

REWRITING THE DOMESTIC SPHERE: MODERN NOTIONS OF
NARRATIVITY IN “TENDER BUTTONS” AND “THE ALICE B. TOKLAS
COOKBOOK”

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Abstract. This paper explores the relationship between imagined narrative and recipe writing, largely through the lens of an “embedded discourse”, a term first coined by Susan J. Leonardi, in which she accounts for the social and cultural contexts that a recipe was born out of, and thus possesses. The author examines Gertrude Stein’s “Tender Buttons” and “The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas” to demonstrate that when both texts interact with each other, a new hybrid literary style is achieved. When put in conversation with one another, these modernist works bridge the gap between past and present, between public and private spheres of authorship, and between women’s lives as they wrote them and our interpretations of the documents they left behind. Moreover, this paper will prove that recipe writing was not merely used as a mechanism for sustenance, but also as a space to depict marginalized images of love and sexuality through the practice of cooking and cookbook writing.

Keywords: recipe writing, gender, modernism, food studies, domesticity

Since the late eighteenth century, American recipe books have illustrated the gendered division of labour as inherent and desirable, and femininity and masculinity as two symbiotic precepts - two halves that complete each other to constitute a whole. Changes like the urbanization and atomization of families, the emancipation of slaves, and a fear of the growing numbers of women in the labour force (Vester 2015,137) only solidified this notion that cooking, as an act of feminine performativity, was symbolic of a woman’s love for a man. Food advertisements, household manuals, and women’s journals have long proclaimed that cooking is a vital part of being a

woman. Books like *The Joy of Cooking* not only imply that cooking should be a satisfying act, but also that women should cook for their men as an act of love. However, for the last hundred years, there has been an insurgence of texts that disavow the heteronormativity of cookbooks by repurposing the genre as a space to depict marginalized images of love and sexuality into the practice of cooking and cookbook writing.

In her experimental book of poems titled *Tender Buttons*, the modernist writer Gertrude Stein implemented aspects of the structural and linguistic components of cookbooks to confront medical and scientific discourses that characterized same-sex relationships as perverted and unnatural (Vester 2015, 139). This radical text also calls attention to the arbitrariness of the kind of feminine performativity that is so closely associated with cooking and domesticity; instead of a mere reversal of gendered hierarchies, Stein works with a feminine medium to make visible the constructedness of such roles. Stein's partner, Alice B. Toklas, similarly appropriated the cookbook form, but her methods and motivations were different. Like Stein yet in her own unique style, Toklas's cookbook resists traditional notions of gendered identity by rewriting the domestic sphere as a site of expression for same-sex love and desire; and in doing so, fosters and maintains nonconformist notions of family, marriage, and community. I will begin this paper with an overview of relevant postulations regarding the history of power relations pertinent to domestic and canonical categories, followed by an analysis of what others have termed as the 'literary' cookbook; an idea that I will return to later on. The close reading that follows will prove that when the structural and linguistic elements in both pieces interact with each other, a new language that radicalizes certain modern notions of narrativity is created. Scholarship in this period has extensively addressed Stein's work in modernist writing. And yet, I contend that *Tender Buttons* and *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* are inextricably linked and that, by taking their association into further consideration, a unique reading of the interconnection between the two will come to fruition and

our understanding of the field of food studies within the modernist canon will be deepened.

HISTORY OF POWER RELATIONS

Food consumption is not merely attached to biological needs but serves to represent identity markers such as culture, social status, geographical locations, genders, religions, customs, traditions, and life events. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's well-known phrase "Tell me what you eat: I will tell you what you are" speaks to this notion that physiologically it makes no difference whether a person eats caviar or crickets; our bodies take in the protein and calories to process both foods generally in the same manner. However, the way certain groups culturally construct the different, and often conflicting narratives regarding the consumption of one food item in comparison to the other subsequently alters the way food and identity interact. In other words, while food products may stay the same over time, the meaning and knowledge generated by food choices constantly changes depending on the power relations within food discourses. It is now essential to turn to the essay *Subject and Power*, in which Michel Foucault asserts that power does not exist without relationships, which is based on a set of actions upon other actions (*i.e.* the nature of power). Foucault is concerned with human beings as subjects, and with his use of the word "subject" it is important to note that this means: subject to someone else's control, or one who is tied to his own identity by conscience or self-knowledge. The self is not singular (in and of itself), it is not the singular object of knowledge, nor is it a "free agent" prior to coming into, or submitting oneself into society. His essay outlines three struggles of domination: ethnic, social, and religious; these struggles can be isolated from each other or mixed together (Foucault 1982, 781). He writes, "[f]or, if it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power

