidence of several arts,"<sup>22</sup> and the issue of correspondences or synaesthesia:

No musician excels Wagner in *painting*, materially and spiritually, both space and depth. . . . He possesses the art of translating, by subtle gradations, everything that is excessive, immense, and ambitious in spiritual and natural man. It sometimes seems, while listening to this ardent and despotic music, that one rediscovers the vertiginous conceptions of opium, painted on a background of shadows and torn apart by reverie.<sup>23</sup>

Baudelaire intercalates into the critical text several lines from his poem "Correspondances," as a reminder that "God proffered the world as a complex and indivisible totality."<sup>24</sup> These are not metaphors, but rather the overture to a new epistemology and aesthetics. In a rhetoric that prefigures that of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Baudelaire writes of the emotions invoked by Wagner's art: "I felt delivered from the bonds of *weightiness*, and I found through memory the extraordinary *voluptuousness* that circulates in high places,"<sup>25</sup> a stimulating, inspiring condition of lightness celebrating all that is implied by "*will, desire, concentration, nervous intensity, explosion*."<sup>26</sup> Wine, opium, and a certain music create an ecstatic temporality that overcomes the quotidian irreversibility of time and the partition of the senses; henceforth, art is no longer a function of expressing states of the soul, but rather of creating metamorphoses, establishing correspondences, seeking infinity.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, Baudelaire stressed a quest for the absolute: "Every well-formed brain bears within itself two infinities,

heaven and hell, and it immediately recognizes half of itself in every image of either of these infinities.”<sup>28</sup> This claim is certainly not without a certain quotient of Pascalian anguish; indeed, the theological is always on the horizon of Baudelaire’s work, and one of his attractions to *Lohengrin* was that it evoked, “the craving of the spirit for the incommunicable God.”<sup>29</sup> However, while the dual infinities of Pascalian theology are objectively external and theologically determinant, for Baudelaire heaven and hell—invoked and nourished by “infinite melodies” mysteriously arising from invisible orchestras—are subjectively innate and psychologically disquieting. The antipodes of the soul are joined at the border between intoxication and delirium: joy and morbidity, rapture and oblivion, all coalesce in an intuition that eliminates time and transforms space, the very forms of consciousness.

It is precisely at this point, through the “artificial paradises” of intoxication and music, that temporal contradictions vanish in an eternal moment of reversibility; spatial contradictions disappear from the point of view of infinity; and the divisions of the senses are overcome through synaesthesia. But this is hardly Romantic mysticism, and the implications for aesthetics are contemporary and unique, as Gaston Bachelard points out, stressing that the Baudelairean theory of correspondences is operative only on condition of “a pullulating and audacious sensualism, drunk with inexactitude.”<sup>30</sup> This epistemology—indeed one of intoxication, where the real and the ideal exist in disturbing promiscuity—operates in diametrical opposition to the sensualist tradition of Locke and Condillac. Baudelaire’s theory of correspondences—where the ideal is compelled to excite all the senses—is one of polyvalence and reciprocity, entailing a sensorial metaphoricity irreducible to sheer sense data. Bachelard elaborates:

The sensations are hardly any longer the occasional causes of isolated images. The *real cause of the flux of images* is truly the *imagined cause* . . . . [T]he *function of the unreal* is the

function that truly drives the psychic mechanism, while the *function of the real* is one of blockage, of inhibition, a function that *reduces* images in such a manner as to give them the simple value of a sign. It is clear that the immediate *contributions* of the imagination must be considered alongside the immediate *givens* of sensation.<sup>31</sup>

Realism and classicism are subverted by an influx of Romantic idealism, where the quotidian and the contingent are interiorized as a system of symbols, and perception is produced autonomously by the psychic mechanism. Like alcohol, such correspondences attenuate the inhibitions imposed by the reality principle, establishing new ratios and relations between the senses; as Bachelard astutely remarks, writing specifically of the effects of wine, “Contradictions that would be intolerable in their initial sensible state come alive through a transposition into another sense.”<sup>32</sup> This is hardly a Hegelian dialectical reconciliation of opposites, but rather the celebration of an aesthetics of inexactitude, an epistemology of perpetual poesis, slippage, transfer, metamorphosis, deviation, *drunkenness*.

