Nathalie Cooke

Montreal in the Culinary Imagination[1]

Noah Richler argues that “Nowhere” becomes “Somewhere” through art, which is essential to a landscape's coming into consciousness. "The sum of stories that are told about or in a particular landscape," he writes, "create an impression of a place that is imaginary, but functions as any map would, for places are as real as persons, but they have no voice and so they speak to us through art."[2] In the case of Montreal, the city most famously sprang to life in pages penned by Hugh MacLennan, Brian Moore, Mordecai Richler, Gabrielle Roy, F.R. Scott and Michel Tremblay among others. Just as its writers mapped Montreal's peoples and streetscapes, so too they wrote about Montreal's distinctive foodways. Photographers and illustrators captured the idiosyncratic characters and animals - yes, live animals - that animated Montreal's restaurant food scene.

Consequently, this study asks, how do Montreal foodways - real, represented, and imagined - work in the construction and stabilization (or destabilization) of place. In what ways were and are Montreal's foodways represented in the culinary imagination? What can such literary maps tell us about Montreal cuisine, and what has shaped Montrealers' food choices? To answer such questions, this study adopts a definition of place that emerges in the 1970s from humanistic geography, one that conceptualizes space as “a particular location that has acquired a set of meanings and attachments.”[3] As T. Cresswell explains, “While space was the favored object of the spatial scientist (and is still the favored object of social theorists), it is the way space becomes endowed with human meaning and is transformed into place that lies at the heart of humanistic geography.” Cresswell adds, “This is the most important contribution of

humanistic geography to the discipline - the distinction between an abstract realm of space and an experienced and felt world of place."[4] However, the particular notion of place discussed here gains nuance from later geographical commentators like Doreen Massey, who points out that places are constantly in process, dynamic sites that are part of the comings and goings of mobile societies.[5] Place, for Massey, is the function of practice and careful nurturing, its identity woven from the threads of, among other things, creative cultural productions, including a diversity of literary forms - in addition to such other literary forms as anecdote, folklore, brand literature, tourist narrative and popular fiction.[6] Seen through this lens, and with a specific focus on the city's culinary sense of place, Montreal has become a city closely identified with distinctive food traditions, one known predominantly for the more popular and affordable foodstuffs like Montreal bagels and smoked meat, in addition to the culinary sophistication of some of Canada's best restaurants.

Using Montreal as an example, this study argues that the culinary imagination is not only mimetic in the sense of representing socio-historical and cultural context, but also *constitutive* of place itself. That is, the city's cultural productions actually contribute to shaping as well as articulating a sense of place (where place is understood according to usage in the field of human geography). Examples explored here include cookbooks, restaurant histories, interviews with chefs, in addition to Gabrielle Roy's popular novel set in Montreal, *Bonheur d'occasion* (*The Tin Flute*), a historical commentary on the Montreal fire by Afua Cooper, and an acerbic poem about Montreal's language politics seen through the lens of a food menu by F.R. Scott.

In particular, through an extended glance at the role of Jewish foods and foodways in Montreal's culinary imaginary, including a discussion of the endurance of Jewish foodways within the city via the restaurants, popular/iconic food items, and literary stories despite the

city's changing demographics, this study points to the *enduring* hold of certain "culinary imaginaries." In this way, the city's culinary cultural productions are *constitutive* of place, where place is understood to be both process and practice. Further, the case study of Montreal reveals that the culinary imagination is at once, and paradoxically, *dynamic and enduring.* In the case of Montreal it seems like the culinary imagination holds sway - and carries certain imaginaries *through* time, *across* space, and *between* cultural groups - even as demographics shift, neighbourhoods evolve, and new food imaginings enter into the mix.

What Is the Culinary Imagination?

Like other contributions to this collection, my study of Montreal necessarily poses the central question: what is the "culinary imagination"? W.W. Norton describes a recent book by Sandra Gilbert by that same title, *The Culinary Imagination,* as tracing "the social, aesthetic, and political history of food"[7] - food's connotations, in other words, as much as its denotations. Bee Wilson's review of Gilbert's book further emphasizes the second word in the phrase "culinary imagination," tracing Gilbert's scrutiny of the "allure" and pleasure of "imaginary" food.[8] For Wilson, as for Gilbert, the allure is not food itself, but rather its possibilities, and particularly as they are unleashed and realized in and through human imagination.

Perhaps the most potent illustration of the potential of cultural production to imbue foods with significance involves iconic foods. Jennifer Berg notes that icons come to symbolize something bigger. She writes that "Specific icon foods, when consumed or even just imagined, immediately suggest links to specific places, culturally bound groups, or communities."[9] Elsewhere I have argued that Expo 1967 and Canada's Centennial year prompted a "period of intense introspection (which continues to our own day) in which Canadians began to review and

revise their culinary practices past and present - to reconceive food (sometimes retrospectively) as symbol of self, community and nation; to bestow upon humble food items (such as red fife wheat, the donut, tourtière, the butter tart, and, most recently, poutine) the burden of iconicity."[10] Pemmican should also certainly have been added to this list of iconic Canadian foods. There are certainly other iconic foods that evoke a particular region in Canada rather than the nation itself. Suman Roy and Brooke Ali organize their "journey through Canada's culinary history" around foods that are either sourced in particular regions, or dishes traditionally prepared only in particular regions in Canada, and therefore take on iconic status.[11] These include foods like scallops from Mahone Bay in Nova Scotia, potatoes from Prince Edward Island, maple syrup from Quebec, Saskatoon berries from Saskatchewan and salmon from the west coast. Examples of traditional and regional dishes include Newfoundland's Figgy Duff; Son-of-a-Gun-in-a-Sack from the prairies; or Nanaimo Bars, which take their name from Nanaimo on Vancouver Island.

That these and other foods have gained iconic status is thanks to various kinds of cultural productions, including food histories and cookbooks like that of Roy and Ali, as well as oral histories, folklore, and marketing narratives to invite settlers (especially at the turn of twentieth century) and later tourists to appreciate the country's bounty.