without the means of escape or possible flight” (Foucault 1982, 794). This suggests that the way members of modern democratic Western societies create forms of knowledge in terms of the self and power is only a set of processes in which everything is subject to something else. More specifically, Foucault defines power as:

(...) the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (Foucault 1980, 92-3)

While this excerpt mainly focuses on power relations as not stable, but a network of discourses that constantly shift and change, it also suggests that some organizations may crystallize to assume a pattern of administering systems that produce the subject. In accordance with this, Katharina Vester writes that such institutions and experts “have the authority to establish, maintain, and even—within limits—change the rules of the discourse, that is, of what can be said and what cannot be said, or what statements are considered to be reasonable or unreasonable, true or false” (Vester 2015, 7). This Foucauldian reading contributes to this discussion of recipes as a form of knowledge because, historically speaking, food belonged to the private realm and therefore was not treated with “scholarly interest; it was a topic slightly too mundane, too feminine, and (within the context of affluent societies) insufficiently political” (Vester 2015, 3). Food advice from cookbooks has traditionally instructed readers to not only eat well, but also how to be good citizens, and how to conform to conventional gendered performances of heterosexual men and women. Food discourses, like the scholarly discourses that Foucault analyzes, are also authoritative and systematizing (Vester 2015, 8).

LITERARY CANONS AND FOOD DISCOURSES

With regard to the creation of literary canons, it is important to consider the following questions: What are the elements that constitute a literary text? Perhaps more importantly, who determined the standards by which literary scholars assess such texts, and why are such standards in place? In his essay *Language, Narrative, and Anti-Narrative*, Robert Scholes claims that a narration contains:

(...) a selection of events for the telling. They must offer sufficient continuity of subject matter to make their chronological sequence significant... When the telling provides this sequence with a certain kind of shape and a certain level of human interest, we are in the presence not merely of narrative but of story. (1980, 206)

If, for a moment, we operate under the premise that Scholes and other structuralist narrative theorists have established for narrative properties, then it is sufficient to state that a literary text must have certain elements - temporality, cohesion, linearity, and “human interest,” or what other narrative theorists ascribe as the “moral voice” or “moral centre” - which is then also associated with the structure of narrative. Therefore, according to Scholes (and others like him), a story is only “fully narrative” if this connection between the narrative and “moral voice” exists.

In her article *Challenging Contemporary Narrative Theory: The Alternative Textual Strategies of Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Cookbooks*, Andrea Newlyn confronts narrative theories, like the one put forth by Scholes, by opening her essay with a quote from Marilyn Robinson Waldman: “[w]e cannot fully assume that a text...tells no story because it does not make its story explicit, formally organized, and finished (that is, fully narrative); we cannot even assume that explicitness is universally a sign of ‘full’ narrativity” (Newlyn 1999, 35). In other words, when our definition of what makes up a text’s “literariness” is dictated by rules related to its linear trajectory and moral compass, we leave no space for other textual strategies that

divest from “further privileged and reified canonical, and deeply patriarchal, notions of what is ‘great literature’” (Newlyn 1999, 36). If we return to the set of questions posed earlier in this chapter (of who determined the current prevailing specifications for categorizing a text as literary), then a feasible response might be proposed in light of Foucault’s framework - those who are privileged by the network of discourses within power relations in effect gain authority over knowledge, and thus dictate its structure. However, it is crucial to remember that questioning the expert’s authority and knowledge might eventually lead to different insights and conclusions.