In all these states of intoxication, whether inspiring or stultifying, spectacle is reduced to illusion or delusion; perception is increasingly mobile; the sense of self expanded; the apparent structure of the world destabilized. Seeking the ultimate extrapolation of Romantic aesthetics, an iconoclastic technique of theaterless theater is suggested, one that effects a *counter-memory*, *counter-spectacle*, and *counter-symbolic*. The very body of the observer becomes theater. This new technique of scenarization is coherent with the physiological experimentation and theorization of the nineteenth century, which came to understand perception to be possible in a nonreferential manner.<sup>33</sup> Such was demonstrated by experiments proving that the body may produce phenomena without any external correlates, by mechanical, electrical, and chemical means: a single stimulus may have diverse effects, and different stimuli may have similar effects. For example, the study of visual after-

images and hypnagogic images, divorced from direct visual perception, reveal them to often be strikingly homologous to a sort of inner fireworks. In his study of this scientific paradigm shift, Jonathan Crary, in *Techniques of the Observer*, concludes that “[t]he very absence of referentiality is the ground on which new instrumental techniques will construct for an observer a new ‘real’ world.”<sup>34</sup> Such is the reality of Baudelaire’s drug-induced artificial paradises. To seek the aesthetic limits of such physiological effects and scientific techniques would be to theorize not the sublime but the countersublime, where temporality is constituted by a reflexivity closed in upon physiological rhythms and thresholds; where consciousness, subsumed by pure presence, eschews all transcendence; where the imagination exists in direct proportion to somatization; and where, purged of language, the symbolic codes are abolished. Narration is obliterated, time nullified, and the psychic mechanism thrust into a solipsism rivaling that of the mystics, inaugurating the oxymoron of an innate apocalyptic sublime.

This interiorization of perception—the implosion of the senses into a unified source of creative intuition (often aided by sundry modes of intoxication)—was exemplified by the contemporary disintegration of the division between senses, genres, and arts: 1. Baudelaire’s notion of correspondences offered a new aesthetic paradigm, whereby “the *imagination* is the most *scientific* of the faculties, because it alone understands *universal analogy*, or what a mystical religion terms the *correspondence*”;<sup>35</sup> 2. Wagner’s operatic Gesamtkunstwerk was the culmination of the genre of the total work of art, combining all the arts in a unified scene; 3. investigations of synaesthesia abounded in the scientific literature, such that experiments were even considered to cross-connect nerves in order to permit the subject to see sounds and hear colors;<sup>36</sup> 4. literary hybridization became common practice, and new life was given to the ancient genre of the encyclopedic form or “anatomy,” as Northrop Frye later termed it, that heterogeneous literary form which includes all forms (already reconceived by Romantic

theorization), where the very notion of genres begins to disintegrate from within.<sup>37</sup> Referentiality and representation were no longer structural preconditions of artistic production.

However, intuitions of expanded consciousness and novel styles did not always serve Baudelaire's cause; culinary and landscape metaphors abound in this epoch, and were occasionally put to particularly acerbic use against Baudelaire. Consider the vitriolic attack in the form of a recipe, directed against *Les fleurs du mal*, that appeared in *Le Figaro* four years after the infamous trial of 1857: "Cut open a gamy and already decomposing cadaver, stuff it with well turned verse and eccentricities in as many parts as you can, dust it with paradoxes, dress it with Flowers of evil, and serve it very stiff."<sup>38</sup> Consider also the article written by Sainte-Beuve, in *Le Constitutionnel* of 20 January 1862, entitled "Des prochaines élections à l'Académie," concerning Baudelaire's tragicomic candidacy for the Académie Française:

. . . in short, M. Baudelaire has found the means of building himself, at the end of a peninsula which is said to be uninhabitable, and beyond the bounds of known romanticism, a bizarre kiosk, very ornate, very overdone, but elegant and mysterious: a kiosk in which one grows drunk on abominable drugs in cups of exquisite porcelain. This singular kiosk, made of marquetry, of a deliberate and composite originality, which, for some time, has drawn people's eyes to the furthest extremity of the romantic Kamchatka, is what I call *the Baudelaire folly*.<sup>39</sup>

With its distinctly appropriate evocation of Poe, this evaluation is telling. Not only is the double entendre of the word *folly* (madness and garden folly) of particular interest in this regard, but the very use of puns, mixed metaphors, and allegories takes on a new and poignant meaning in the context of the complex intermingling of senses and genres in this epoch, usages whose

profundity was fully revealed at the turn of the century in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