A Montreal Focus:

Consequently, as we turn our attention to Montreal, it is useful to consider some of the narratives currently being offered to tourists interested in Montreal's culinary heritage. Most obviously, Montreal is one of the top sites of culinary tourism in Canada; restaurants Toqué, Joe Beef, and Au Pied du Cochon have impressive reputations both nationally and internationally.[12] Gail Simmons writes in her introduction to *Montreal Cooks,* the "city has a very long history as a

culinary destination for food lovers not only within Canada but from around the world. The ritual of eating good food and enjoying life is second nature to Montrealers. Trends may change, tastes may evolve, but our culinary scene will forever be incomparable."[13] In 2007, *Travelocity* editors published their Top 10 destinations for gourmet travellers, commonly referred to as *foodies*. Montreal, which managed to rank sixth, is the only Canadian city to have made it to the Top 10.[14] According to American travel guide *Frommer's*, Montreal ranked among the 10 best cities for outdoor dining in 2011.[15] Fodor's lists Taste Montreal as one of the world's 15 top food festivals.[16] In 2010, Statistics Canada showed that Montreal's tourists spent 548 million dollars on restaurant dining. In 2011, in the touristic boroughs of Ville-Marie and the Plateau Mont Royal, there were on average 83.9 restaurants and 11.5 bars per square kilometre.[17] A similar emphasis on dining as preferential tourist activity in Montreal emerges from evidence that the average tourist spent 63.25$CAN on restaurants per stay in Montreal between 2007 and 2010; while for the same period, the average tourist spent 55.04$ on restaurants per stay in Canada.[18] However, this may be in part because in 2009, the average Montreal dinner (3 courses, no drink, service included) cost 43$CAN, as compared with 34$CAN in Toronto.[19] Certainly, the Canadian dollar relative to its American counterpart makes Montreal all the more attractive as a tourist destination for American travellers.

Culinary tours of Montreal are popular and include such offerings as the Jewish Museum's "Beyond the Bagel" food tour of Montreal's Jewish culinary sites, the Local Montréal Food Tour Company's tours of Old Montreal, Montreal's working class and multicultural Mile End District in the Plateau Mont-Royal Borough, and the city's craft beer scene.[20] The company Round Table provides an array of tours given by foot and on bicycles, including their Jewish

Neighbourhood Food Tour, Tastes of the Iberian Peninsula food walking tour, and the Montreal Urban Agriculture and Sustainable Food biking tour.[21]

What these tours reveal is the way food and food venues have figured in Montreal's complex cultural and socio-ideological negotiations, and also the way they served and continue to serve as means of communication and bridge between Montreal's varied and distinct communities. To expand on the first: food provides an effective angle for approaching and understanding Montreal's history. Not only is the topic of interest to tourists, but it also serves as a concrete indicator of changing ideas and practices over time. Closer scrutiny of Montreal's food venues and their clienteles provides detailed glimpses of Montreal's evolution. To expand on the second point: intriguingly given the sometimes fractious relationship between Montreal's different cultural communities, foods that have taken on iconic status in Montreal are ones that appealed to those outside the particular community responsible for its origin. Indeed the culinary imagination in Montreal seems remarkably "mobile," not so much limited to a particular location or specific moment in time, but rather to "place" - that more fluid and subtle notion emerging from human geography.

Iconic Food Venues in Montreal:

Popular tour operator Melissa Simard of Round Table Food Tours[22] offers three wonderful anecdotes about Montreal's colourful food history, which both engage listeners on her tours, and serve here as useful starting points for further exploration of the relationship between the city of Montreal and its cultural imaginary.

First, she reminds tour participants of the success of the iconic Joe Beef Canteen.[23] The canteen was situated first along Montreal's waterfront on St Claude Street[24] and as of 1876 on

Common Street, a bit further west. Simard points out that the proprietor supported striking workers constructing the Lachine canal, thereby becoming a local hero.[25] During December of 1877 he not only sent two wagons of food for the striking workers but also distributed bread to the soldiers, who ultimately in the spirit of things, shared it amongst the workers themselves.[26] Joe Beef - the proprietor Charles McKiernan's nickname - supported his working-class clientele in other ways as well. He kept a few bills tucked near the bar in his establishment in order to pay fines for his regular customers. Most of these were day labourers, for whom a jail sentence had dire consequences for their families.[27] His Canteen housed workers needing a roof over their heads and provided a venue for those needing a place to convalesce. Historian Peter DeLottinville argues that McKiernan, the tavern's owner, was able to leverage the tavern's role as forum for the working-class community of Montreal.[28] "His role in alleviating problems of housing, job hunting, health care, and labour unrest indicated the possibility of a collective response to the common problems among casual labourers of Montreal's waterfront."[29] Arguably, Joe Beef's legacy in Montreal's cultural imaginary is one of social advocacy. The Canteen took its energy from Charles McKiernan's big character and changed hands soon after in 1889. As of 1893, the establishment became the base of the Salvation Army, a change that signalled the entrance of middle-class reformers into discussions and initiatives to improve the lives of the working class.

Current-day restaurateurs David McMillan and Frédéric Morin adopted the name Joe Beef for their establishment to honour the nineteenth-century canteen. There is an informal vibe to this contemporary restaurant certainly, with McMillan confessing to wearing shorts and sandals and claiming "we're these hilbillies that have a garden out back."[30] However, ranking 81st in Restaurant's list of the top restaurants in the world in 2015, the contemporary iteration has

proved itself to be focused on the quality of food, and has consequently appealed to a clientele enjoying culinary sophistication. Nevertheless both restaurateurs are careful to emphasize not so much the working-class ethic associated with Joe Beef's own legacy, as an expansive, down-to-earth character, which they astutely equate with Canada's own national character. If Joe Beef in the nineteenth-century provided a venue and voice for Montreal's working class, then the owners of Joe Beef in the twenty-first century place themselves and their enterprise squarely in the national culinary imaginary. About the award, for example, McMillan explained: "I think it's very un-Canadian to pop Champagne bottles. There'll be an extra beer for everyone tonight."[31] That beer is more Canadian than Champagne, of course, owes much to Canada's longstanding traditions of brewing beer, but also to its iconic status as a national drink, cemented with Molson Canadian's hugely popular advertisement, "I am Canadian."[32] That the restaurant is the brainchild of a partnership between an anglophone (David McMillan) and a francophone (Frédéric Morin) extends the claim to reaching across the linguistic solitudes in Montreal, Canada's largest bilingual city.