While Foucault’s work *Subject and Power* is no doubt extensive and valuable, there are feminist scholars who have created an alternative body of work that criticizes Foucault’s “gender blindness” (Vester 2015, 7). The discourses Foucault examined in his own work were not concerned with how one’s class, race, or gender can also influence who belongs and is excluded. Foucault focused mainly on institutions that disciplined men: the prison, the military, the factory, the school—places that largely excluded women (Vester 2015, 8). Scholars like Susan Bordo and Elspeth Probyn have found a way to use Foucault’s theory as an analytical lens for feminist interpretations by analyzing food discourses that produce gender and identity categories, as Probyn contends: “As eating reactivates the force of identities, it also may enable modes of cultural analysis that are attentive to the categories with which we are now perhaps overly familiar: sex, ethnicity, wealth, poverty, geopolitical location, class, and gender. Eating... makes these categories matter again: it roots bodies within these relations” (Probyn 2015, 9). In order to account for those women who were left out, or marginalized, a reconsideration of the domestic realm, namely cookbooks and kitchens, will provide us with a better sense of how those excluded from a heteronormative economy rewrite themselves into food, and culinary discourses (*Ibidem* 2015, 15). Literary canons, as well as food discourses, are a product of human labour, and thus do not escape the influences of hegemonic power structures within society.

However, where there are sites of power relations and acts of dominance and oppression, there will also be the chance for, and moments of, acts of resistance. This chapter will look closely at how food and literary discourses intertwine to open a dialogue about the power relations at work when we eat, cook, or read about eating and cooking.

LITERARY COOKBOOKS

As previously mentioned, the term “literary cookbook” is a way to differentiate between the kind of collections that are used from the kind that are read. In her article *The Literary Cookbook*, Carrie Helms Tippen states: “Just as an experienced reader of fantasy novels can conjure an entire world by reading words on a page, a cookbook reader imagines a recipe like a narrative in which the reader is the protagonist, chopping, sauteeing, seeing, smelling, and tasting” (Tippen 2016, 1). The cookbook, as a literary genre, will have its own set of conventions in terms of the organization, tone, narrative, and language (*Ibidem*). Similarly, Theophano argues that literary cookbooks are “the closest we can come to another world. By its reading, we are momentarily transformed. Thus, for some, eating the words of a recipe book is a nourishing act” (Theophano 2002, 272). When a recipe is compared to a novel, for instance, the reader of the novel is not obviously addressed; whereas the reader of the recipe is addressed repeatedly through its unique blend of imperative structure, oral history, and yet still rooted in written tradition.

In cookbooks and other texts featuring recipes, recipes are often named after their “authors” (a person, a country, a region, or an ethnic group) to identify their (often mythical) “origin”. This can transform the writer of a cookbook into a compiler or archivist, and the cookbook into a communal project. As a reader is invited to participate, the recipe becomes a textual conversation over the metaphorical and actual breaking of bread. Recipes can pass on traditions, overcoming distances of time and space, as well as differences between

groups, taking part in the invention of traditions that can help establish the story of a nation, the boundaries of the masculine community, the sisterhood of non-hegemonic sexualities. (Vester 2015, 9)

This call to action (implied in the structure) marks recipes as a site for resistance that narrates the self as well as nationhood, and the home as well as community. More specifically, texts by lesbian authors (and made for a lesbian readership) on cooking directly challenged dominant ideals and norms pertaining to family structure, while also creating positive, nonconforming images of gender and sexuality.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, an increasing number of authors used the cookbook genre and its aesthetic characteristics to undermine its conventional usages as well as to make space for resistance against “gendered and sexual normativity when it comes to cooking and eating” (Vester 2015, 138). Prior to this, same-sex desire was termed as gender inversion by sexologists Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) and Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), who believed homosexuality to be an inborn trait but also diagnosed it as a disease or degeneration (*Ibidem*, 147). Medical, scientific, and judicial discourses coalesced to attempt enforcement of “clear -cut categories and to prevent their subversion by criminalizing and pathologizing gender transgression by connecting it to prohibited sexual practices” (*Ibidem*, 147). Sexologists’ interest in women’s homosexuality, in particular, was activated at the beginning of the twentieth century, in part as a response to discredit the early women’s and suffrage movement (*Ibidem*, 148). At the same time, women modernist writers were finding ways to represent same-sex desire and lesbian identity through literary discourse. Djuna Barnes, in her roman à clef *The Ladies Almanack* (1928), creates alternative explanations for this desire, “some of them in deliberate contrast to dominant medical discourses” (*Ibidem*, 148). This work, and others, are a testament to the kind of restrained freedom that living as an expatriate in Paris gave to well-off and creatively inclined women.