The aesthetic celebration of intoxication and the subsequent inmixing of the senses would find its most celebrated poetic statement in Rimbaud's claim, in a letter of 1871, that the poet must, "arrive at the unknown through the disordering of *all the senses*."<sup>40</sup> That same year, Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*, where, inspired by Wagnerian opera, he interprets classic Greek tragedy according to the mythopoeic differentiation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, respectively conceived as "the separate art worlds of dreams and intoxication,"<sup>41</sup> domains ruled by the gods of form and excess. In the state of Dionysian frenzy—where the symbolic faculties are excited to their fullest extent—the *principium individuationis* (the principle of self-identity) disintegrates, revealing the terrors and ecstasies of existence, thus entailing precisely the "psychotic risks" and "subjective dispersion" of which Barthes warned. The function of Greek tragic drama is to transform Dionysian intoxication into Apollonian vision, to transform libido into sign. Such is the foundation of a new aesthetic phenomenon:

The essence of nature is now to be expressed symbolically; we need a new world of symbols; and the entire symbolism of the body is called into play, not the mere symbolism of the lips, face, and speech but the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic movement. Then the other symbolic powers suddenly press forward, particularly those of music, in rhythmic, dynamics, and harmony.<sup>42</sup>

Whereas in *The Birth of Tragedy* the dualism is such that Apollo creates a hallucinatory world of visions to veil the primal chaos represented by Dionysus, in Nietzsche's later works Apollo is

subsumed within Dionysus, such that, as Nietzsche already suggests in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Dionysian states entail self-oblivion, where “*excess* revealed itself as truth.”<sup>43</sup> Such Dionysian intoxication implies a principle of nonrepresentation—ruled by force, not form—which not only supported a profound reinterpretation of Greek tragedy, but also suggested a radical transformation of modern art and aesthetics. The end of metaphysics is prefigured by a drunken *diasparagmos*, by the ritual murder, dismemberment, and eating of the ancient god. Indeed, *in vino veritas*.

Subsequently, the ultimate metaphysical justification of intoxication was expressed in Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols* in terms of the psychology of the artist, specifically through the integration of the form giving Apollonian into the energy providing Dionysian aspects of the soul:

*Toward a psychology of the artist.* If there is to be art, if there is to be any aesthetic doing and seeing, one physiological condition is indispensable: frenzy. Frenzy must first have enhanced the excitability of the whole machine; else there is no art. All kinds of frenzy, however diversely conditioned, have the strength to accomplish this: above all, the frenzy of sexual excitement, this most ancient and original form of frenzy. Also the frenzy that follows all great cravings, all strong affects; the frenzy of feasts, contests, feats of daring, victory, all extreme movement; the frenzy of cruelty; the frenzy in destruction; the frenzy under certain meteorological influences, as for example the frenzy of spring; or under the influence of narcotics; and finally the frenzy of will, the frenzy of an overcharged and swollen will.<sup>44</sup>

Though sexual frenzy is given ontological preference, all sorts of frenzy are appropriate to this end, including that of feasts and narcotics (the former of which have received little com-

ment in the vast critical literature on Nietzsche), and notably that of volition, also the key to Baudelaire's psychology of the artist. The goals are the enrichment of the world through the artist's volition and fullness; the idealization and perfection of existence; the transformation of the self into a work of art; and the overcoming of Time and its terrible restrictions.

To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all "it was" into a "thus I willed it"—that alone should I call redemption. . . . "It was"—that is the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy. . . . That time does not run backwards, that is his wrath. . . . This, indeed this alone, is what *revenge* is: the will's ill will against time and its "it was." . . . All "it was" is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, "But thus I willed it."<sup>45</sup>

Nietzsche's philosophy is consequently regulated by the hysteron-proteron, that trope which reverses the natural or dramatic order of events, thus abolishing the seemingly inexorable linearity of time. These are precisely the effects associated with Wagnerian opera. Consider Theodor Adorno's characterization of the phantasmagoria in Wagner, arguing that "the absence of any real harmonic progression becomes the phantasmagorical emblem for time standing still. . . . The standing-still of time and the complete occultation of nature by means of phantasmagoria are thus brought together in the memory of a pristine age where time is guaranteed only by stars."<sup>46</sup> It is in this context, for example, that "Tannhäuser mirrors the bacchanal from the remoteness of heathen prehistory on the dream stage of his own body."<sup>47</sup> In this eminently Nietzschean read-

ing, the Dionysian bacchanal is represented by the Apollonian dream state: intoxication suppresses time, symbolism becomes body symbolism, and the spectator partakes in the lives of the gods.