One final link between the two restaurants includes a nod in the contemporary restaurant to its historical forebear. During McKiernan's time, the Canteen served as a meeting place, where the local community could come together for food and conversation, certainly, even for aid, but also for recreation. The original Canteen was home to an enormous variety of animals - monkeys, parrots, and most famously alcohol-loving bears Jenny and Tom among others. One article of 1879 recounts the alarming time when McKiernan's six-year-old son fell by accident into the bear pit to be rescued by his father, who suffered a very nasty gash on his leg.[33] But it was ultimately a buffalo that caused difficulty for Charles McKiernan, injuring him to the extent that he needed a stint in the hospital.[34] There are two stuffed animal heads in the contemporary

restaurant. One is that of a bear, supposedly one of the bears McKiernan kept chained in the basement of the original restaurant.[35] The other is a curiosity - a large stuffed bison head in the main bathroom. This seems not to be a reference to McKiernan's buffalo, however, but rather a curiosity offered as a gift by loyal customer Joe Battat.[36]

[Insert Image 1 here]

[Insert Image 2 here]

Ironically enough, then, although the restaurant name suggests a preoccupation with a particular foodstuff - beef - the culinary imaginary surrounding Joe Beef past and present showcases the restaurateurs, and their ability to leverage their establishments to become platforms for outreach, advocacy and community engagement. In Montreal there are two other restaurants that are all about a particular food product, indeed one of Quebec's most iconic foods: pork. Catherine Turgeon-Gouin rightly points out that the narrative of Quebec's traditional foodways serves as foundation for Martin Picard's Montreal restaurant, Au Pied du Cochon, which has become a tourist draw in its own right. Turgeon-Gouin goes on to argue that Picard's menu transforms Quebec's culinary traditions to appeal to an urban clientele, and what Turgeon-Gouin describes as "bohemian-bourgeois" or "bobo" ideals:[37]

> Au Pied de Cochon, with its ingredient and menu choices, decor, and overall atmosphere, is steeped in Québec tradition. From the jovial attitude and lumberjack plaid-shirt attire of its owner to the flow of maple syrup on pork cooked from nose to tail, the Montreal restaurant relishes Québec folklore. As one reads in the first pages of Au Pied de Cochon: L'Album, "Il (Martin Picard) aspire […] à évoluer dans un contexte culinaire propre au Québec,"[1] and concerns about promoting La belle province's gastronomical culture

permeate the entire book as well as Picard's discourse. Au Pied de Cochon's project uses for its basic narrative the cuisine and folklore of Québec.

Although Picard's Au Pied du Cochon has become a welcome attraction for Montreal and finds its home in the city, it is really more precisely one of a number of articulations of the provincial (rather than urban) culinary imaginary. Another would be the long-running restaurant Au Petit Poucet, with a menu steeped in pork-related offerings, in Val David, north of Montreal. By contrast, there was one iconic Montreal food venue that focused its attention not so much on pork as on "the" piglet. Like Joe Beef of the nineteenth century, it included live animals as part of its recreational offerings: piglets, in this case, often bedecked in ribbons, who entertained customers by feeding from the bottles they were invited to give them. There were more than 2,500 photographs taken of diners being thus entertained at a restaurant called "Au lutin qui bouffe," between 1938 and 1972, when the restaurant situated at the corner of St Hubert and St Grégoire burned down. In this venue it was the piglets, likely more than the food itself, who served to stimulate conversation and congenial interaction.

[Insert Images 3, 4, and 5 here]

Montreal Bagels and Smoked Meat

Tour operator Melissa Simard shares two other anecdotes that revolve around Montreal's Jewish culinary scene, and both illustrate ways in which that cuisine is shared beyond the Jewish community. One is about a beloved Montreal food venue, the iconic deli Wilensky's. Simard explains that Moe Wilensky, proprietor of the diner lovingly commemorated in Mordecai Richler's Montreal fiction, never cut his "special" smoked meat sandwiches, because he was a communist and believed that nobody should receive special treatment.[38] The second anecdote

signals an apparent curiosity: that Jewish and Chinese communities co-populated what is now Chinatown in Montreal, an area situated south of René Lévesque Boulevard and north of Old Montreal.[39] This often comes as a surprise even to Montrealers largely because, as Christopher Dewolf points out, Chinatown's Jewish heritage has been erased by "time and redevelopment," as Chinese immigration increased after the easing of immigration restrictions, and as the Jewish population of Montreal moved gradually to neighbourhoods farther west and north.[40]

Tamara Myers sheds light on the enormous influx of Jewish immigrants to Montreal at the turn of the twentieth century, such that Montreal's Jewish population grew "from 881 in 1881 to more than 45,000 on the island in 1921."[41] The *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération,* the source for Myers' insight, also notes that the Jewish population grew between 1921 and 1941 - from 45,792 to 63,898 - but this increase was less significant in terms of demographic shift. Drawing on the censuses of 1921, 1931 and 1941, Linteau observes that Montreal Jews tended to cluster in the city (93% in 1921 and 80% in 1941).[42] It is understandable then that during the earlier period at the turn of century, Montreal's downtown would have been a thriving hub of Jewish culture. Writes Dewolf:

> At its peak in the 1910s, Yiddish-language cultural life flourished in this downtown neighbourhood, with two bookstores on the Main, the newly-founded Jewish People's Library (the predecessor to the present-day Jewish Public Library) and a regular programming of socialist and Zionist lectures and Yiddish theatre at the Monument National.
>
> On Chenneville Street, about half of all residents were Jewish between 1900 and 1915.[43]

By contrast, the Jewish population of Montreal has dwindled over time in percentage terms since this "peak" period, such that in 2011, the National Household Survey revealed that of

Montrealers reporting religious affiliation (85.1% of the total population), only 2.2% were identifying as Jewish, 5.9% Muslim, and 63.2% Roman Catholic.[44]

Despite the small proportion of the Jewish population in Montreal, the city's multiple culinary tours of Jewish Montreal[45] suggest this particular cuisine continues to influence the "tastes of Montreal." Olivier Bauer points to the predominance of Jewish food establishments in a list provided by Pierre Bellerose, VP of public relations for Tourisme Montréal, on his 2011 blog. The six on his list with Jewish restaurateurs are: "Fairmount Bagel (1919-), Schwartz's (1928-), Beauty's (1942-), Déli Lesters (1951-), St. Viateur Bagel (1957-), and Moishes (1938-). That six out of ten are Jewish establishments is indeed striking. [46] Elsewhere, Bellerose writes that: "Nos longues traditions juives et canadiennes-françaises uniques en Amérique du Nord se reflètent dans ces comptoirs à l'ancienne que sont Schwartz's, la Binerie ou encore Wilensky. Ils sont devenus avec les décennies des incontournables qui font partie depuis longtemps de notre ADN montréalais et québécois, autant que les nouvelles bonnes tables de nos grands chefs québécois." [47] In other words, Montreal's culinary imaginary has embraced Jewish culinary traditions as its own.