Although the recognition of Gertrude Stein's impact on modernism was much delayed until after her death, the calibre of her work in relation to the canon is of exceptional quality. One might go as far to contend that even the male modernists do not surpass her level of influence on the modernist movement. The blend of high and low culture and experimentations with the mundane, as well as the intellectual, concepts so closely associated with Modernism might not have come to exist without Gertrude Stein, and arguably, Alice B. Toklas. Belinda Bruner's article *A Recipe for Modernism and the Somatic Intellect in The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook and Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons* outlines three criteria for the development of Modernism as a literary genre: the privileging of the physical over the intellectual, the heightened attention towards the female experience, and questions regarding perspective and voice (Bruner 2009, 412). Furthermore, Bruner asserts that Toklas played a much larger role in forming Stein's position as genius, or the prevailing expert in modernism, than previously thought. She writes, "Stein, together with Toklas, built the foundation for modern and contemporary questioning of conventional authorship and voice; the two women are also responsible for increased attention to the physical in Modernist writing" (*Ibidem*). This reciprocal influence between the two women becomes apparent through a consideration of not only the domestic life they shared together at *Rue de Fleurus*, but also through the tender, and sensual physical side of their relationship.

STRUCTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS

The product of this closeness between Stein and Toklas is seen in the "domestic nesting (...) laid out in *Tender Buttons*" when "the mundane becomes beautiful to Stein as Toklas performs day to day necessities and nurtures Stein's talent" (Bruner 2009, 418). Moreover, allusions to Toklas are scattered throughout the poems, and manifest in signifiers, alliteration, and double entendres. As

stated by Bruner, “*Alas*, being one of Stein’s words for Toklas and a pun on Alice and a lass, is a special word used to demonstrate Stein’s dependence on Toklas” (*Ibidem*, 420), as in ‘cooking’: “*alas* pull the bell *alas* the coach in China, *alas* the little put in leaf *alas* the wedding butter meat, *alas* the receptacle, *alas* the back shape of mussle, mussle and soda” (Stein 1990, 492). *Tender Buttons*, written during a time when Stein and Toklas were in the process of establishing their respective roles within domestic life (Bruner 2009, 420), reflects these developments wherein - Toklas kept up with the typing and proofreading of Stein’s work, maintained the household, and handled food and cooking - Stein drove the car, mentored artists, writers, and other creatives and, most importantly, worked on her craft. Without Toklas as her collaborator, Stein might not have contemplated the mundane, or the little moments of the “everyday” with the same admiration or attentiveness as she does in *Tender Buttons*, thus, the experimental nature of Modernism, as we know it today, might not have come to exist. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is also indicative of the ways in which Stein and Toklas built Modernism together.

While Stein had long been captivated during her lifetime by psychology and the inner-workings of the human mind, it was not until the trip she took with Toklas to Granada, Spain, that her style and the inspiration for that style began to change. She “had been interested only in the insides of people, their character and what went on inside them, it was during that summer that she first felt a desire to express the rhythm of the visible world” (Stein 1961, 112). This trip with Toklas marks a turning point for not only Stein’s aptitude for blending high and low culture, but also sparked the onset of attention from young writers and columnists alike towards the first publication of “three manuscripts to make a book,” which came to be known as *Tender Buttons*:

Of these three manuscripts, two had been written during our first trip into Spain and Food, Rooms *etcetera*, immediately on our return. They were the beginning, as Gertrude Stein would say, of mixing the outside with the inside.