In the penultimate chapter of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “The Drunken Song,” a veritable ode to joy, Zarathustra proclaims the key to his new philosophy, summed up in the sentence: “All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored—oh, then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants—eternity.*”<sup>48</sup> Nietzsche’s aesthetic of intoxication thus parallels that of Baudelaire, most succinctly expressed in one of his *Petits poèmes en prose* (Little Prose Poems): “It is time to get intoxicated! So as not to be the martyred slaves of Time, ceaselessly intoxicate yourselves! With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you wish.”<sup>49</sup> Wine is tantamount to an epistemological drug, since drunkenness entails the negation of time. Baudelaire’s practice and aesthetic of intoxication, and the consequent transformations of space and time, bear striking parallels with Nietzsche’s philosophy; note that for Baudelaire, in a certain aesthetic state of consciousness, “[t]his imagination endures an eternity. With a great effort, a moment of lucidity permits you to look at the clock. The eternity had lasted one minute.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, alas, this eternity is all too ephemeral.

In both Baudelaire and Nietzsche, we are offered the wine without the feast. It must be stressed, in gastronomic honesty and exclusive of any ad hominem arguments, that the notorious water drinker Nietzsche was far more sensitive to meteorological conditions than to wine; and that the equally notorious alcohol and opium abuser Baudelaire was often intoxicated far beyond the limits of gastronomic appreciation. These limits and dangers are both practical and metaphysical. Marcel Detienne reminds us, in *Dionysos à ciel ouvert* (Dionysius Under the Open Sky) that the people of ancient Corinth celebrated the apparition of Dionysus in his full duality by presenting, in the agora, two absolutely identical

statues of gilded wood whose faces were decorated with vermillion, distinguished only by their names: *Dionysus Baccheios* and *Dionysus Lysios* or *Katharsios*, the former bringing misunderstanding, drunkenness, delirium, madness, and murder, the latter offering benevolent catharsis and purification.<sup>51</sup> The effects of wine are twofold, and to neglect the expiatory powers of Dionysus Katharsios is to portend the worst.

As was already made clear in terms of the social and ethical virtues of wine, it must not be forgotten, as the ancient Greeks knew all too well, that the quotidian realities of intoxication are different from its aesthetic benefits, and that there is both a qualitative and a quantitative threshold between inebriated joy and empoisonment. For while the difference between everyday drunkenness and aesthetic intoxication for Baudelaire and Nietzsche is a qualitative matter, there are also quantitative differences between degrees of intoxication, differences perhaps more astutely recognized in popular and scientific, rather than ideal, terms.

A lighthearted quantitative example of such proselytizing for temperance is the “*Thermomètre du Pochard*” (The Boozer’s Thermometer), which appeared on Parisian café counters toward the end of the nineteenth century, in order to gauge six degrees of drunkenness:

1. sober [*à jeun*]
2. under way; gay [*en train; gai*]
3. going strong; moving along; tipsy [*lancé; parti; pompette*]
4. boozed; wrecked [*poivré; culotté*]
5. totaled [*compté; à son compte*]
6. round as a marble; full as an egg [*rond comme une bille; plein comme un oeuf*].<sup>52</sup>

In a more literary vein, Balzac, in his *Traité des excitants modernes* (Treatise on Modern Stimulants, 1839), recounts a bet that led to a drinking bout with a friend; seventeen bottles of wine and two cigars later, the friend collapsed on a couch and

Balzac, the obvious winner, went off to the opera. He describes his experience as follows:

What I heard of the overture of *La Gazza* equalled the fantastic sounds that fall from the heavens into the ear of a woman in ecstasy. The musical phrases reached me through brilliant clouds, stripped of all the imperfections that enter men's works, and full of all that the artist's sensibility imprinted on it of the divine. The orchestra appeared to me like a vast instrument where there occurred some sort of work whose movement and mechanism I could not grasp, as I saw most indistinctly the necks of the basses, the stirring bows, the golden curves of the trombones, the clarinettes, and the lights, but no men whatsoever. Only one or two immobile powdered heads, and two swelled, grimacing faces that disquieted me. I was half asleep.<sup>53</sup>

Although this description seems to prefigure Baudelaire's account of *Tannhäuser*, Balzac in fact concludes that "drunkenness is a temporary poisoning,"<sup>54</sup> and that physiological intoxication guarantees aesthetic deformation. For this writer, for whom coffee was the most effective literary stimulant, drunkenness is seen to be a social evil, without aesthetic recompense.