In part, the popularity of Jewish venues can be attributed to the marketing successes of these establishments. Bertrand Cesvet offers a close study of the "Conversational Capital" that the small Hebrew delicatessen, Schwartz's, managed to develop. "Schwartz's enjoys incredible international word-of-mouth and an extremely loyal customer base. It has never employed *mass-marketing* techniques, and yet it continually draws in new customers while retaining its existing clientele. Show up any day of the year at lunchtime or dinner, and you are likely to stand in line outside on Saint-Laurent Boulevard."[48] For Cesvet, the ritual of standing in line is an integral part of the deli's success: waiting in line become a ritual of initiation that "reinforces a feeling of

tribalism."[49] More generally, Cesvet finds that Schwartz's checks all the boxes for producing the eight engines that drive "Conversational Capital": Rituals and Tribalism (the queueing), Exclusive Product Offerings (the best smoked meat), Myths (did the recipe really come to Montreal from a Romanian Jew?), Relevant Sensory Oddity (aroma of grilled meat and spices), Icons (photos of the now late original owner, his family and friends, and of famous visitors), Endorsements (which include Céline Dion, Jean Chrétien, Ken Dryden, Halle Berry, Angelina Jolie, The Rolling Stones...), and Continuity (the deli's continual presence in Montreal for decades). That's a lot of conversational capital for a single small Montreal delicatessen with a limited menu and minimal decor. In turn, Schwartz's success has become Montreal's success, as Montreal smoked meat has become an icon of Montreal foodways.

[Insert image 6 here]

[Insert image 7 here]

Olivier Bauer asks himself: "Bagels and smoked meat - some of the foods most closely identified with Montreal - are Ashkenazi Jewish in origin, yet Jews make up only 2 percent of Montreal's population. How did this happen?"[50] Such quick adoption of an ethnic foodways would indicate a fast track to what Susan Drucker describes as the fifth stage of immigrant cuisine's incorporation into the larger North American restaurant scene.[51] Bauer's answer is a practical one: Ashkenazi Jews settled on the border between French and English Montreal, offering affordable and hearty fare.[52] Bauer's explanation both points to the pertinence of geographer Doreen Massey's argument that places are sites of heterogeneity in relation to Montreal, and to one example of what Mary Pratt has called the "contact zone" in which cultural others brush up against one another. In suggesting this, I also point to the city's maps as tools

through which one can begin to trace and understand the shifting boundaries of the sense of place understood to be “home,” and to further conceptualize place as practice.

Interesting in themselves, Simard's two anecdotes about Montreal's Jewish heritage, provide slightly different but consistent insights about ways that Jewish cuisine might have started to punch above its weight in Montreal's culinary imaginary: that Jewish food purveyors served a clientele that extended beyond the Jewish community, and that the Jewish community resided in close proximity to other cultural communities.

In particular, the close proximity of the Jewish and Chinese communities during the early twentieth century speaks to a larger North American urban phenomenon of alliances between Jewish and Chinese communities. This phenomenon is referenced by the American poet August Kleinzahler in his poem "Christmas in Chinatown," in which the poem's speaker muses on the experience of eating Chinese at Christmas, very much a part of contemporary life for Jewish North Americans since Chinese restaurants are some of the few establishments serving regular fare and open for business on the holiday.[53] The appeal of Chinese food for Jews, as fare that effectively functions as “safe treyf,” is explored in detail by Tuchman and Levine.[54] Here "treyf" refers to food not authorized by the rules of Kashrut, whereas "safe" speaks to the possibility of the food “passing” as safe - or possibly allowing the willing suspension of disbelief - because of its unfamiliar configuration.

Although this is a larger North American phenomenon, Morton Weinfeld reminds us that Canadian Jewry is distinct from American Jewry.[55] One important distinction for Montreal Jewry in particular is the strong presence of French-speaking Jews, naturally drawn to a bilingual city in a country with French as one of its official languages. Consequently the relative proportion of Sephardic Jews to Ashkanazi Jews is much higher than in other North American cities, the

Sephardim typically hailing from other French-speaking countries such as Morocco and parts of Africa.[56]

Artistic Renderings of Montreal Foodways

From Montreal's culinary reality has sprung lore and literature, even song. There is Mordecai Richler's Montreal, famously outlined in the novel *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and depicted in the film starring Richard Dreyfuss,[57] which has itself become the stuff of walking tours and tourist advertisements for the city. As readers of his works would know, Richler's home-turf was Montreal's historic Mile End neighbourhood; a typical walking tour of Richler's favourite gastronomic haunts include St. Viateur's Bagel Shop as well as Wilensky's, to name only a couple.[58] There is now also popular entertainment based on food establishments, including Bill Brownstein's popular book, *Schwartz's Hebrew Delicatessen: The Story,*[59] which inspired a recent musical also based on the iconic deli, Schwartz's, *Schwartz the Musical*.[60]

The startlingly un-poetic choice of topic for the musical based on Schwartz's deli, leads to another question. What prompts playwrights and authors more generally to feed their characters? To gather their subjects to the kitchen and dining table? And what is the particular appeal of textual fare, the particular "allure" of imagined food, to use Bee Wilson's phrasing?[61]

Commentary on food in literature provides answers that fall into two broad categories: that authors use imaginary food in the service of precision, and artistic effect. First and most obviously, representations within the text of food served up in its transformed state serve as vehicle for precision in characterization.[62] Detailed representations of food further add to a sense of the accurate rendering of socio-historical setting.[63] Second, at the level of the text,

representations of food and metaphors involving food can serve either to support or challenge the text's formal and thematic frameworks.[64]

The case study of Montreal's iconic foods and food venues suggests that the culinary imagination is not only mimetic and constitutive of *notions* of socio-historical and cultural context, but rather can also be understood as *constitutive* of place itself. In other words, our focus here on Montreal's foodways and cultural productions related to them enables us to extend existing commentary on the "allure" and function of imagined food.