Hitherto she had been concerned with seriousness and the inside of things, in these studies, she began to describe the inside as seen from the outside. She was awfully pleased at the idea of these three things being published, and immediately consented, and suggested the title of *Tender Buttons*. (Stein 1961, 147)

The Autobiography documents the importance and scope of Toklas's influence over Stein's writing style, as well as the significance of Toklas's own capabilities as editor and cook; which eventually led to her role as a skilled cookbook writer. According to Janet Hobhouse, in the earlier days of their life together, "Stein wrote primarily for Toklas, who questioned and listened, and who proofread and typed everything" - citing this, Rebecca Mark also points out that "it is a story of relationship, not one voice, but voices — collaboration, dialogue, response, love" (*qtd.* in Bruner 2009, 432). In *The Autobiography*, Stein writes that "I always say that you cannot tell what a picture really is or what an object really is until you dust it every day and you cannot tell what a book is until you type it or proof-read it. It then does something to you that only reading it never can do" (Stein 1961, 106). It is the multiplicitous nature of their relationship that rewrites the domestic realm as a space that rejects patriarchal dualisms between the physical and intellectual, and emotional and rational. Therefore, if we examine Toklas's capabilities as a writer with these features in mind, then it becomes possible to understand how Stein's writing style evolved from an intellectual language to a "domestic and tactile aesthetic" (Bruner 2009, 412).

The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook attests to a style of writing that Paul Schmidt calls "Savarinist" in his article on how to interpret recipe collections. Schmidt affirms that Brillat-Savarin subscribes to the idea that there is a metaphysical element in cooking: "his transcendence is tempered throughout with the presence of the world... and an entire school of writing derives from it — anecdote stimulated by food, the memory of taste awakened by anecdote" (Schmidt 1974, 181). Toklas is skilful in this writing style, which also supports the notion that her creative influence went beyond acting

as muse and partner to Stein. In the chapter titled *Food in the United States in 1934 and 1935*, Toklas describes dessert as “(...) a postcard Virgil Thomson once sent us from the Côte d’Azur, delightfully situated within sight of the sea, pine woods, nightingales, all cooked in butter” (Toklas 1984, 126). Throughout the book, Toklas’s use of metaphor and wordplay in this, and other remembrances, illustrates the poetic congruity with which she writes.

Similarly, in *Tender Buttons*, Stein uses alliteration and rhyme to explore the interplay between the physical and intellectual through her description of a meal: “Lovely snipe and tender turn, excellent vapor and slender butter, all the splinter and the trunk, all the poisonous darkening drunk, all the joy in weak success, all the joyful tenderness, all the section and the tea, all the stouter symmetry” (Stein 1990, 35). As mentioned earlier, Bruner argues that “[w]ithout Toklas as a helpmate, Stein might have never looked so joyfully upon the physical and the mundane, and the blending of high and low culture and the contrasting of the physical and the intellectual, experimented with by the Modernists, might not have come to exist” (Bruner 2009, 421). Toklas’s *Cookbook* is a direct reflection of this boundary-crossing as she, too, experiments with the interplay between genre: namely her fusion of the cookbook with the memoir. The authorial persona throughout *The Cookbook* is witty, and at times sarcastic, with the cadence and timing of the repartee precise and well-placed. Toklas is even inclined to compare cookbooks with fiction writing, which blurs the lines between the two genres. She writes:

“Cookbooks have always intrigued and seduced me. When I was still a dilettante in the kitchen, they held my attention, even the dull ones, from cover to cover, the way crime and murder stories did Gertrude Stein. When we first read Dashiell Hammett, Gertrude Stein remarked that it was his modern note to have disposed of his victims before the story commenced. Goodness knows how many were required to follow as a result of the first crime. And so, it is in the kitchen. (Toklas 1984, xii)

For Toklas, it would seem that the act of writing was inextricably tied to Stein’s literary career; she was “wife” to Stein’s genius. In her

essay *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook- Nameless Cookie?*, Carol Stone suggests that “[p]ublished in 1954, eight years after Gertrude Stein’s death, [*The Cookbook*] can be seen as a tribute and as a rebuke to Stein in which Toklas, at last, speaks in her own voice”. Regardless of whether or not it took the loss of Stein for Toklas to find the agency to express herself, the significance of her nonconformist style and voice remains.