But more seriously, scientific tracts began to appear beginning at midcentury, studying the causes and effects of alcohol intoxication, though not coincidentally often studiously attempting to separate the healthful and creative effects of wine from the destructive effects of all other spirits. At the very moment that intoxication was rediscovered as a transgressive aesthetic principle, it also began to be conceived of as a public menace. The Société Française de Tempérance was founded in 1872, and on 23 January 1873 a law to suppress public drunkenness and combat alcoholism was instituted, more in response to the events of the Paris Commune than to the

inflammatory statements of a Rimbaud.<sup>55</sup> As intoxication became central to a certain modern, indeed decadent and transgressive, aesthetics, it was simultaneously stigmatized by the powers that be. Ideal spleen and common drunkenness merged, and art was confronted with everyday reality.

Certainly, the Baudelairian revolution achieved yet another synthesis, beyond those of the senses (synaesthesia) and the arts (Gesamtkunstwerk): that of the lexical definitions of drunkenness. Consider the three major meanings of drunkenness [*ivresse*] according to the dictionary *Littré*: 1. The ensemble of phenomena determined by an excess of fermented drink, beginning with disturbances of reasoning through the state of delirium, of involuntary sleep, and even death; 2. Figurative. Disturbance produced in the soul by a passion, by a possession; 3. Poetic enthusiasm.<sup>56</sup> The new aesthetic of intoxication entails the *incorporation* (in the literal sense of the term) of the physical, figurative, and poetic meanings of drunkenness; the synthesis of these troubles, this enthusiasm, and this poetics of inexactitude, errancy, illusion, and perversion offers one of the epistemological foundations of a nascent modernism, where all epistemology becomes aesthesiology, a logos of the senses.<sup>57</sup> While Kant had shown in *The Critique of Judgment* that there are no a priori aesthetic laws, the aesthetics of intoxication in Baudelaire and Nietzsche reveal that there are also no a priori epistemological laws divorced from the corporeal symbolic, if not the negative condition of the desire to abolish the old Kantian forms of consciousness, space, and time. Baudelairian intoxication offers an ironic reversal of the Kantian sublime: for Kant, the sublime is based on the *interiorization* of infinity caused by certain terrifying aesthetic effects; for Baudelaire, this apperception of infinity now becomes a result of the *incorporation* of mind-altering drugs. Consequently, not only is a new theory of the senses offered, but a new ratio of interaction between the senses is established. As Baudelaire suggests in

*Fusées*: “All is number. The number is in *everything*. The number is in the individual. Drunkenness is a number.”<sup>58</sup> Drunkenness, in this respect, follows its own laws, even if such laws now reveal the lineaments of inexactitude, indeterminacy, and the aleatory. The calculable, quantitative, isotropic coordinates of Cartesian mathematics no longer suffice to describe perception; space and time are now understood in strictly phenomenal, qualitative, heterotropic terms, describing unnatural, shifting, heterogeneous horizons of perception. Deprived of all a priori aesthetic structures, aesthetic discourse—and a fortiori the discourse of gastronomy—must henceforth be written in the first person singular; not on the basis of a subjectivization of values, but rather as a valorization of the corporeal and historical dimension of existence. Modernist poetics is determined by singularities, not laws.