How then can one prove that Montrealers' sense of their city has been shaped by its cultural productions? Let me begin to answer this question in relation to Gabrielle Roy's 1945 novel *Bonheur d'occasion* (translated as *The Tin Flute*), arguably Canada's first urban novel, for which Roy won the Prix Femina. *Bonheur d'occasion* is a novel in the realist tradition, offering a detailed glimpse into Montreal just prior to and during the start of the Second World War. In this novel, Montreal is described as being a part of the larger consumer society and its central characters find themselves on the lowest rungs of the consumer ladder. The consumer society is figured literally in this novel; food service and consumption set the stage in working-class Saint Henri. The young Florentine works as a waitress at the Five and Dime, surrounded by food. But her mother is unable, on the family's meagre earnings, to provide adequate nutrition to keep her children healthy. When war looms, those men who are nourished enough to pass the medical test are able to secure a wage for themselves, and to support their families. This novel's consistent emphasis on scenes of food scarcity and on instances that reveal unequal access to food build up a symbolic resonance for this novel about the perils of consumer society for those on the lower end of the food chain.[65] In this way, the novel's food scenes both serve to paint a strikingly

accurate and haunting portrait of prewar Montreal, and also to support and further the novel's symbolic structure.

How has Roy's novel served to shape notions of the city itself? When one walks around Saint Henri today, one seems to find references to that novel - a street and park bearing the name "Lacasse" - the surname of the family that figures in the novel, and one chosen for its relevance to a story about poverty centred on a family that is for much of the time, as the surname suggests, “broke.”[66] But the street was actually named in 1907 to honour the parish Priest, also named Lacasse, and not in reference to Roy's award-winning novel. Evidence of the novel's influence can be found elsewhere, however. Most obviously, there are walking tours of Gabrielle Roy's Montreal,[67] which signal the book's enduring popularity, and Montrealers' recognition that Roy's writerly imagination offers valuable glimpses of the city. As well, the novel's characters and places reverberate in the city's literary imagination. The protagonist in *My October* by Montrealer Claire Rothman, for example, returns to inhabit the real house that served as model for the home of Jean Lévesque in Roy's novel.[68]

One of the disturbing insights of Roy's novel is that the poorer classes were driven to war not out of conviction but out of necessity; they were figuratively fodder for the war machine. In another book about Montreal's history, the writer - this time a scholar writing a work of nonfiction - makes the link between humans and objects of consumption explicit. It goes without saying perhaps, but when fictional and nonfictional authors describe characters *as* food, rather than invite them to the dinner table, it is for marked effect. Here is Afua Cooper depicting what might have prompted black slave Angélique to set fire to her master's home, and eventually to much of Montreal, in the spring of 1734. Her act is a conscious one, intended to treat her slave masters to a literal dose of their own figurative medicine:

> She would roast, burn, and grill them, and so do to them what they had been doing to her all her days. With determination, she blew hard on the coals on the cross beams, and they burst into flames.[69]

The fire of Montreal is still widely believed to be an unsolved mystery.[70] But through this interjection of the culinary imagination in Cooper's scholarly work, Montreal's history and therefore our notion of place have been transformed in the same way that Montreal was transformed by that blaze. Through indirect narration, this passage demonstrates its affective quality - it suggests to the reader that Afua Cooper in the twenty-first century could channel Angélique's thoughts in the eighteenth century. This too is an act of the narrative culinary imagination.

The Stories Books (and Food) Can Tell

Just as stories can be told through food, in the way that Roy and Cooper illustrate, so too can food function as a storytelling medium. This is particularly true when food is understood to be the vehicle for the celebration and continuance of cultural heritage. Two important Montreal cookbooks provide insights about changing attitudes towards food and cultural food practices over time. The first Canadian cookbook by a Jewish writer is *Household Recipes or Domestic Cookery* "by a Montreal Lady" (1865).[71] Only one recipe hints at the author's cultural heritage and religious practice: a recipe for "ball soup," a version of the very familiar Ashkanzi "matzoh ball soup," perhaps more colloquially known today as “Jewish chicken soup.” By contrast, the very popular *A Treasure for My Daughter* (1950), in its 14th printing in 2013, is much more explicit about its cultural context. This text offers readers staple Jewish recipes such as Cold Beet Borscht and Noodle Kugel, and in doing so, asserts an important connection between the food

we eat and cultural heritage.[72] *A Treasure for My Daughter* is staged as a conversation between a mother and a daughter, where the mother passes on the legacy of food recipes and traditions to ensure their continuance. Eileen Solomon identifies this book as constituent of the process of cultural negotiations through the language of food of Jewish communities in North America.[73]

For foods to tell their stories, of course, their "story" and the "language" in which it is told have to be understood. The apprenticeship at the heart of *A Treasure for My Daughter* ensures that both the book's readers and "My Daughter" are recipients of culinary and cultural knowledge. But there are a number of moments when writers describe the inevitable misunderstandings in a city like Montreal, with its increasing cultural plurality, and where the stories food tells are not fully understood. In these moments, food scenes serve as sites of cultural negotiation. Poet F.R. Scott provides one wonderful example, where he includes food in his wry depiction of miscommunication between the two official languages and the people who represented them when he wrote this poem in 1954. Notice how he introduces the poem as one about two "cultures" rather than just two "languages," signalling already that the poem will touch on the intersections between a primarily Roman Catholic francophone population and an anglophone community that was primarily Protestant Christian, as well as between religious and secular rituals:

BONNE ENTENTE

The advantages of living with two cultures

Strike one at every turn,

Especially when one finds a notice in an office building:

"This elevator will not run on Ascension Day";

Or reads in the *Montreal Star*:

"Tomorrow being the Feast of the Immaculate

Conception,

There will be no collection of garbage in the city";

Or sees on the restaurant menu the bilingual dish:

DEEP APPLE PIE

TARTE AUX POMMES PROFONDES[74]