In *The Alice. B Toklas Cookbook*, Toklas engages with recipe writing partly as a way to document her life with Stein. Her book is a prime archetype for what we might call a “literary cookbook” - a text that “merged recipes with memoirs, bending the conventions of the genre to present another form of family structure” (Vester 2015, 139). Written as a homage to the thirty-five years spent making a home and life with Stein, Toklas weaves together memories, recipes, and instructions to construct a piece that queers and subverts the conventions of autobiographical writing. Moreover, this particular text is also a testament to the claim that a literary narrative does not have to encompass a chronological and linear temporal sequence to be recognized as such. Janet Theophano writes that “[i]n evoking or re-creating the sensate, culinary world of the book, the writer transports a reader in time and space into her own lifeworld. The seasons of the writer’s life emerge in the foods that she cooked or dreamed about cooking, the poetry and prose she placed alongside her recipes” (Theophano 2002, 122-3).

In Toklas’ book, this disruption of linearity punctuates the stories told by unpredictably incorporating the recipes as “amuse-bouches” to supplement and emphasize certain memories (Vester 2015, 156). The recipes often feature eccentric titles such as “Mutton Chops in Dressing Gowns” (Toklas 1984, 101), “Omelette in an Overcoat” (*Ibidem*, 106), “Giant Squab in Pyjamas” (*Ibidem*, 111), “A Hen with Golden Eggs” (*Ibidem*, 109), and “Haschich Fudge (which anyone could whip up on a rainy day)” - this last title is labelled as “the food of paradise - of Baudelaire’s Artificial Paradises” (*Ibidem*, 259). Toklas not only displays these recipes within a literary context but also transcends the rules of the cookbook genre by incorporating

the cooking instructions as part of a literary discourse, as in the recipe for “Lobster, Breast of Chicken and Black Truffle Salad” (*Ibidem*, 216) which, she claims, is enjoyable to read but hopeless to recreate (Vester 2015, 157).

As previously mentioned, Toklas works with certain ingredients that call up significant memories of the past in a way that harkens back to this notion of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. That is, looking at recipes as a kind of semiotic exercise implies that the space between description/language based rendering and experience/personal exchange with an idea or object is akin to seeing the recipe, and understanding that one may never make “real” the specific product the author describes. In other words, the meaning behind the text shifts away from a functional one and towards something else. What, then, is the purpose of Toklas’s cookbook? Is it to honour and remember an unconventional lifestyle through an unconventional structure? We will never know indefinitely, and to have the full answer is, perhaps, besides the point. What can be gleaned from the collection is that it frames “a fictional world as surely as novels do. Without ever preparing a dish, reading with one’s imagination is a satisfying act” (Theophano 2002, 272). Moreover, Toklas’s cookbook transmutes pieces of history, memoir, fiction, and travelogue. Food (and its accessibility) functions not only as a device to move the plot forward, but also transports the reader to another world - one that accounts for the experience of war.

Both Toklas and Stein had lived in Paris since 1907 and 1903 respectively, and witnessed the effects of both World Wars. Toklas’s account of them does not detail “political or military developments in France and the world, but strings of personal anecdotes revolving around food and the craving for it, describing the hardship of wartime (as experienced by two middle-class Americans far from the front lines)” (Vester 2015, 157). While some critics might discount the text for its lack of war writing conventions and depictions of suffering, others acknowledge Toklas’s ability to illustrate the banality of a war on the home front. She departs from

other male modernist writers, who fixate on the decline of civilization and increased globalization (caused by the horrific events of WWI), by writing from a place of domesticity — which is not to say that it is a lesser account. Vester suggests that in some ways the text could “also be understood as a statement against the war in general” (*Ibidem*, 158). Therefore, to dismiss this text primarily on the basis of Toklas’s class and status, or even patriotism, is not only indicative of the dominant power structures mentioned earlier, but also of a discrediting of women and women’s tasks.