A new aesthetics arose, one that finally established the preconditions for considering all the arts—including cuisine, as well as all other “crafts”—as taking part in an interlocking and nonhierarchized complex conjoining all the arts and articulated by all the senses. These conditions consist of the following:

1. The sublime is interiorized, giving rise to a corporeal sublime (an operation extrapolated from Romantic poetics);
2. Sublimation is differentiated from the sublime, such that aesthetics becomes as much a matter of desublimation as of sublimation;
3. The aesthetic field is opened to perverse libidinal cathexes (fostered by both extreme intoxication and unlimited libido);
4. Perception is conceived as a synaesthetic system (homologous with the symbolic system of correspondences), thus obviating the classic hierarchization of the senses;
5. The arts are freed from mimesis and representation;
6. The notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* authorizes the potential inmixing of forms and genres;

7. The hybridization of artistic genres is established as a paradigmatic practice.

In this originary moment of modernism, every art form now had a place (however actual, however potential) in the synaesthetic matrix; indeed, all the senses needed to be aesthetically justified and represented. Cuisine, along with the other arts—with their attendant representational, symbolic, and allegorical doubles—would now have a determined place in the formal structure of the system of the fine arts. Henceforth, cuisine too would have access to the discourse of sublimation and the sublime, as well as to the full range of free-flowing libidinal cathexes, perverse and otherwise. “Transcendent cuisine” would no longer need to seek a transcendental base in order to enter the aesthetic domain; its sensual correspondences would suffice.

This inmixing of the arts also took place in the culinary domain. Consider the following description of an early nineteenth-century *pièce montée*, as described by Grimod de la Reynière:

Monsieur Dutfoy did not limit himself to the resources offered him by architecture; he also sought, in the art of pyrotechnics, new means of varying our pleasures. And the fireworks he adapted for his decorations, arising from amidst his palaces and temples, produced an effect easier to imagine than to describe. At the desired moment, a carefully hidden wick was lit, which burned for several minutes. Suddenly the temple was covered with odorous sparks of all colors, a thousand showers shooting to the ceiling. The guests, whose eyes and noses were simultaneously delighted [*jouissent*], stood under a vault of flamboyant sparks. The sound, the odor and the blaze of this unexpected spectacle caused a universal drunkenness, trou-

bled by no fear of danger; for these sparks, despite their blaze, are so very innocent, that the finest fabrics were not damaged. We must admit that this sort of dessert is a veritable drama, and that it would be hard to imagine how one might end a sumptuous meal in a livelier and more dazzling manner.<sup>59</sup>

Already, before the post-Romantic thematizations of synaesthesia and the Gesamtkunstwerk, before the breakdown of representation and the dismantling of the boundaries between art and craft, the unlikely combination of cuisine, architecture, and pyrotechnics effected a synaesthetically organized “drama” evoking the joys of “universal drunkenness.” It is as if this *pièce montée*—a footnote (or perhaps ironic pastiche) to the great *Divertissements de Versailles* and their cosmogonic fireworks, as well as being a superb prolegomena to Antonin Carême’s (1783–1833) masterpieces of decorative cuisine as expressed in the forward to the third edition of his *Le Pâtissier Pittoresque* (The Picturesque Pastry Chef), where he notes the extent of his passion for architecture: “I would have ceased being a pastry chef had I blindly abandoned myself to my natural taste for the picturesque genre, such as I conceive it for the embellishment of princes’ parks and private gardens.”<sup>60</sup>—were the signal of a radical transformation of epistemic moments.

At the dawn of modernism, the synthetic and synaesthetic effects of the great seventeenth-century festivals were condensed and interiorized, first through Romanticism, and then in the light of that philosophical intoxication originating in Baudelaire, celebrated by Verlaine and Rimbaud, and theorized by Nietzsche (via Wagner) as a precondition for the end of metaphysics. The consequent transformation of aesthetics is well summed up by Bachelard: “Lyrical drunkenness no longer only appears as a parody of dionysian drunkenness.”<sup>61</sup> As wine loosened aesthetic inhibitions and reconfigured the sensorial matrix, the realm of the senses was transformed into a bacchanal. While the nineteenth century witnessed the overt modern-

ization and codification of French haute cuisine from Carême through Escoffier, the aesthetics of intoxication from Baudelaire through Nietzsche covertly transformed aesthetic standards and artistic forms, inaugurating a new discursive modality for cuisine that is yet to be fully theorized. Although intoxication certainly impairs the gastronomic faculties, these transgressive aesthetics—conceived in conjunction with the physiology of synaesthesia and the aesthetics of the total work of art—reconfigured the aesthetic matrix such that a potential discursive space was established that would eventually permit haute cuisine to take its place amongst the *beaux arts*. The neoclassic bacchantes that supported the garlands at the feasts of Versailles would be reincarnated as revelers in the debauched frenzy of Zarathustra's table.