Like the "profound" apples in Scott's pie, food is good to think as much as it is good to eat. Montreal, Canada's most bilingual city, is the site of significant and ongoing cultural negotiation - one that often takes place over food, just as much as it is described in the languages of food itself, and in cultural productions of the culinary imagination. The culinary imagination that Montreal conjures for itself, however, is one of inclusion. By writing this, and by signaling the strategic and self-conscious way a city (through its advocates) constructs a sense of its own place, I begin to align this study's notion of place more closely with that of critical cultural geography than to humanistic geography because the former scrutinizes the way power is involved in the "construction, reproduction, and contestation of places and their meanings," to use Cresswell's phrasing of the particular subsection of the discipline's concerns.[75] So far in this study I have pointed to examples that signal food's role as catalyst for encounter between different cultural communities, even species (in the case of the original Joe Beef canteen). Additionally, the book written by current co-owners of Joe Beef in Montreal constructs a culinary tradition for Montreal that is inclusive of a variety of different culinary registers. Ian Mosby points out: "*The Art of Living According to Joe Beef* tries to overcome Montreal's

fractured linguistic, ethnic, and class divisions through an appeal to a common history and a common love for delicious foods that extends beyond - but also necessarily includes - the usual gravy-covered and cheese-curded suspects. (You know who you are.)"[76] Mosby is particularly struck by the way McMillan and Morin gather together low with high culinary food traditions in their book, such that the blending itself becomes peculiar to Montreal's food scene:

> Chip shacks and delis, for instance, are placed on as high a pedestal as groundbreaking Montreal restaurants like Toque! or Citrus. Recipes simultaneously look traditional and modern, high-end and low-class, French and English (and Jewish and Irish and Haitian and many of the other groups that make up contemporary Montreal) and therefore range from the fanciful tongue-in-cheek high/low hybrids like Pork Fish Sticks or a Fois Gras Breakfast Sandwich to the more traditional and straightforward Pate en Croute, Schnitzel of Pork, or Chicken Jalfrezi.[77]

When asked about pivotal moments in Montreal's food scene, journalist Julian Armstrong, whose career has been devoted to chronicling Quebec's foodways, identifies 1967 as a particularly pivotal moment.[78] Not only did Montreal's Expo bring the world and its varied cuisines to Montreal's door, but it also brought the world's chefs to Montreal. She points to Peter Mueller in particular who, as she describes it, was one of a number of chefs who came from abroad, ran the restaurants of their countries at Expo and then restaurants in Montreal, thereby launching Montreal as a more international food city. “Prior to that," Armstrong explains, "French and maybe a smattering of Chinatown restaurants would have been about it internationally."[79] Scrutiny of Census data alongside Yellow Pages listings confirms Armstrong's sense of the times. Alan Nash found that between 1951 and 1971 in Montreal, there was a 244 percent increase in the total number of ethnic restaurants in the city, with a marked rise of percentage

share by those serving Italian, Greek and Chinese cuisine, and with a decline by those restaurants serving European or Jewish cuisine.[80]

Mueller himself describes the restaurant scene in Montreal of the 1960s as being about "huge portions... big plates full of steak and potatoes.... sixteen or twenty ounce portions without finesse. Cuisine chez grand mère."[81] Slowly, he explains, it became more "gourmand." Certainly he, along with the other European expat chefs in Montreal, played a lead hand in this development. Armstrong describes Peter Mueller as "a huge bon vivant, a natural leader, I think, and much liked."[82] Mueller had actually come to Montreal from Switzerland in 1962, when he ran the restaurant in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, before being transferred to Vancouver. But he came back to Montreal to manage the restaurant in the Swiss Pavilion at Expo 67, where he recalls that the 140-person staff served an astonishing number of clients, usually between 2100 and 2200 per day. After Expo, Mueller joined the William Tell restaurant, which had been floundering. Under his direction, and later with another Swiss-born chef, Anton Koch, as his chef de cuisine, the restaurant flourished and became central to Montreal's culinary scene. After lunch service, top chefs from the city's key restaurant venues, would gather at the William Tell, to exchange ideas and for conversation over "coffee cake, kirsch, and beer," as Mueller recalls. These included Albert Schnell (of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel), Christian Hitz (of the Château Champlain), Hans Burry (of the Mount Royal Hotel), Raymond Ferri (of the Mount Royal Club), and Carlo dell Olio (of the Windsor Hotel). Says Koch, "it was an amazing era for the chefs, who found each other here, and built a circle."[83] Peter Mueller explains that whereas today important restaurants are stand-alone establishments, during the 1960s and 1970s, they were largely affiliated with hotels.[84] Anton Koch also recalls that European chefs, with the exception of Quebec Executive Chef, Pierre Demers (of the Ritz), ran most of the important restaurants.[85]

This would slowly change with the opening of ITHQ, the “Institut de tourisme et d’hôtellerie du Québec.”

[Insert Image 8 here]

David McMillan - chef, history buff, and co-owner of the current day restaurant Joe Beef - argues that the French expat chefs, more specifically, contributed significantly. "These are the pillars of Montreal cuisine," to his mind.[86] But McMillan also points to one other shining light in the Montreal restaurant scene, Normand Laprise, who opened Citrus in 1989 and then the legendary Toqué. "Toqué! was a meeting place for chefs young and old," remembers McMillan. "It was like the Bohemian movement in Paris, a powerhouse of great talent. Today it sits proudly on the edge of the old port, watching over us, keeping us sage."[87] Mueller also gives Normand Laprise top honours, saying "today Normand Laprise carries the flambeau."[88]

[Insert Image 9 here]

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In conclusion, the enormous reservoir of cultural production - material gathered by tour guides, restaurateurs, writers, scholars of religion and history, chefs and food journalists, to describe Montreal's culinary imaginary - always emphasizes food's inclusive potential. The history of Montreal foodways - at least as Montrealers tell it - is punctuated by moments when different communities shared their food traditions, and when chefs brought innovative ideas to the table. Foodways in Montreal today are described as a blending together of different culinary registers, and the product of an evolution that has welcomed new culinary traditions and innovations. Food is good to think as well as to eat; and in Montreal's culinary imaginary, food lore seems to be a way to depict the good in Montreal and Montrealers.

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Endnotes

[1] A version of this study was presented on 20 February 2016 at the panel on "You are Where You Eat: Stories of Urban Foodways," as part of the conference on "Culinary Imaginations," held at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. My thanks to Erin Yanota, Étienne Gratton and Nora Shaalan for their research assistance, to the wise counsel of McGill librarians Eamon Duffy and Lonnie Weatherby, as well as to Julian Armstrong for facilitating consultation with some of Montreal's most esteemed culinary professionals.