The stories she narrates do not pretend to be heroic or patriotic; instead, they are honest recollections of the challenges and changes that war brings (however trivial) even to those who are relatively safe from its dangers. Toklas allegorizes these experiences through wordplay like “piece-de-résistance”, with which she classifies her first illegally purchased food items (Toklas 1984, 204). Rather than relying on ration cards for their food source, Toklas and Stein resort to illegal food trades and eating well as a way to rebel against the occupation. What little resources they do have will not be consumed or squandered by the Germans, who are described as uncivilized and disorderly; which, for Toklas, then translates into a lack of taste (Vester 2015, 158). The following anecdote portrays the French (and by extension the Americans they host), in stark contrast, as the embodiment of sophisticated culture and refined tastes, thus delineating themselves apart from German vulgarities:

The German soldiers were interested in butter. It appeared that many of them had never tasted it. Had not Hitler asked them if they wanted butter or guns and had they not given the right answer? One day, marketing for whatever unrationed food might still be for sale, a German soldier came into the shop. He pointed at a huge mound of butter and said *one kilo*. One kilo, the clerk exclaimed. The German nodded his head impatiently. The butter was weighed and wrapped up. Unwrapping one end of the package the German walked out of the shop. From the open door where I was standing, I saw him bite off a piece of the butter. It evidently was not what he expected it to be for with a brusque movement he threw it violently over the garden wall of the house opposite. The story got about. People came to look at it. No one would touch it. There it stayed. (Toklas 1984, 203)

For Toklas, the greed and ignorance of the German soldier then become “a metaphor for the imperialist ambitions of his government” (Vester 2015, 159). The cookbook partially utilizes a chronological structure, but consistently disrupts it with a multitude of flashbacks into certain childhood memories or wartime stories. Now I would like to address what makes food such a powerful and expansive site for memory.

In order to consider food’s relationship to language and expression, it is necessary to examine the inextricable connection between food and memory. As Terry Eagleton famously wrote, “[i]f there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never food.” Whether it be sex, death, identity, oppression, or displacement, food is often used as a proxy for something else. It is used not only for survival and sustenance, but also as a way of incorporating the world around us. During instances of loss or change, food memories can function as a “creative imaginative response” to this deprivation by working through the “mutual reinforcement of the cosmic and the mundane” (Sutton 2001, 159). In his anthropological essay *Food and Memory*, Jon D. Holtzman suggests that “the sensuality of eating transmits powerful mnemonic cues, principally through smells and tastes” (Holtzman 2006, 373). Through a diverse range of processes, both individual and social, memory “intrinsically destabilizes truth through a concern with the subjective ways that the past is recalled, memorialized, and used to construct the present” (*Ibidem*, 363).

However, aside from bodily experiences, food memories are also deeply symbolic of psychological and social meaning, and thus relates the everyday mundane to “broader cultural patterns, hegemonic structures, and political-economic processes” (*Ibidem*, 373). Therefore, one can suggest that food memories, for Toklas and Stein, are a dynamic way to record recollections that are deeply symbolic to produce a hybrid literary style that instructs, amuses, and captivates its readers. Furthermore, both pieces by Stein and Toklas challenge prevailing notions of authority and authorship.

Toklas gives credit to other cooks for certain recipes, thus subverting the idea that authorship is either autonomous or singular.

Similarly, *Tender Buttons* features language that pertains to household management, fashion, and cooking — which function as devices that challenge the norms of masculine authority associated with modernist writing. The book is broken down into passages preceded by such titles as *Roastbeef*, *A Chair*, *Sugar*, and *Piano*. The passage *Roast Beef* opens the *Food* section: “Please spice, please no name, place a whole weight, sink into a standard rising, raise a circle, choose a right around, make the resonance accounted and gather green any collar” (Stein 1990, 37). The grammatical tone shifts slowly from the subjunctive “please” into the imperative structure with “choose”, “make”, and “gather.” This variation between subjunctive and imperative structures seems to interrogate the constructedness of authority in language by deconstructing the normative logic and purpose of household and cooking literature. According to Katharina Vester, “she [Stein] questioned not only authority in general, but also the effects hegemonic knowledge had on regulating identity categories and the use of language (...) [by] shattering the linguistic and rhetorical rules of discourse [thus] render[ing] their effects unpredictable” (Vester 2015, 150).