[2] Richler, *This Is My Country, What's Yours?*, 6.

[3] Cresswell, “Place,” 169.

[4] Ibid., 172.

[5] Massey, “Power-geometry”, 60-70.

[6] In adopting the term “diversity” I am cognizant of the perils of articulating the range of literary forms in terms of the false binary “high” and “low” art, as articulated by Fisher in“High Art Versus Low Art.”

[7] See Gilbert, *The Culinary Imagination From Myth to Modernity*.

[8] See Wilson, “The Allure of Imagined Meals.”

[9] Berg, "Icon Foods," 243.

[10] Cooke, "Introduction," 6.

[11] See Roy and Ali, *From Pemmican to Poutine*, 229.

[12] See Meehan, “These Chefs Believe in Sticking Close to Home.”

[13] Simmons, "Introduction."

[14] Travelocity, "Travelocity Highlights 10 Delicious." *Hotel News Resource,* March 15, 2007, cited in Tourisme Montréal, "La restauration en chiffre." In *Tourisme culinaire à Montréal*, 64.

[15] Cited in Tourisme Montréal, "La restauration en chiffre," 64.

[16] See Friesen, "North America's 15 Best Food Festivals."

[17] Tourisme Montréal, "La restauration en chiffre," 54.

[18] Ibid., 59-60.

[19] Ibid., 55.

[20] See, for example, "The Mile End Montreal Food Tour."

[21] See, for example, http://www.roundtablefoodtours.com/

[22] See her blog 4cornersofthetable.com and tour website: roundtablefoodtours.com.

[23] Named after the original Joe Beef canteen.

[24] My thanks to Etienne Gratton who points out that St-Claude is a small street running only from St-Paul to Notre-Dame. It was said to be right behind the Bonsecours market, which would place it probably between today's St-Paul and Le Royer, perhaps even at the angle of St-Paul and St-Claude. In terms of the Common Street location, one advertisement listed Joe Beef as being at 4, 5 and 6 Common Street and 2 Callières (now 201-207 de la Commune, a Gallicized version of 'Common Street'). The present-day restaurant Joe Beef is located at 2491 Rue Notre-Dame West in the Little Burgundy area of Montreal, a historically working-class neighbourhood, but in the process of rapid gentrification. See Walker, *Cantine de Joe Beef;* See also Collard, "Joe Beef's Canteen," 269-81.

[25] He wouldn't refuse anyone service based on their ethnicity nor refuse the poor a meal. He also had sofas set-up for people to sleep on. He was very controversial. Curiously, he used wild

animals, among other things, to entertain his customers. See DeLotinville, “Joe Beef of Montreal,” 9-40.

[26] DeLottinville, "Joe Beef of Montreal," 21. See also an article in the *Star* 19 December, 1877.

[27] Ibid., 16.

[28] Ibid., 11.

[29] Ibid., 18.

[30] Tucker, “There’s a mistake!”

[31] Ibid.

[32] For an interesting analysis see Bodroghkozy, “‘I… Am… Canadian!’”

[33] “An Encounter With A Bear,” *The Globe*, 17 June, 1879.

[34] DeLottiville, “Joe Beef of Montreal,” 15. See also *The Montreal Daily Witness*, “The Second Visit,” 8; and *The Montreal Daily Witness,* “McKiernan and his Dog,” 8.

[35] Personal communication from Max Campbell (Bar Manager, Joe Beef), August 7, 2016.

[36] Morin, McMillan and Erickson, *The Art of Living according to Joe Beef,* 13.

[37] Turgeon-Gouin, “The Myth of Québec Traditional Cuisine at Au Pied de Cochon,”

[38] Writes Simard in a personal communication to the author dated February 3, 2016: “Harry Wilensky (Moe Wilensky’s father and Sharon Wilensky’s grandfather) came from Russia and was a Communist so a secular Jew. He had a barbershop that started selling comic books and cigars and became a kind of variety store and hangout for lone Jewish male immigrants. In 1932, his son Moe Wilensky, known to be creative and charismatic, was working with his father when someone said, ‘Moe, make me something special.’ Moe whipped up what is now known as the ‘Wilensky Special’- an all-beef grilled bologna and salami sandwich heated in an iron and

always served with mustard. The sandwich was never cut, as Moe wanted to reinforce the idea that that no customer should get special treatment (perhaps due to a love of 'simplicity,' or a by-product of communism, or maybe a bit of both). Schwartz's is the same in that 'no matter who you are, you can't cut the line.'"

[39] There are further connections between these communities: for example, Wong Wings, the Chinese food establishment, was partially funded by Steinbergs – the iconic supermarket group that sold to IGA. See: http://www.wongwing.ca/en-ca/Pages/OurStory.aspx
Here, Wong Wing tells the company story. Wing Noodles claims to have partially financed them along with Steinberg. Their page says Mr. Wing, but Wing Noodles was owned by Arthur Lee (Mr. Lee) back then.

[40] Dewolf, "When Chinatown was a Jewish Neighbourhood."

[41] Myers, "On Probation," 180.

[42] Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal,* 325-26.

[43] Dewolf, "When Chinatown was a Jewish Neighbourhood."

[44] http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/FOG.cfm?lang=E&level=3&GeoCode=462

[45] See, for example tours by "Round Table Tours" and "Beyond the Bagel": http://www.roundtablefoodtours.com/tours.php; Schwartz, "Beyond the Bagel: A Jewish Food Walking Tour."

[46] Bauer, "Bagel, Bagelry, Smoked Meat and Deli."

[47] Bellerose, "Le tourisme gourmand à Montréal." "Is it possible for a journalist visiting Montreal's restaurants not to comment on the bagels, Schwartz's or La Binerie Mont-Royal, for

instance? Our long jewish and French-Canadian traditions, unique to North America, are reflected in the rustic counters of Schwartz's, La Boinerie or Wilensky. They've become staples and have long since become part of our Montreal and Quebec's DNA, along with the tables of newer Quebecois chefs."

[48] Cesvet, *Conversational Capital*, 30.

[49] Ibid.

[50] "Bagels and Smoked Meat."

[51] Drucker, "Ethnic Food and Ethnic Enclaves," 173-83.

[52] See Bauer, "Bagel, Bagelry, Smoked Meat and Deli."

[53] Kleinzahler, "Christmas in Chinatown." My thanks to Olivia Maccioni for bringing this poem to my attention.

[54] Tuchman and Levine, "New York Jews and Chinese Food," 382-407.

[55] For a brief summary of the history of Jewish–Canadians, see: http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/jewish-canadians/. For a history of the Jewish community in Montreal, see this document provided by the Jewish Public Library: http://www.jewishpubliclibrary.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Immigration-Timeline.pdf

[56] According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there were 22,225 Sephardim residing in the Montreal CMA. Consequently the Sephardim comprises 24.5% of the 90,780 members of the Jewish community in Montreal. Charles Shahar, "National Household Survey 2011 Analysis, Part 7, The Sephardic Community". Courtesy of Charles Shahar, Canadian Jewish Federation, p. iii. In this analysis, if one's mother tongue is French, Arabic, Greek, Bulgarian, or Yugoslavian, then one is considered to be a member of the Sephardim. Whereas if one's mother tongue is

Yiddish, English, Russian, Austrian (Germanic Languages, n.i.e), Czech, Danish, German, Hungarian, Irish (Celtic Languages), Dutch, Polish, Romanian, Swedish, or Finnish, then one is considered to be a member of the Ashkenazim (Shahar, 49).

[57] Richler, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz,* directed by Ted Kotcheff, DVD.

[58] See Griffiths, "Mordecai Richler's Montreal."

[59] Brownstein, *Schwartz's Hebrew Delicatessen.*

[60] The musical was first staged at Centaur Theatre in Montreal, scripted by Rick Blue and George Bowser. See: http://www.bowserandblue.com/centaur.html

[61] Wilson, "Imagined Meals."

[62] Although she does not specifically address characterization in literature, in *Fasting Girls* Joan Jacobs Brumberg reveals how during the Victorian age, a woman's rejection of food was an expression of her moral propriety and ideal femininity. Avoidance of meat consumption pointed to the delicate nature of a young woman, as "how one ate spoke to issues of basic character" (167). In a Canadian literary context, Elspeth Cameron provides an example of characterization-via-food through her analysis of Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Women* in which the protagonist, Marianne, stops eating as a means of personal protest against, and acquiescence to, consumer society. Characterization of course is not limited to whether or not a character eats, but also includes *what* a character eats. Alice Munro's "Half a Grapefruit" and "Royal Beatings" in her short story collection *Who Do You Think You Are* reveal how a character's diet points to his or her social-economic position.

[63] Critics Mary Drake McFeely and Margaret Visser suggest that food is imbued with social-cultural codes, which are both context specific and dynamic. McFeely, for instance, argues that

that "[c]ookbooks have acted as agents of society, delivering expectations of women that may conflict with or support women's own goals" (3). Historical changes in domestic science, technology, and women's roles make the kitchen "a place to study women's lives" as the foods women serve point to specific social values and norms (4).

[64] Traci Marie Kelly notes that culinary autobiographies - texts that include recipes, personal stories, and public history - are an appropriate genre for the telling of women's life narratives: "For many women, sitting around a table or standing around a kitchen counter becomes the space where their stories are told. For generations, oral storytelling has brewed while dinners have simmered. […] There is a power that we get from telling our stories through our recipes." For Kelly, food's presence through the recipe form lends credibility to the content and telling of a woman-centred narrative. For writer Carol Shields the obvious advantages of food for a novelist is the way it affords socio-historical accuracy and precision in character portrayal. Acknowledging her use of real menus, as gleaned from newspaper clippings for example, she notes how "shifting menus - familiar to all of us - make for fascinating social history and allow a novelist to set a scene in a precise period in history." As well, parties give the novelist a chance to bring "characters together on stage" and "show a book's characters from as many angles as possible." See Kelly, "If I Were A Voodoo Priestess," 252. Also Shields, "Parties Real and Otherwise," 211.

[65] Roy and Josephson, *The Tin Flute*.

[66] The street was actually named after the parish priest, also named Lacasse, in 1907, see Ville de Montréal, *Les Rues de Montréal.*

[67] Montreal-based tour company 'Kaleidoscope' offers a "Tin Flute" tour in Roy's home neighbourhood of St. Henri: http://www.tourskaleidoscope.com/accueil/nos-visites-de-a-a-z/bonheur-doccasion-dans-saint-henri.html. Other companies offer tours of the neighbourhood with mention of Gabrielle Roy. See: http://lessalonsdesylvieroy.com/2014/09/visite-du-quartier-saint-henri-suivie-dun-souper-au-resto-bitoque/. See also this Quartier St-Henri walking tour: http://randopleinair.com/decouverte.

[68] The protagonist of Claire Holden Rothman's novel, *My October* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2014), also lives in a fictional version of the distinctive little blue boat-shaped house near the train tracks that was used by Gabrielle Roy as model for the home of Jean Levesque.

[69] Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique,* 292.

[70] For more on the connection between Angelique and the fire of Montreal, see "Truth and Torture: Angélique and the Burning of Montréal" in http://www.canadianmysteries.ca

[71] For full text see: Hart, *Household Recipes.* https://openlibrary.org/books/OL17430229M/Household_recipes_or_Domestic_cookery

[72] For a longer selection of recipes from "A Treasure For My Daughter," see Warshaw, Davids and Ein, "Cooking the Classics"

[73] Solomon, "More Than Recipes," 24-37.

[74] Scott, "Bonne Entente," 56.

[75] Cresswell, "Place," 172.

[76] Mosby, "Joe Beef."

[77] Ibid.

[78] See also Kenneally, "'There *is* a Canadian cuisine, and it is unique in all the world.'"

Interestingly, Michael Symon makes the case that foodways across the Western world were dramatically transformed in the mid-1960s, see Symons, “Grandmas to Gourmets.”

[79] Armstrong, Personal communication with author, August 12, 2016.

[80] Nash, “From Spaghetti to Sushi,” 15.

[81] Mueller, Conversation with the author, August 30, 2016.

[82] Armstrong, Personal communication with author, August 12, 2016.

[83] Koch, Conversation with the author, August 26, 2016.

[84] Mueller, Conversation with the author, August 30, 2016.

[85] Koch, Conversation with the author, August 26, 2016.

[86] McMillan, “The Builders, The Brewers,” 52.

[87] Ibid., 52-3.

[88] Mueller, Conversation with the author, August 30, 2016.