Stein employs the imperative structure, which typically creates the expert persona customarily found in cookbooks; however, in sections like *Roast Beef*, it is apparent that the reader is not being informed of what to do. The structure rather provides the reader with a “blueprint for their imaginative interpretations” (Theophano 2002, 51). Additionally, the nonsensical “instructions” recode preconceived meanings connoted from the gendered division of labour to make space for new notions of authority and authorship — a kind of authorship that approaches women’s multiplicity as something to be celebrated and embraced. It is through an exploration of such boundary-crossings and contradictions that rework the politics of pleasure and desire.

Set upon the same path as Stein and Toklas, there are other lesbian authors of memoirs and cookbooks who used food and cooking as a trope for “difference” in female expression. According to Vester, “[a] small corpus of cookbooks and cooking blogs written

by self-identified lesbian authors published since the 1980s imagines lesbian cooks as their audience, thus often dealing with questions of identity: What is a lesbian cook? And how can a multitude of same-sex subjectivities form (...) communities without reverting to clichés?” (Vester 2015, 138). Texts like *The Butch Cookbook* (2008) or *The Lesbian Erotic Cookbook* (1998) reveal the struggle between gaining control over one’s own subjectivity and falling prey to patriarchal definitions of what it means to be a lesbian both in and outside the domestic sphere. While these tensions still reverberate in writing today, Stein and Toklas’s works demonstrate that there were other twentieth-century texts that not only interrogate culturally constructed gender and sexuality in more nuanced and inconspicuous ways, but also influenced the creation of the modernist canon as we know it.

While this kind of textual production (of domestic labour) may seem insignificant in comparison to other literary modes of writing, the manuscript sources addressed in this essay are certainly influential to “unthinking assumptions about women and authorship” (Wall 2016, 115). The domestic sphere, and literary cookbooks, need to be revisited as a way to take into account various linguistic shadings in order to broaden the scene of literary traditions. *Tender Buttons* and *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*, in particular, allow for the kind of materialist methodology that will expose patterns as well as differences, uncover connections, and expand our understanding of women’s literary history and production within the Modernist canon. Terry Eagleton writes: “Modernist art was born at much the same time as mass culture, and one reason for its obscurity is to resist being sucked in as easily as tabloid print. By fragmenting its forms, thickening its textures and garbling its narratives, the modernist text hopes to escape the indignities of instant consumption” (Griffiths et al. 1998, 206). Instead, a slow consumption of fragmentary methods of narration, through the most minimal and meticulously dissected pieces of history and literature, carries with it the potential to provide the most telling details.

Postulations about authority and authorship regarding the experimental forms and literariness of the recipe genre are conveyed throughout *Tender Buttons* and *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*. Foucault's theory on power relations reframes our understanding of how those left out of a heteronormative economy rewrite themselves into food discourses. The cookbook genre and its aesthetic characteristics were utilized to subvert its conventional usages as well as to make space for transgressions against the gendered and sexual normativity associated with the act of eating and cooking. The structural and linguistic elements from both texts explore the crossing of boundaries while simultaneously reworking the politics of pleasure and desire. The work of both Stein and Toklas show that food memories are a compelling way to record recollections that emanate from experiences of war, love and companionship, domesticity, patriarchal structures, and intellectual freedom. The field of food studies in modernist literature is made more substantial by contemplating the relationship between literature and the recipe genre. This close reading of *Tender Buttons* and *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* has illustrated the complexities of the modernist view of same-sex love and self-expression, and how the domestic realm served as a space for heightened attention towards the female experience. Furthermore, the food paradigm has provided an unconventional reading of both texts when they are put in conversation with each other. This is a call to revitalize the trope of recipe writing in modernist works and to apply analytical lens to food studies in order to cultivate our understanding of how modernist authors experimented with fragmented forms, and did so by seeking out the poetic potential of cookbooks.

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